

# America

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## Peering Outward

THE SHARED WITNESS OF MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY

MICHAEL HEINTZ



**W**hen it was announced last September that Pope John Paul II and Pope John XXIII would be canonized together on the same day this month, the phones started ringing here at **America**. The secular press were looking for commentary and analysis. One call came from a prominent reporter at a major American newspaper who asked: "Father, would you call this a bipartisan canonization? Is Francis telling us that Catholics need to reach across the aisle?"

"No," I said, "that's not quite right, even by analogy. This event isn't about what we should do; it's about what God has already done." The reporter responded: "Well, I can't really print that." Now, in fairness, I get that. When it comes to the church and the secular media, we often have unreasonable expectations. In asking the secular media to report accurately on what is in reality a living mystery, we are asking them to do more than they are really trained or qualified to do.

I have less patience, however, when it's a fellow Catholic who is telling the story and getting it wrong. And I've seen a bit of that too. Not a few people have told me that they think it politically ingenious that Pope Francis decided to canonize these men on the same day, bringing together two very different people. Apart from the obvious difference that one man is Italian and the other is Polish, however, and that the two men have different personalities and styles, intellectual and artistic tastes and perhaps even different philosophical sympathies, I fail to discern a truly meaningful difference between them.

And that's a good thing, because what we celebrate in their sainthood is what they have in common. This canonization is not about us or our narcissistic ecclesial politicking. It's about what God has accomplished in the lives of these two great men of the church. And Pope Francis' intention in canonizing them together, I venture to guess, has less to do

with how you and I should relate to one another and much more to do with how you and I should relate to God. In other words, this joint canonization reminds us that the goal of Christian living is not to be right, but to be holy. The goal is not to possess the truth but to be possessed by the one who is truth, the one who is the way and the truth and the life.

Popes John XXIII and John Paul II were possessed by the truth. Their lives point the way to our heavenly inheritance. Yet their lives also point the way in the here and now. For each of these men testified in his own dramatic time and way that if the way to holiness is the gift of self to the person of Christ, the one who is truth, then the key to human action is the gift of self to others, those who are similarly made in the image and likeness of God—the God of Jesus Christ—the one for whom love and mercy and justice are the only standards of human action.

In an increasingly impersonal and depersonalized world, this self-gift to God and to one another, if it is truly grace-filled, will more and more resemble the radical acts of love and forgiveness to which the Gospel and their lives testify: acts of radical discipleship that are subversive of every creaturely notion of power. As Msgr. Raymond Etteldorf wrote, "A saint can be defined, or at least described, as one who lives in complete harmony with the divine will, demonstrating in an outstanding way all the virtues, in particular humility, charity and heroic suffering" (see p. 23).

Such were the virtues of Sts. John and John Paul. We could use more of them. If we are to avoid further narcissistic divisions in the church or secular society, then we must proceed in a penitential key, from our powerlessness, from a lived acknowledgment of the sheer gratuity of our creation and redemption. This was the narrow gate through which these two Johns once passed. Let us pray for the courage to follow them.

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# CONTENTS



14

## ARTICLES

### 14 SHARED SACRIFICE

*The witness of marriage and celibacy* Michael Heintz

### 19 WRITERS BLOCKED?

*The state of Catholic writing today* Kaya Oakes

### VANTAGE POINT

### 23 1963: The Greatness of Pope John

Raymond Etteldorf

### 24 2003: John Paul's Quarter-Century

John Thavis

### 26 ONE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

*When Malcolm X became El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz*

Patrick J. Ryan

### 29 SUPPLY AND DEMAND

*One man reflects on a drug war—and market—without end.*

Robert Joe Stout



23

## COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

### 4 Current Comment

### 5 Editorial

An Act of Love

### 6 Reply All

### 8 Signs of the Times

### 12 Column

Friends of Merton Daniel P. Horan

### 32 Philosopher's Notebook

Just Friends John J. Conley

### 38 The Word

The Witness of the Bread; The Witness of Suffering

John W. Martens



33

## BOOKS & CULTURE

### 33 FILM "Noah" BOOKS

Wilson; Trans-Atlantyk

## ON THE WEB

A video introduction to the lives of **St. John XXIII** and **St. John Paul II**. Plus, **Sir Gilbert Levine**, right, talks on our podcast about a special concert celebrating the **canonization of the two popes**. All at [americamagazine.org](http://americamagazine.org).



### Not Good for America

In 1952 Charles E. Wilson, former head of General Motors and later secretary of defense, told a Senate subcommittee, “I thought what was good for our country was good for General Motors and vice versa.” Al Capp, creator of the comic strip “Li'l Abner,” seized on this and created the character General Bullmoose, a ruthless capitalist whose motto was, “What’s good for General Bullmoose is good for the U.S.A.”

Over the years General Motors has had its prosperous ups and bankrupt downs. Recently G.M. disclosed that in 2001 technicians detected a fault in the ignition switch that could unexpectedly turn off the car’s engine and disable its air bags. For over 10 years, amid a series of warnings, complaints and fatal crashes, G.M. rejected proposals to fix the problem. It sent notices to dealers, but did not follow up until February of this year, when it recalled a total of 2.6 million cars. G.M. faces responsibility for 31 crashes and 13 deaths. Floyd Norris wrote in *The New York Times* (3/28) that individual G.M. personnel may consider themselves ethical, “yet, collectively, they acted in a way that is absolutely stunning in its callousness.”

On April 8 federal safety regulators announced that G.M. is being fined \$7,000 a day until the company provides answers, under oath, to all their requests for information in the case. In the meantime, G.M. must replace every ignition switch, and the victims and their families must be justly compensated. Otherwise all Americans of conscience should collectively demand that no one purchase any G.M. product.

### Civil Engagement

On April 3, just 10 days after being promoted to chief executive officer of the software company Mozilla, Brendan Eich resigned because of outrage over a \$1,000 donation he made in 2008 in support of California’s Proposition 8, a ballot initiative that defined marriage as between one man and one woman. At the announcement of his promotion, Mozilla employees took to Twitter to protest, and the online dating site OkCupid boycotted Mozilla’s popular Firefox Internet browser. Many of those who cheer the office coup consider defending a traditional view of marriage to be the moral equivalent of opposing interracial marriage. But Andrew Sullivan, who is Catholic, gay and in favor of same-sex marriage, wrote that the campaign against Mr. Eich “should disgust anyone interested in a tolerant and diverse society.”

The swift and strident reaction among gay rights activists to a donation made six years ago reveals just how drastically the terms of the marriage debate have shifted in that very

short period. In 2008, 52 percent of California voters supported Prop 8 and a definition of marriage that has been accepted across cultures for millennia. Today same-sex marriage is legally recognized in 17 states, and a growing segment of the population views opposition to same-sex marriage not as a political position that can be legitimately debated, but as evidence of bigotry that can only be shamed out of enlightened circles.

That is unfair. Our society is clearly in a time of rapid social upheaval. As such, both courage of conscience and humility are called for on all sides. The quick denunciations and absolutist stance of Mr. Eich’s detractors evinced little of the latter and effectively shut down civil engagement when we need it most.

### Voting for Hope

After years of relentlessly bad news, is it possible that something has gone right in Afghanistan? The land of Taliban attacks and air strikes on wedding parties managed on April 4 to conduct a nationwide election blessedly free of any Taliban-concocted mayhem. The world should pause a moment to acknowledge the fortitude of the Afghan people. U.S. voters may face legislated obstacles to participation, occasionally long lines and antiquated equipment, but no one has to queue up amid fear of an ambush or car bomb attack. Afghan voters understood that the act of voting could prove fatal; but 7.5 million came out anyway—representing the same percentage of eligible voters (58 percent) as voted in the U.S. presidential race of 2012.

Taliban attacks on sites frequented by foreign nationals before the election had the desired effect of driving down the number of outside election observers, and so far thousands of complaints have been received about voting irregularities. That is surely cause for concern, but Afghan election authorities have assured the Afghan people that they will protect the integrity of the vote. For now, they should be given the benefit of the doubt. The fact that Taliban forces were unable to launch any large-scale assault to disrupt the vote is an encouraging sign of the improved capacity of the Afghan police and military.

Whatever the outcome of this pivotal vote, this successful exercise in democratic expression offers a welcome sign of hope. In upcoming elections more participation among Afghanistan’s women and voters in Taliban-wary rural communities would surely be welcome. Most welcome of all, of course, would be an election someday that includes a disarmed Taliban, willing to pursue its political interests and ambitions peacefully.

# An Act of Love

When asked about immigration on April 6, former Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida made a distinction between those who overstay visas and those who enter the country illegally “because they had no other means to work” and were concerned about providing food for their children. “Yes, they broke the law,” he explained, “but it’s not a felony. It’s an act of love.” With immigration reform legislation at a standstill in Congress and the number of deported immigrants under President Barack Obama nearing two million, Mr. Bush’s accurate and compassionate portrayal of our immigrant brothers and sisters offers some hope. Will his fellow politicians heed the message and throw their support behind comprehensive immigration reform in 2014?

A report released last month during a meeting co-hosted by the Partnership for a New American Economy and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce argues that Congress should pass immigration reform, but for a seldom expressed purpose: the benefit of U.S. businesses. The report, “A Crucial Piece of the Puzzle: Demographic Change and Why Immigrants are Needed to Fill America’s Less-Skilled Labor Gap,” explains that between 1990 and 2010, the supply of low-skill jobs—those requiring a high school degree or less—has remained steady. But the number of U.S.-born workers willing to fill these positions has drastically fallen, dropping by nearly 1 percent each year.

Because of this drop, employers across the country struggle to fill certain positions. Farmers, for example, are sometimes forced to abandon crops because they have no workers to harvest them. The report says that factors like lower birth rates and increasing educational opportunities in the United States make immigrant workers not only helpful to the U.S. economy but essential. Randel K. Johnson, senior vice president of labor, immigration and employee benefits for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, believes it is time for Congress to address this widening gap. “Immigration reform would create a means to bring in more workers to carry the load created by demographic realities,” he said in a statement.

The recent visit to Arizona by members of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Migration also stressed the need for immigration reform. On April 1, several bishops, led by Cardinal Seán P. O’Malley, O.F.M.Cap., of Boston, traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border at Nogales, Ariz., and celebrated Mass for the thousands of migrants who have died crossing

the desert. As hundreds of people gathered on both sides of the border, Cardinal O’Malley said in his homily, “The hard work and sacrifices of so many immigrant peoples is the secret of the success of this country.” The cardinal described the negative attitudes toward immigrants as “xenophobic ranting” and reminded the public that the “immigrant population contributes mightily to the economy and well-being of the United States.”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin” (No. 2241). At the same time, governments also have a right and duty to secure their borders and enforce immigration laws. In reflecting on these principles, the U.S. Catholic bishops have rightly rejected an “enforcement only” approach and outlined several components of reform: an earned legalization program that includes a path to citizenship; family-based provisions that increase the number of family visas and reduce the waiting time for family reunification; and a worker program that allows foreigners to enter the country legally and protects their rights. The worker program would help U.S. businesses fill the low-skilled worker gap.

Last June, the Senate passed a comprehensive reform bill that, though not perfect, includes many of the provisions outlined by the U.S. bishops. Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, then chairman of the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Migration, said the legislation passed by the Senate improves upon the status quo, a state of affairs that “causes much suffering among immigrants and their families and must end.” The House of Representatives should pass this bill, which President Obama is poised to sign.

The United States needs to recognize the value of immigrants not only for economic reasons but also for their social and cultural contributions. In “More Deeply Into the World” (Reply All, 4/21), Michael Baxter and William T. Cavanaugh refer to the blessed “mixedness” of immigrants, the diversity Latino immigrants bring to the United States through their blend of U.S. and Latino culture. We should also remember, as Cardinal O’Malley said, that these immigrants “will be the citizens of tomorrow,” and we “cannot be indifferent in the face of such suffering.”





## REPLY ALL

### Conscience Integral

While rightly sounding an alarm about the dangers of a growing secular culture antagonistic to deeply held religious values, “Our Secular Future,” by R. R. Reno (2/24), gives short shrift to the rights of conscience. “Liberty of Religion and of Conscience,” by Drew Christiansen, S.J. (Reply All, 3/31), rightly expresses the danger in ignoring conscience rights in pursuit of religious liberty.

Reminding us that respect for conscience is integral to our first freedom, religious liberty, Father Christiansen urges in the face of current difficult questions, to seek solutions which respect conscience, erroneous or not.

Solutions will not easily emerge in the clash of consciences. Nonetheless in the words of St. John Paul II, the full truth about religious liberty can “prevail only in virtue of truth itself.”

At this moment, the church in the United States should not only give close attention to the concern of Professor Reno, but also give serious thought to the counsel of Father Christiansen. His

referral to the teaching on conscience in the Second Vatican Council and the wise words of St. John Paul II must not be ignored, regardless of future decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court.

(MOST REV.) JOSEPH A. FIORENZA  
*Houston, Tex.*

*The writer is emeritus archbishop of Galveston-Houston.*

### Positive Developments

I was very pleased to read “Noble Vocations,” by Joseph J. Dunn (3/24). Though no schools should offer business programs that aren’t also informative on ethics, I agree strongly that Catholic universities and other universities pledged to moral behavior through religious traditions hold a particularly high responsibility when it comes to business education.

My decades of experience here and in Europe teach me that we’ll never safeguard corporations from internal corruption or poor business practices. No structures on earth developed and managed by human beings are perfect.

What I see in the management world today does give me hope, how-

ed. This might be true if we limit our vision just to the tight-knit, spatially dense communities of white Catholics.

But interracially, the church was far from united. No mere victim of the nation-state’s anti-black biases, the Catholic Church acted to kick black Catholics out of its corporate body on its own initiative.... As theologians and religious scholars... have demonstrated, the nation-state learned everything it knows about race and whiteness from Christian theology. Rather than the corrupted student, the church played the role of corrupting teacher.

While the Gospel is always true, the church is not just the answer; sometimes it is also the problem.

KATIE GRIMES

ever. Executives are more aware than ever that the public good and their communities require a high standard of principled leadership. There is also an accelerating trend for corporate strategies to go beyond profit and to make a mark through conscious global citizenship.

I want to believe that the contributions of graduates and stakeholders at business schools in places like Boston College have had some role in this welcome evolution and will continue to do so.

ANDREW BOYNTON  
*Chestnut Hill, Mass.*

*The writer is dean of the Carroll School of Management at Boston College.*

### Role of Workers

There is no question that a career in business can be a noble profession. As a retired mid-level business executive, I recall when workers were treated with respect and consideration. Later in my career, the opposite occurred. Sadly, today there is too much concern for quarterly profits, to the detriment of long-term planning and organizational growth. In the race to increase stockholder equity, the worker is treated less as a partner in the enterprise and more as a cog in the machine, easily replaceable and often discarded as too costly.

The trend to offer business to undergrads also makes no sense to me. It is more appropriate to start with a solid liberal arts education and then later tackle a business degree in graduate school, when the student is more mature. When I hired a trainee, I looked for people who could think on their feet, write an intelligible memorandum and plan several moves ahead. More often than not, the trainee had a liberal arts degree.

EDWARD J. THOMPSON  
*Gettysburg, Pa.*

### A Real Plan

I have to highly commend “Heal the Wounds,” by Joseph G. Kelly (3/17), for its insightful and deeply pastoral

### BLOG TALK

*The following is an excerpt from “A Truly Catholic Politics?” by Katie Grimes, at [womenintheology.org](http://womenintheology.org) (4/7). The post is in response to “Reply to ‘A View From Abroad,’ by Massimo Faggioli,” by Michael Baxter and William T. Cavanaugh (In All Things, 3/31).*

Baxter and Cavanaugh implicitly contrast the unity secured by wholehearted and unsullied membership in the church with the inherently divisive and atomizing politics of the nation-state. In so doing, they celebrate a church that never existed. White Catholics of all political stripes look back on the church of the early 20th century with tender nostalgia, remembering it as a time when Catholics were pious and unit-

application of Pope Francis' description of the church as a "field hospital after battle." I have had my own turn at taking one of the pope's remarkable and graphic descriptions of the church ("a church that is poor and for the poor") and attempting to forge this summons in practical terms for people in the pew and in ministry. It is a demanding challenge.

The "best practices" presented by Professor Kelly are superb, a real plan for ministers, lay and clerical. The practices will enable a genuine and compassionate realization of this vision of the church. I thank Professor Kelly and confess publicly that I will make a full disclosure when I use his outline in a homily for a confirmation group that includes future teachers and health care practitioners at a woman's university.

Thank you, as always, for your magazine.

(MOST REV.) SYLVESTER D. RYAN  
Nipomo, Calif.

*The writer is the retired bishop of Monterey, Calif.*

### A Fair Hearing

Re "A Pastoral Path to Communion?" (Signs of the Times, 3/17): As a divorced Catholic who has remarried, I am heartened to hear that the church will examine the challenges of divorce. As someone who was once an active parishioner—altar server, parish council member and Pre-Cana instructor—I feel abandoned by my church.

I will continue to attend church anonymously, receive Communion and answer to the Lord when that day arrives. I know my new wife, a pediatric emergency room nurse, has a pass to heaven. I may not be so lucky, but I am confident enough in God that he will give me a fair hearing that I was not afforded by my church.

CHARLES F. FIELD JR.  
Scituate, Mass.

### Truly Pastoral Help

Many divorcees are receiving Communion with new spouses; they

received annulments and entered sacramental marriages. Since the publication of the new Code of Canon Law in 1983, dioceses all over the world have devised procedures to help all—rich and poor—to experience the healing that the annulment process can bring.

People have claimed that annulments helped them to heal the wounds of their "first" marriages and prepare for the maturity needed for a true sacramental union. Before brushing aside this success for vaguely "pastoral" reasons, perhaps the German bishops should re-examine their annulment procedures to offer truly pastoral help to their people.

JOSEPH KRASTEL, C.S.S.R.  
Annapolis, Md.

### Jesus' Mercy

Forgive me if I am less than enthusiastic about Cardinal Walter Kasper's pleas for mercy for the divorced and

remarried. They seem timid at best. He rightly says that "one cannot propose a solution different from or contrary to the words of Jesus," but where exactly does Jesus talk of "sacramental" marriage, let alone its "indissolubility"? And what about Mt 19:9, where Jesus grants an exception for divorce?

The Greek word in this passage used to be translated "fornication." The latest translation of the New American Bible now says "unlawful marriage," rendering the exception as essentially a tautology. This new translation was quietly slipped in without so much as a whisper in the Catholic press.

To hang the case for present church discipline on a single verse (with a problematic translation) in opposition to the entire teaching of Jesus, shot through with mercy, is proof-texting of the highest order.

(DEACON) BRIAN CARROLL  
Berkley, Mich.

### WHAT YOU'RE READING at americamagazine.org

- 1 **A Careful Reading**, by Richard M. Doerflinger (4/7)
- 2 **Reply to "A View From Abroad,"** by Massimo Faggioli, by Michael Baxter and William T. Cavanaugh (In All Things, 3/31)
- 3 **Bishops at the Border**, by Kevin Clarke (In All Things, 4/1)
- 4 **The Water That Time**, a review of the film "Noah," by John Anderson (Online, 3/27)
- 5 **Celebrating Sisters**, by Christina Capecchi (4/14)



CARTOON: HARLEY SCHWADRON

GREAT BRITAIN

## Higgins Visit Suggests Sea Change in Anglo-Irish Relations

State visits are usually occasions of pomp and circumstance signifying little. That was not true, however, of the recent formal introduction of President Michael Higgins of Ireland to Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom. During the president's historic four-day visit, from April 8 to 12, the British Union Jack was hoisted alongside the Irish tricolor in courtesy calls around England, and the Irish president was feted at two banquets hosted by the queen at Windsor Castle. Higgins addressed both Houses of Parliament.

Before returning to Dublin, Higgins said he had been moved by the reception he received during this first-ever state reception of an Irish president in the United Kingdom and urged those who were unhappy with the visit on both sides of the Irish Sea to "think of all the things we have in common."

"A president of Ireland on a state visit to the U.K. would have been unthinkable even two decades ago," said Christopher Maginn, associate professor of history with the Institute for Irish Studies at Fordham University in New York. "It is of immense significance in the Anglo-Irish relationship," Maginn wrote in an email. "But it is even more than that. It would appear that Queen Elizabeth herself is the primary diplomatic mover here. The fact that she hosted the president not at Buckingham Palace, her place of business, but at her home, Windsor Castle, reflects her interest in improving the relationship with Ireland."

According to Maginn, the queen, aware of the long and troubled history between England and Ireland and the role of the monarchy in it—"also aware of her own mortality"—is using the symbolic might of her monarchy "to right a historical wrong" that will "allow the two governments of Britain and Ireland to reap the rewards."

Maginn adds that Higgins, in the mostly ceremonial role of Irish president, makes a good partner in such an effort. A former academic, a poet and author and a dramatic public speaker, he is not aligned with either of Ireland's main nationalist parties.

The rewards of this unprecedented exchange of state visits—the queen made a historic visit to Ireland in 2011—are twofold, according to Maginn: "normalization in the North and economic growth" for both nations.

"With such good relations between Dublin and London, the political parties

in Northern Ireland only have themselves to blame for continued political impasse," Maginn said. "Loyalist intransigence and hatred of Dublin among Protestants rings hollow if the queen is wining and dining the president of Ireland; nationalist intransigence rings hollow when a former commander of the I.R.A.—Martin McGuinness—is shaking hands with the queen."

Better relations between Dublin and London can only help economic conditions in Ireland, according to Maginn. "U.K. nationals are the largest minority here in Ireland and U.K. tourists are the largest visiting group. On the other side of this, Britain continues to be a destination of thousands of Irish people—many of them now highly educated—for work."

During his tour, Higgins met Prime Minister David Cameron at Downing Street and Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg at Buckingham Palace. He told



**HISTORIC HANDSHAKE.** Standing with President Michael Higgins of Ireland, far right, Queen Elizabeth of Britain greets Martin McGuinness, far left, Northern Ireland's deputy first minister and former I.R.A. commander, during a reception at Windsor Castle on April 10.

his British hosts: "It is the business of living souls to breathe life into words, and I have no doubt but that our long conversation in a shared language will continue into the far future to breathe new life, and the lightning of our different imaginations, into a common human purpose."

Regarding what improved relations bode for the future of Northern Ireland and the possibility of a united Ireland, Maginn said, "With the future of the single currency uncertain and with Scotland threatening to vote for independence next year, a situation could theoretically arise where a united Ireland emerges within some new British economic union.

"Really though, the people of Ireland have moved beyond talk of a united Ireland. It is no longer, if it ever was, a priority in the Republic and census numbers in the North are showing increased ambivalence on the subject. Irish





people are ready to move on and this visit, I think, reflects that.”

**KEVIN CLARKE**

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING

# Pope Francis: ‘A Crime Against Humanity’

**W**hen the pope was Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, he dragged the hidden problem of human slavery into broad daylight, annually celebrating open-air Masses in the city’s Constitution Square for and with victims of human trafficking. Now, as leader of the universal church, Pope Francis is dragging the blight of human trafficking onto the global stage, decrying the world’s indifference.

The Vatican recently sponsored a

conference of church workers, charity representatives and police chiefs from 20 nations, Interpol and Europol, who pledged greater cooperation to prevent trafficking. “Human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ,” Pope Francis said, addressing the gathering on April 10. “It is a crime against humanity.”

The United Nations estimates that 2.4 million people are trafficked at any given time. Their exploitation generates \$32 billion in annual profits for criminals. The Global Slavery Index estimates nearly 30 million people worldwide are living in slave-like conditions.

Pope Francis has made combating human trafficking and slavery a priority of his papacy. The Vatican recently joined forces with the Anglican Church and Al-Azhar University, the world’s foremost seat of Sunni learning, in an anti-slavery initiative. Not long after his election in March 2013, he asked the chancellor of the pontifical academies of sciences and of the social sciences to work on the problem of human trafficking and modern-day slavery.

Just a few months later, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, the Buenos Aires-born chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Science, hosted the first of three international gatherings on trafficking and the marginalized. He said the pope’s focus on the issue is driven by a deep desire to be close to those who suffer, recognizing that Christ himself can be found in their wounds.

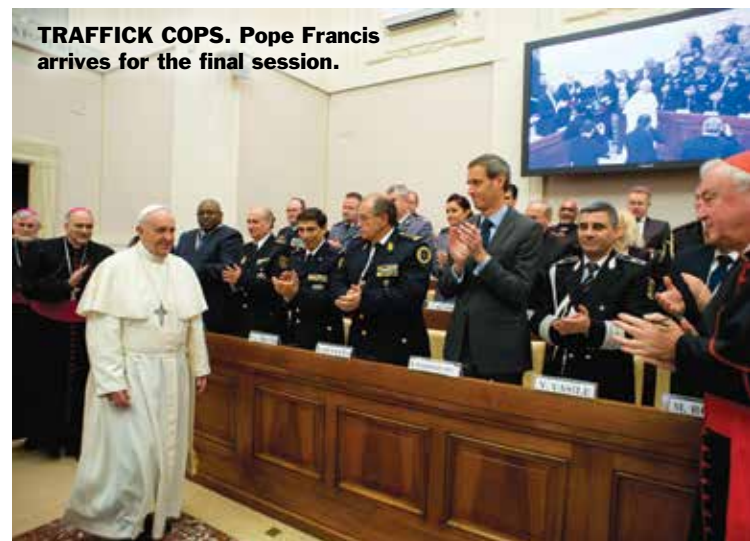
“He really has always had this ‘nose

for’ the people of the Beatitudes,” those who are poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted and so on, he said. “This is his instinct.”

Bishop Sánchez said the pope’s arguments to end slave labor appeal not only to people of faith, but also to people who believe only in the bottom line. In a speech to new ambassadors to the Vatican last December, the pope said that “the increasingly aggressive crime” of trafficking and slave labor “threatens not only individuals, but the basic values of society and of international security and justice, to say nothing of the economy, and the fabric of the family and our coexistence.”

Bishop Sánchez said economists who support the pope’s position argue that living wages for workers pump money back into the economy, stimulating business and increasing government revenues through taxes. But the pope knows that ultimately converting hearts and minds is what will determine whether Catholics, economists, businesses, police and politicians take action.

“Humanity still hasn’t learned how to cry, how to lament. We need many tears in order to understand the dimension of this drama,” the pope said at the conclusion of the trafficking conference.



## Pope Apologizes for Clerical Sex Abuse

"I feel called to take responsibility for all the evil some priests...have committed and to ask forgiveness for the damage they've done [because of] the sexual abuse of children," Pope Francis said, speaking at the International Catholic Child Bureau meeting in Rome on April 11. "The church is aware of this damage," he said, and is committed to strengthening child protection programs and punishing offenders. The remarks are among the pope's strongest on the sex abuse scandal. In December, Pope Francis established a Vatican commission to promote improved child protection policies throughout the church. Meeting with leaders of the International Catholic Child Bureau, an organization based in France and dedicated to defending children's rights, Pope Francis said it was hard to believe "men of the church" would commit such horrors. "We don't want to take a step backward in dealing with this problem and with the sanctions that must be imposed," the pope said. "On the contrary, I believe we must be very strong. You don't play with children's lives!"

## Vatican Joins in Venezuela Mediation

Pope Francis has written to the leaders of government and the opposition in Venezuela, urging a peaceful, negotiated solution to the ongoing political crisis. The pope's message was read at the start of a much-anticipated meeting between President Nicolás Maduro and key members of the opposition on April 10. Pope Francis wrote that he was aware of the "restlessness and pain felt by so many people," but noted his deep conviction that violence can never bring peace, only more violence. The dialogue was the first major effort at reconciliation

## NEWS BRIEFS

An ecumenical prayer service **called for healing** on April 9 at Mother of Sorrows Catholic Church in Murrysville, Pa., after a 16-year-old student rampaged in the hallways of Franklin Regional High School near Pittsburgh, wounding 22. • Along with other leaders and organizations that defend the rights of Tamils, the **Rev. S. J. Emmanuel**, the 80-year-old leader of the Global Tamil Forum, was named on April 10 to a list of "terrorists" by Sri Lankan authorities. • On April 10, U.N. officials agreed to deploy **12,000 peacekeepers** to the chaotic Central African Republic, but they will not arrive until September; the nation's religious leaders are urging an immediate deployment of reinforcements for an existing peace mission. • A survey by CARA of attitudes among priests and lay parish leaders about the revised Roman Missal, released on April 10, reports that 52 percent of priests say **they don't like** the new texts, while 75 percent of priests and lay leaders think the language is "awkward and distracting." • Archbishop Charles Bo of Yangon said on April 10 that proposed laws on "the protection of race and religion," apparently targeting Myanmar's Muslim minority, risked dialing back **religious freedom** in Myanmar at a time when citizens are gaining freedoms in most other areas.



Prayers in Pennsylvania

since protests broke out in Venezuelan cities in early February. Key leaders of the opposition agreed to talk after receiving assurances that the government was willing to discuss amnesty for jailed government opponents and the creation of an independent truth commission. In his letter, Pope Francis called on those participating in the talks to have the courage to look beyond their differences for the good of the Venezuelan people and their own children's future.

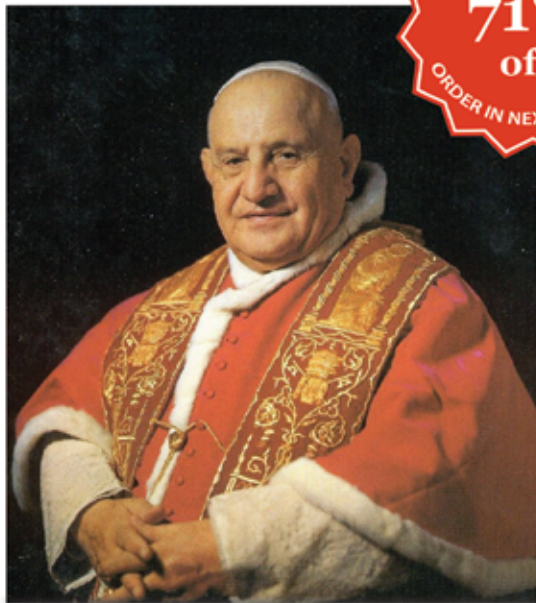
## 'Courtyard of Gentiles' Comes to America

In the first U.S. implementation of the "Courtyard of the Gentiles," a Vatican-sponsored structure for dialogue between believers and nonbelievers, conversations at Georgetown University on April 10 touched on the role of religion in society. The Washington Post colum-

nist Michael Gerson described a recent visit to the Central African Republic. He found the situation there especially frightening because a sectarian conflict arose very quickly in a country that had a long history of peaceful interfaith mingling. Gerson said he was reminded that the multicultural and multifaith society of the United States is fragile and requires lots of work. Phil Zuckerman, a sociology professor at Pitzer College in Claremont, Calif., said problems for the common good arise when a particular religious faith is linked with nationalism or becomes entwined with political power. The Rev. J. Bryan Hehir, secretary for health care and social services of the Archdiocese of Boston, said the balance of faith, culture and the common good depends much on how well a society accepts the common good as a goal.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.





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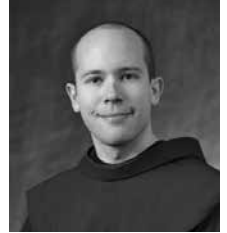
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# Friends of Merton

On Nov. 10, 1958, Thomas Merton wrote a letter to Pope John XXIII in which the famous American monk shared with the new pope some reflections about the world and the church. In one passage Merton describes how he had begun to understand that being a cloistered monk did not necessarily mean withdrawing from the world in some absolute way. Instead, he discerned the Spirit calling him to another form of ministry from within the walls of the monastery by writing letters, connecting with women and men he might never have had the opportunity to meet otherwise.

It is not enough for me to think of the apostolic value of prayer and penance; I also have to think in terms of a contemplative grasp of the political, intellectual, artistic and social movements of this world—by which I mean a sympathy for the honest aspirations of so many intellectuals everywhere in the world and the terrible problems they have to face. I have had the experience of seeing that this kind of understanding and friendly sympathy, on the part of a monk who really understands them, has produced striking effects among artists, writers, publishers, poets, etc., who have become my friends without my having to leave the cloister.... In short, with the approval of my superiors, I have exercised an apos-

tolate—small and limited though it be—within a circle of intellectuals from other parts of the world; and it has been quite simply an apostolate of friendship.

Merton came to realize that part of his religious vocation involved connecting with people of different backgrounds, experiences and worldviews.

He corresponded with the writers Boris Pasternak, Czesław Miłosz, Ernesto Cardenal and Evelyn Waugh; with the activists Joan Baez, Daniel and Philip Berrigan; with the theologians Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner, Abraham Heschel and Rosemary Radford Reuther; with bishops, nuns and religious leaders of other traditions, like Thich Nhat Hanh; and with so many others, including ordinary, unknown people.

I thought of Merton and his “apostolate of friendship” earlier this month while sitting at a pub one evening in England. I was in the company of a diverse collection of people: a middle-age father from Ireland, an Episcopal priest from Scotland and a woman and man from England, both teachers. We were there enjoying some beer after a long but inspiring day of academic paper presentations and workshops on the life, thought and legacy of this American monk. We were in Oakham, in central Britain, for a conference of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland, an event held every other year. (In the alternating years, the International Thomas Merton Society holds a large conference somewhere in North America; the next will

be in Louisville in June 2015.) I was there to deliver a keynote address, but the conference draws a diverse group composed of top Merton scholars, as well as people with a more casual interest in Merton and all sorts of others in between.

Strangers before this evening, those with whom I found myself at the pub all began to exchange stories about how each had come to discover the writings of Merton and what had led them to attend this three-day event. Most shared a version of “the typical Merton story,” which begins with reading *The Seven Storey Mountain*.

The Irishman, however, recalled a dramatic event that took place in a hospital room. Visiting his father, who was recovering from

surgery, he was told that the man in the next bed was dying. The dying man happened to be reading a book, which led my new Irish friend to reflect: “If he’s dying and is reading, it must be an amazing book! I need to know what it is.” The book was Merton’s *The Seven Storey Mountain*.

This man told us, decades later, that Merton remained a major influence in his life, ever since he read the book after that hospital encounter.

Few writers and thinkers can bring people together this way. Even fewer can do it long after their death. Thomas Merton continues to exercise an “apostolate of friendship,” bringing people together across many divides. If you haven’t met Merton and his friends yet, I encourage you to do so.

Merton  
connected  
with people  
of different  
backgrounds  
and  
worldviews.

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DANIEL P. HORAN, O.F.M., is the author of several books, including *The Last Words of Jesus: A Meditation on Love and Suffering* (2013). Follow him @DanHoranOFM.

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Canonized: April 27, 2014*

*Motto: Totus tuus (Totally yours)  
Feast Day: October 22*

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# Shared Sacrifice

THE WITNESS OF MARRIAGE  
AND CELIBACY

BY MICHAEL HEINTZ

Late in 1608, St. Francis de Sales, the bishop of Geneva, published a little book that was in some ways a revolutionary treatment of the Christian life. Addressed to a laywoman, Philothea (a literary artifice, meaning “lover of God”), Francis’ *Introduction to the Devout Life* is still in print. Francis was keen to demonstrate that “devotion” (read: holiness) was not the interest or domain of the spiritual elite or privileged few, but the obligation incumbent upon all the baptized, regardless of their station in life. He opened the door, so to speak, for ordinary Christians to see that sanctity was not only asked of them but also accessible to them within and through the mundane and often ordinary fabric of their daily life. In a book addressed principally to lay people, he reminded them that holiness was not solely the provenance of the cloistered.

Three and a half centuries later, a few years before the Second Vatican Council, the convert and Oratorian priest Louis Bouyer wrote *The Meaning of the Monastic Life* (1955). Despite its title, the book was in fact an invitation for all

the baptized to see in the monastic life the essence of the Christian vocation. The subtext of the book is as important as the text itself. As he put it rather cheekily, vowed monastics should not view their vocation as “special”; rather, they embody the fundamental vocation of every Christian, though embraced in a particularly focused and intense way. In fact, Father Bouyer was actually inviting all the baptized to a more serious, thoughtful and deeply evangelical life of holiness, to what he called an “eschatological humanism.” In a book addressed to monastics, he was seeking to raise the bar, inviting Christians of all states of life to see their high call in baptism.

The Savoyard bishop and the French priest, both deeply attuned to the living tradition of the church, were elucidating what the language of Vatican II would canonize as the universal call to holiness of life. The council was being radical, but only in the sense that it was recapturing a central imperative rooted in the Gospel itself, one that in the course of the church’s long history has at times been forgotten or overlooked.

## More Than Renunciation

Discussions of clerical celibacy or vowed chastity quite reasonably and understandably reflect on difference and dis-

---

**MSGR. MICHAEL HEINTZ** is director of the master of divinity program at the University of Notre Dame and rector of Saint Matthew Cathedral in South Bend, Ind.



tion; that is, celibacy is more often than not viewed in terms of its foil, married life. The differences are obvious, but that can too easily be reduced to the dimension of genital expression: married people have sex; priests and religious do not. In order to reflect more deeply on clerical celibacy, in the spirit of St. Francis de Sales and Louis Bouyer, it might be helpful to bridge the gap, so to speak, and to reflect on the mystery at the heart of both Christian marriage and clerical celibacy—namely, the paschal love of Christ.

At baptism, Christians are made by being plunged into the dying and rising of Jesus. To be a Christian means, as St. Paul told the Corinthians, that we somehow carry about in our bodies the very dying of the Lord. The dying and rising of Jesus are not mere historical events of the past, carried about in our heart or imagination alone, but realities in which, right here and right now, we who are baptized participate and are called to reveal. The manifestation of that mystery in the life of the baptized is expressed by an agapic love, a love willing to give itself wholly and without reserve, a love so free that, forgetting itself, it gives itself away. Christ, betrayed, beaten, bloodied and pinned to the cross, is the living (and dying) icon of the freest person who ever lived. This crucified love is the essence of every Christian life—single, married, ordained, vowed, divorced or widowed. Regardless of the particular form it takes, the life of the Christian is to become one of ever greater self-gift after the pattern of Christ crucified.

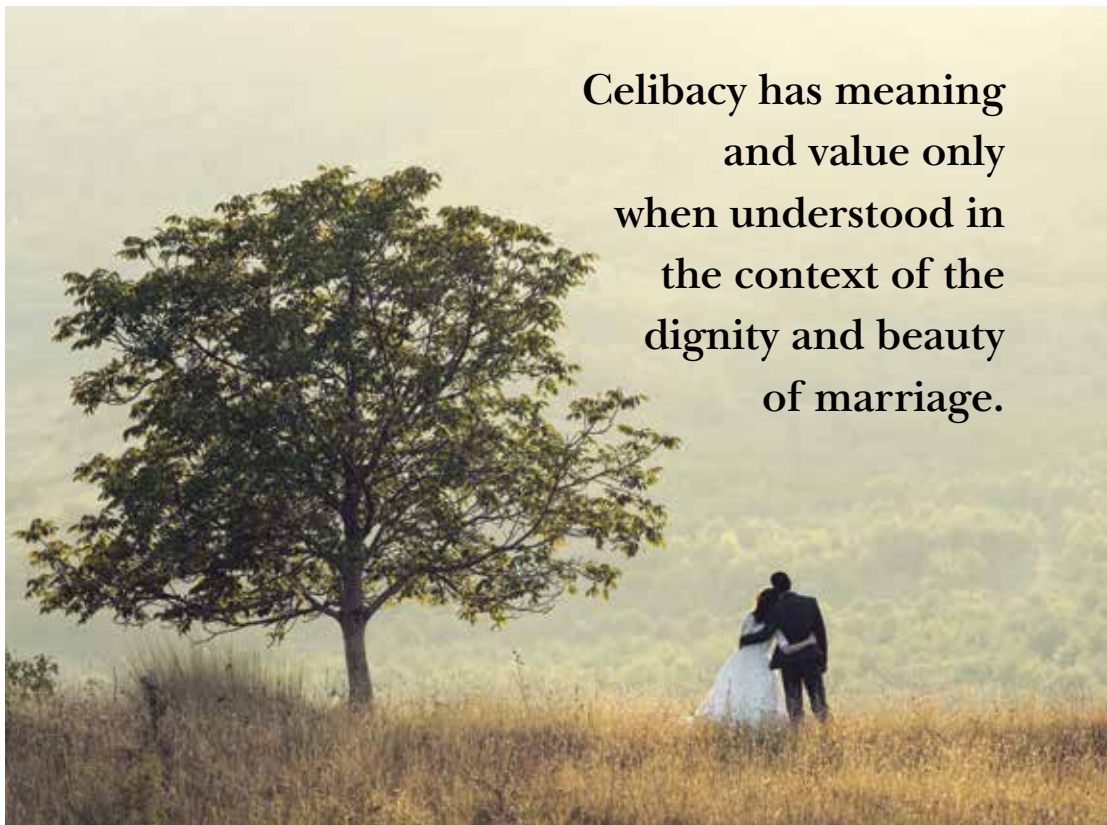
The fact is, I am continually learning the full meaning of my celibacy from the witness of married men and women I know, the families I serve, those entrusted to my care as well as those among my friends and peers, not by juxtaposing my celibate life to their married life, but by seeing in their vocation what is and should be also at the heart of mine: self-donation, crucified love, *agape*. And I hope that married persons can somehow see in the life of happy celibates the same mystery that is to animate their life and vocation as well: a generosity of spirit and gift of self that not only imitates but actually participates in the paschal love of Jesus.

The danger for those who are celibate is to assume that

the essence of their commitment is simply a negative, merely a renunciation. It can be embraced, often without any technical infidelity, with teeth gritted, as a kind of sacrifice. It is indeed a sacrifice, yet if this commitment remains detached from the paschal mystery, it cannot become something that gives life, either to the priest or to those he serves. Such a cleric can look at those around him who are married, wistfully imagining his life were more like theirs, bereft of any real understanding of the sacrifices that married couples and parents make almost constantly and sometimes heroically in their daily lives.

### Spousal Love

The prophets of the Old Testament preached the spousal relationship that God had established with the people of



**Celibacy has meaning and value only when understood in the context of the dignity and beauty of marriage.**

Israel as his beloved. Israel's chronic and serial infidelity was met by God's faithfulness, a prodigal and seemingly reckless mercy offered to them again and again despite their numerous failures. The fullness of this spousal love, adumbrated throughout the Old Testament, is revealed in the paschal mystery, Christ's total self-gift on behalf of his beloved, and experienced liturgically by believers in sacrament. The Song of Songs, the surprisingly erotic poem that sings the intimacy, tenderness and vulnerability of conjugal love, was included in the Scriptures and elevated in the tradition as a window through which to contemplate this dynamic of

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/DANNI12

God's love for Israel, Christ's love for the church, the eternal yearning of the Logos for union with each soul.

Married couples are a living sacrament of that spousal love: a walking, talking, mortgage-paying, diaper-changing, carting-the-kids-to-soccer-practice-and-then-to-piano, daily (sometimes hourly) dying-to-self sign and vehicle of grace for one another and for those whose lives they touch. It is precisely in their conjugal life, their daily gift of self, that they become an efficacious sign of that divine love, their mutual self-gift echoing and participating in Christ's self-gift on behalf of his beloved, the church.

The commitment of celibacy or vowed chastity has meaning and value only when understood in the context of the dignity and beauty of the vocation of marriage. Celibacy, as an eschatological sign, can make sense only if we first grasp and appreciate fully the union between Christ and his bride signified and somehow realized (even if imperfectly) in the sacrament of married love. It is against this horizon that the witness value of celibacy is most clear. What conjugal love quite literally embodies signifies the very union that celibacy seeks to anticipate—the deep, intimate union with God to which each of us is invited. This union is what married love realizes sacramentally and what celibacy anticipates eschatologically.

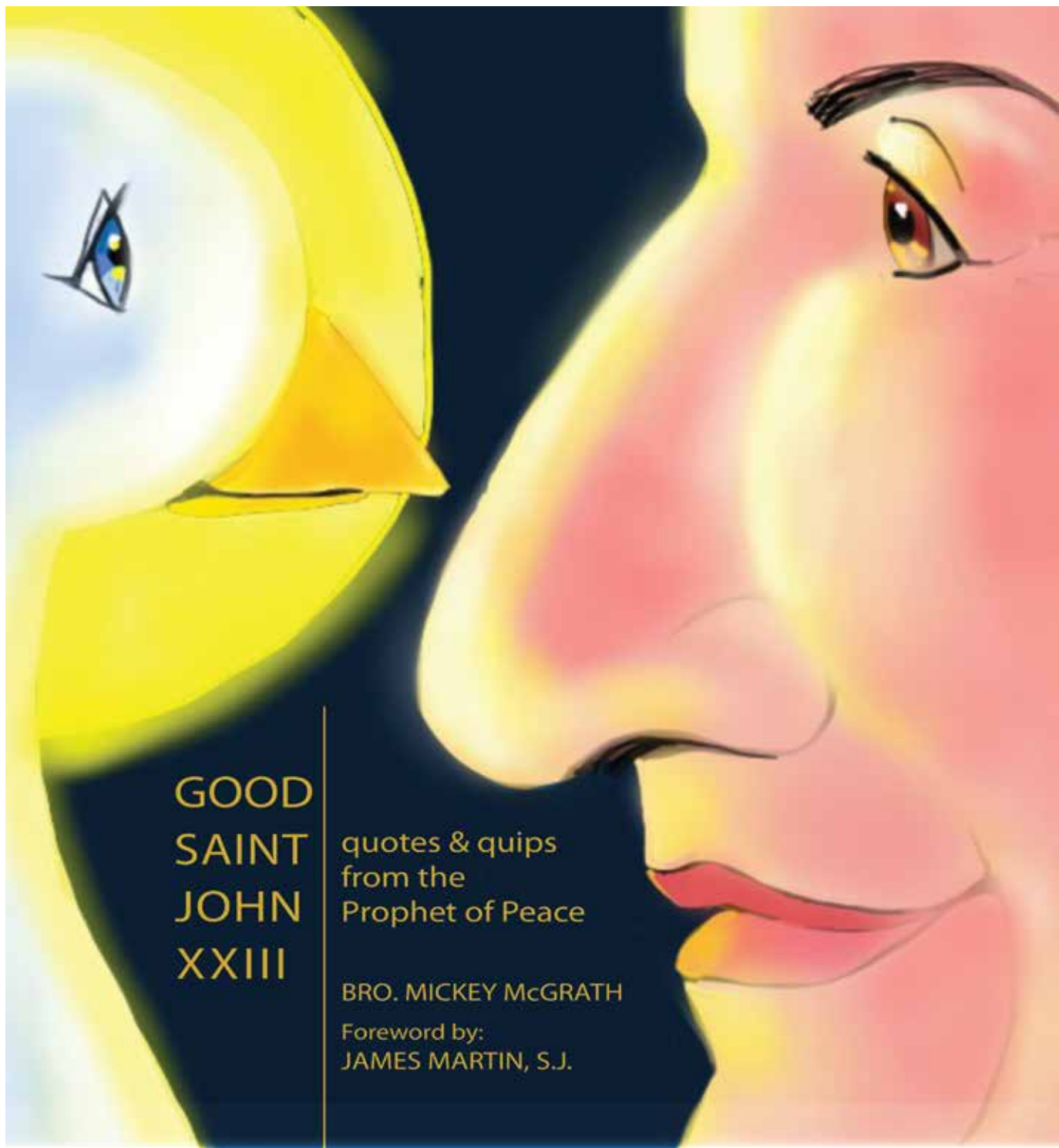
The distinct gift that the celibate person offers to the church is the witness of a deep evangelical freedom enabled precisely by a renunciation, a dying to self, a paschal love. The ordination rite instructs ordinands that their celibate commitment will be “a sign of pastoral charity and an inspiration to it, as well as a source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world.” Freedom, an equivocal term often culturally invoked in the promotion of self, is liturgically subverted by a still deeper and richer freedom, a life made fruitful in direct proportion to its willingness to let the self go. Freedom becomes the condition not for self-assertion but for self-gift, an availability in service to the other; and this involves more than simple temporal availability or ease of scheduling. It is a kind of ontological availability, an entire being, a complete life, made available and given in love for Christ and his body, the church.

Celibate clerics should always remember that the priesthood and celibacy are graces, and as such they are never given to the priest for himself, as a reason for preening, an occasion of pride. Like all divine gifts, they are given only in order to be given away. He becomes a man distinctly for others, analogous to husbands and wives, whose mutual self-gift makes them more and more available to each other and to their family, the domestic church. That same kind of availability, for the celibate, is extended to his spouse, his flock, his community. Even his own prayer is not his own possession, but is to be oriented radically for his spouse: ordinands are instructed to pray the Liturgy of the Hours not as a form of private devotion but precisely for the church and the world.

## Joyful Commitments

In conversations with young men discerning about a vocation to the priesthood, I used to think it was enough to ask the rather basic question, “Do you think you could live the life?” I soon realized that this question is insufficient. It is not enough just to live the life, to go through the motions and do what is asked. The celibate life must be embraced and lived with joy. Unhappy, disgruntled or edgy clerics are hardly a draw, and it is unsurprising that a young person may be less inclined even to consider such a life on the basis of encounters with such sullen celibates. At the same time, those considering marriage see how many marital relationships struggle or are fractured, and this no doubt has some influence on their apprehensions about entering marriage. As we worry about the declining numbers of priests and religious in the past several decades (a trend that may indeed be changing) and the challenges facing marriage as an institution, we should recognize that both married life and priestly life suffer from the same cultural malady: the fear of sustained commitments. The crisis (if indeed it is such) is not principally a matter of the “burden” celibacy imposes any more than it is about the “demands” of marriage and children. In short, both require self-emptying love, and it is precisely the permanence of that commitment—marriage or celibacy—that is so intimidating. On the one hand, seminaries and novitiates today encounter some who might be characterized as hyper-intentional, seemingly professional “discerners”—those who stew and ponder, moving from one community or diocese to another, apparently awaiting a kind of clarity simply not possible this side of the veil and who freight every decision with almost cosmic significance, paralyzed atop the fence of ambivalence. On the other hand, there is the pastoral challenge facing the church of the significant number of couples cohabiting prior to marriage (a phenomenon better understood as evidence of fear than simply a capitulation to concupiscence). Both are symptoms of a cultural aversion to commitment and reveal the genuine vulnerabilities at the heart of any meaningful gift of self, the former veiled as piety and the latter as, well, practice.

Insofar as solipsism can be the occupational hazard of us celibates, who can drift unaware into the center of our own lives, married women and men have the power to remind us celibates that our life can only flourish if we are willing to give ourselves entirely, to live a life of crucified love, to surrender our own will, through a life poured out for the glory of God and the service of the people of God. And the celibate witness is a living reminder that there is a part of each of us, regardless of our state of life and no matter how much our lives are filled with human love, that is made only for God and that no created person, no matter how beloved, can fill or replace. **A**



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# Writers Blocked?

The state of Catholic writing today

BY KAYA OAKES

Midway through Richard Rodriguez's recent spiritual autobiography, *Darling*, the author offers Catholic readers a useful catechism: "I stay in the church because the church is more than its ignorance; the church gives me more than it denies me. I stay in the church because it is mine." Rodriguez identifies as a Catholic, gay Chicano writer of nonfiction, but his name is rarely mentioned in discussions about the fate of the Catholic writer today. Perhaps he is too much of an outlier, too much of an "other" to be lumped in with the names that have been tossed about by Paul Elie, Dana Gioia and several other literary critics and writers, who for many months have been conducting a kind of round-robin debate about the "Golden Age" of Catholic writing. When did that Golden Age end, and why? Was it the rising tides of secularism, the loss of a centralized literary culture in the United States, the Second Vatican Council or all of the above?

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KAYA OAKES is a poet and nonfiction writer from the Bay Area in California.

Let's go with all of the above. A common thread in the essays by Elie and Gioia, published in *The New York Times* ("Has Fiction Lost Its Faith?" 12/19/12) and *First Things* ("The Catholic Writer Today," 12/1/2013) respectively, is their overwhelming tone of nostalgia. These writers seem to pine for an age of faith that no longer exists. In the era for which they yearn, Catholicism had not only a distinctive literary culture, but a distinctive culture: a sense of "otherness" that set it apart from America's Protestant majority, a set of gestures and a creed that formed a wall around its adherents and kept them safe. That nostalgia runs through Rodriguez's memoir as well, but it is tempered by Rodriguez's knowledge of his doubled and tripled "otherness" as a gay Chicano. Rodriguez is unquestionably a Catholic writer, and one with plenty of mainstream literary and media clout, but because he is not a novelist, he is only mentioned in passing in the ongoing debate.

The novel, it seems, is the apex of Catholic literary art. Mention "Catholic writing" and the same names come up over and over and over again: Flannery O'Connor, Walker



PHOTO: REUTERS/RALPH D. FRESO



Percy, J. R. R. Tolkien, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene and G. K. Chesterton (whose novels and short fiction are arguably read more often than his essays and theological work). Thomas Merton is, of course, included in the canonical grouping of Catholic authors, even though he did not write novels, but he was a bestselling writer who led thousands of men and women into explorations of monastic practice and consecrated life. So Merton gets a pass, but the novel is mentioned over and over again, even in a time when nonfiction outsells fiction and fills the pages of magazines and literary journals, and when literary fiction is increasingly difficult to publish and is read less and less.

## Famous and Dead

The fact is that no matter the genre they worked in, the Catholic writers most often brought up in this debate have one thing in common: they are dead. In this line of thought, Catholic literary culture today might best be described as a funeral for multiple corpses. This, for living Catholic writers, makes for a rather depressing set of circumstances to enter into. Gioia recently tempered this nostalgia in an interview with *The Jesuit Post* and offered a list of living Catholic writers he considers highly influential. For me and many other readers, however, the age of the writers on the list only further cemented the notion that Catholic literary culture is the property of a different generation. Gioia names Tobias Wolff, who is 68; Ron Hansen, 66; Alice McDermott, 60; Cormac McCarthy, 80; Don DeLillo, 77; John Guare, 76; John Patrick Shanley, 63; Rhina Espaillat, 82; X. J. Kennedy, 84; and George R. R. Martin, 65, as the most vital examples of Catholic writers, both practicing and lapsed. With all respect to the vivacity, talent and skill of this group, all of whom I look up to and admire, something is missing. In addition to the lack of gender or ethnic diversity, Gioia's list also has no one under the age of eligibility for A.A.R.P. membership.

Elie, 49, and Gioia, 63,—as well as Angela Alaimo O'Donnell recently in the pages of *America* (“Goodbye to the Catholic Writer?” 1/20)—all agree that emerging or younger Catholic writers have an uphill battle, at best. In a blog post at Good Letters, David Griffith agrees with Gioia's statement that there is a “torpid indifference among precisely those people who could change the situation.” Griffith's first book, *A Good War is Hard to Find: The Art of Violence in America*, was published in 2006 by a well-regarded secular indie press, Soft Skull, but many of its essays had an explicitly Catholic and theological framework. Nonetheless, Griffith's book was not reviewed in a single Catholic publication. Griffith's book won raves from the secular press, but the rejection stung. And for me, his story was painfully familiar.

When my book *Radical Reinvention: An Unlikely Return to the Catholic Church* was published in 2012, I was grateful when an excerpt ran in *Commonweal* and was happy to

read endorsements in secular magazines. But no Catholic magazines reviewed the book. Like Griffith's, my book was published by a well-regarded independent press, but even the most successful independent presses can struggle to garner the attention for their books that they frequently deserve. (Full disclosure: my last publisher, Counterpoint Press, is the parent press of Griffith's publisher, Soft Skull, but Griffith and I have never met.) Perhaps that, in addition to my “otherness,” meant my book was not Catholic in a recognizable way. Female, feminist, young(ish), a lecturer at the most secular of secular universities, born and raised in the post-Vatican II church, and a nonfiction writer and journalist rather than a novelist or poet, I, like Richard Rodriguez, would fail in many ways to make the checklist of what many people engaged in the current debate about Catholic writing think a Catholic writer should be.

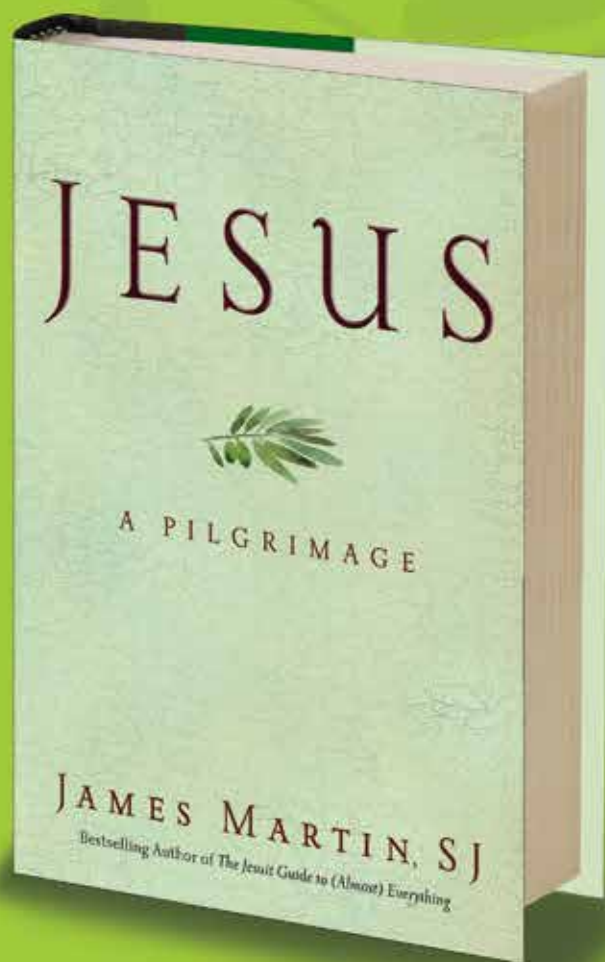
## Old Rules No Longer Apply

But the core problem with this debate is that definitions of what made writing “Catholic” in the past no longer apply. Secularism surely plays its part, but if you are a Catholic writer under the age of 50, odds are that you have spent most of your life building your closest community among writers who are not Catholic. Some authors have argued that this may be another symptom of anti-Catholicism, but my sense is that it is something different. Percy, O'Connor and the rest of the usual suspects had Catholic classmates, Catholic editors, Catholic publishers who worked in powerful publishing houses and Catholic literary agents. My literary agent is a lapsed Catholic turned agnostic; so was the editor on my last book. My colleagues in the writing program at Berkeley are not Catholic, nor are most of my students, nor were my classmates in graduate school. Many Catholic writers of my generation are simply writers who happen to be Catholic.

So it makes no sense to picture only a Catholic reader (I imagine here a stock photo of a woman with a rosary wrapped around her hand), turning the pages of one of my books. Nostalgia for the Golden Age of Catholic writing makes me think of the rhetoric of nostalgia for the church before Vatican II. But for Catholics under 50 who have never worn a mantilla to Mass, do not understand Latin and grew up with the priest facing the congregation, the faith lives of previous generations can seem distant from the faith lives we live today. I am always moved by the scene in *The Seven Storey Mountain* when Merton stumbles into a church during eucharistic adoration, but I read it the same way I read many scenes from history, as a glimpse into a moment of universal transcendence framed by a ritual with which I am barely acquainted.

In ethnographic fieldwork, anthropologists talk about “fixed positions”: the necessity that the field worker go into the study of a subculture with awareness of the unchangeable

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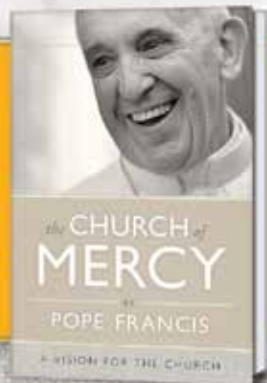
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things about herself—gender, race, age, social class and, yes, religion—in mind. But that does not mean that the anthropologist is a missionary, present only to convert her subjects to her own point of view. It means that she must be aware of how her positioning will affect her observations. Elie recently argued on his blog, “Everything That Rises,” that Catholic writers should not settle for “whispering” about our faith, but that he, as a reader, is “holding out for the phenomenal.” Fair point. But Elie is holding out for the phenomenal from the position of being a distinguished writer and literary critic. He was an editor for Farrar, Straus and Giroux before starting his current role as senior fellow with the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University. Gioia calls for a more centralized Catholic literary culture from the position of being the former chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts and a tenured professor at the University of Southern California. These are positions of power and privilege. From the older to the younger, the new to the more established, most Catholic writers agree that change needs to happen, and that younger Catholic writers need support, but concrete action has yet to occur.

### **Fragmentary Faith**

The positioning of emerging Catholic writers is dramatically different from what it was even 10 years ago. Not only do we lack a centralized Catholic literary culture, the literary culture prevalent when today's established writers were emerging in their own careers has been fragmented beyond recognition. Writers today move from publisher to publisher. Tenure has become a rarity; many writers survive as adjunct instructors or freelance journalists, moving from job to job and writing in snatches of time. Online reading often replaces paper books, magazines and newspapers, and this brings with it different reading behavior: more skimming, less focus. Many of us write for secular publications about secular topics and teach in secular schools. And the faith of younger Catholic writers is perhaps fragmentary in its own ways: open to other faith traditions, flexible about the idea of community and critical about issues of gender and sexuality that have caused a large number of younger Catholics to drift from the church.

For many of us, this fragmentation and questioning are good things because they force us to examine what keeps us Catholic in an age and literary culture in which Catholicism, to many outside observers, makes little sense. But we are still writers. And we are still Catholics. Faith shadows and colors our work, but must our faith dominate every word that we write in order for us to be considered “Catholic” enough? As a call to action, the current debate about Catholic writing is an important one. But when it degenerates into inflexible rubrics or pining for past ways of writing and believing that are not likely to return, it becomes a long gust of hot air. It becomes a breath that fails to give life. **A**

# The Greatness of Pope John

BY RAYMOND ETTELDORF

**T**he greatness of a great man may have different aspects. An artist—Michelangelo, for example—is considered great only for his applied genius. [...] Saintliness is certainly a criterion for greatness. Not all great men are saints, but all saints are great men. [...]

I have no intention to assume here, even in part, the prerogative of the Church, which alone is qualified to declare anyone a saint. But, to express a personal opinion, based on my observation from the time that Cardinal Roncalli was elected Pope, I think he had what it takes to be a saint. I am aware that in approaching a subject of this nature it is easy to yield to the exaggerations of sentimental admiration; hence I will limit my arguments to the application of objective reality to principles. In principle, a saint can be defined, or at least described, as one who lives in complete harmony with the divine will, demonstrating in an outstanding way all the virtues, in particular humility, charity and heroic suffering.

Pope John frequently made references to the acceptance of God's will in his personal life. To give one striking example: he made no secret about his personal concern for the [the Second Vatican] Council, yet before its opening and long before his fatal illness, he stated publicly that he would be willing to die before the convening of the Council if God so desired it. After the Council began and he felt the first signs of his serious sickness, he made it clear more than once that he was willing to die in obedience to God's will before the conclusion of the Council. But such statements do not tell the whole story. The gentle Pontiff did not see the divine will as associated only with disappointments or disaster or death, as many seemingly pious people tend to do; he viewed it positively; he sought to



CNS PHOTO/CATHOLIC PRESS PHOTO



Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII

make his whole life the complete fulfillment of God's will. [...]

It can be said that, as it is easy for the wealthy to speak about the ideal of poverty, so it is not hard for a man of high rank to make expressions of humility about himself. When Pope John repeatedly stated, however, that God had chosen his humble person for the supreme dignity of the papacy, he was not uttering a pious cliché. His humility was of the very substance of his personality. He never forgot his humble beginning in life as farm boy. He was always simply himself. He was his same simple self in talking with the poor, orphans and prisoners as with kings, queens, presidents and diplomats.

The dignity of the papacy is associated with the rigid formality of royalty, but in spite of this—to use a homely phrase—there was nothing stuffy about Pope John. Though his office required that he move in the midst of pomp, he

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**MSGR. RAYMOND ETTELDORF** served as editor of the *Dubuque archdiocesan weekly, Witness*, and was an official of the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches. These are excerpts from an article published on June 22, 1963.



was never pompous. His unpretentiousness was disarming, but no one in his presence forgot that he was the Vicar of Christ. He seemed to have no inhibitions for the simple reason that he did not need to have any. He was simply what he was supposed to be, and that is true humility.

Popularity is not necessarily a sign of greatness. But, it might be asked, why was Pope John so popular? True, his election as Pope catapulted him into world fame. But that does not explain how it happened that he captivated people all over the world. I believe that the basic explanation is to be found in his outstanding charity. Love begets love: John XXIII charmed people of all nations, races, creeds and walks of life simply because his heart went out to them with great love.

His love for men was Christian charity in its real meaning. Because it was all-embracing, it cut across lines and shattered traditions. Pope John was not able to see why his visits to orphanages, hospitals and prisons in Rome created a stir in the press: he felt that he was but acting as the Bishop of Rome in exercising charity toward some of the members of his flock. [...]

Taken as the sum total of his supernatural spirituality, the charity of Pope John XXIII had a particular characteristic. He had a genius for supernatural good. Of course, it would be taken for granted that any Pope acts habitually from supernatural motives. But Pope John was so attuned to the supernatural, it stood out on everything he did and said. It

flowed from him as easily and spontaneously as water from a spring. He was naturally supernatural.

Pope John's patient and resigned suffering and his deeply edifying death are well known. Not so well known is the fact that he suffered much while on his feet. The cancer that finally took his life had started to give him pain about a year before he died. When he participated in this year's Good Friday ceremonies in St. Peter's Basilica, his assistants noticed that he was in great pain. It is known only to himself and God how many other times he took part in functions or spoke to great crowds at audiences while suffering internally. And that surely was heroic suffering. It would be misleading, however, to refer only to his physical sufferings. Though it is hard to catalogue his spiritual sufferings, in general it can be said that he endured the bitterness of frustration and misunderstanding, even as Christ did.

It is difficult to think of the great personality of John XXIII without being reminded of his delightful sense of humor. In this he demonstrated that the quest for spiritual perfection does not make one less human, but rather more human, as originally intended by God.

I do not intend to paint Pope John as a paragon of absolute perfection, for even great saints have faults. He would be the first to admit that he had failings. But whatever his few little failings were, they are almost invisible in the grand design of his greatness.

2003

# John Paul's Quarter-Century

BY JOHN THAVIS

**A**s Pope John Paul II celebrates 25 years in office, the world is taking stock of a pontificate that has helped shape political events, set new directions for the Catholic Church and offered spiritual inspiration to millions of people around the globe.

By any measure, this is a papacy for the ages. Since his election on Oct. 16, 1978, Pope John Paul has delivered more speeches, met with more world leaders, canonized more saints and kissed more babies than any previous pontiff. Visiting 129 countries—from the steppes of Asia to the Rocky Mountains—he has implemented the church's own form of globalization. And in more than 50 major documents, on themes ranging from economics to the rosary, he has brought the Gospel and church teachings to bear on nearly every aspect of modern life. [...]

The first non-Italian pontiff in 455 years, Pope John Paul II

declared early on that the Second Vatican Council had set his agenda. In particular, his global ministry quickly focused on Vatican II's engagement with modern culture. As for teaching, the pope has penned three major encyclicals on economic and social justice issues and has addressed the rich-poor imbalance continent by continent in post-synodal documents.

Over the last 10 years, he also has authored three other encyclicals that strongly challenge what he sees as a prevailing moral relativism in postmodern society. "Veritatis Splendor" (1993) spoke of the truth of the church's moral teachings, "Evangelium Vitae" (1995) defended the inviolability of human life against what the pope calls a "culture of death," and "Fides et Ratio" (1998) argued that human reason cannot be detached from faith in God.

Meanwhile, under his guidance, Vatican agencies have issued important instructions on such specific questions as foreign debt, in vitro fertilization, the arms industry, the role of the mass media and the impact of the Internet.

Through all these pronouncements runs a central theme:

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JOHN THAVIS is the former Rome bureau chief of the Catholic News Service. These are excerpts from an article published on Oct. 6, 2003.

that human freedom becomes destructive when people forget they are created in God's image. Whether an unborn child, an impoverished African or an elderly shut-in, the pope says, every human being has a value that goes beyond earthly advantages and accomplishments.

While pushing Catholic teaching into virtually every area of modern life, the pope also has taken the measure of the church's past mistakes. At his insistence, the church acknowledged historical errors in condemning the 16th-century astronomer Galileo Galilei, in participating in European religious wars and even in its missionary approach in some New World territories.

Against considerable resistance within his own Vatican hierarchy, the pope commissioned critical studies on the church's role in the Inquisition and the Crusades and on the failings of Christians during the Holocaust.

In the area of interreligious relations, Pope John Paul has reached out in ways that were once considered impossible or even heretical.

In 1986 he visited a Jewish synagogue in Rome, then in 2000 prayed at the Western Wall in Jerusalem—a gesture that won the hearts of many Jews worldwide. In Syria, he became the first pope to visit a mosque, and in Morocco he spoke to thousands of cheering Muslim youths. Twice he convened leaders of other religions and other churches for prayer meetings in Assisi, where participants denounced all acts of war and terrorism carried out in the name of religion.

Within the church, the pope has been no less dynamic. He has disciplined dissenting theologians and self-styled "traditionalists," promulgated a new Code of Canon Law, issued new directives calling for clearer Catholic identity in church universities and defended with the full weight of his authority the church's all-male priesthood. [...]

During his papacy, the church has expanded greatly in Africa and made significant advances in Asia and Oceania. This distinctly third world tilt has been spotlighted during the pope's more than 100 foreign trips, when he has used local customs in his liturgies, spoken the native language and praised indigenous writers and thinkers.

But the trips have enormous missionary objectives as well. While respectful of the non-Catholic or non-Christian majorities along his itinerary, the pope has always presented the figure of Christ and the Gospel message to any and all of his listeners.

That is in keeping with the pope's conviction that while all people can be saved, Christ is the unique savior for all people—a point made forcefully in the controversial document "Dominus Iesus," which emphasized proclamation of



**HOMETOWN HERO.** A commemoration on April 2, 2005, the ninth anniversary of the death of Pope John Paul II, in Wadowice, Poland, his birthplace.

Christ over dialogue.

Visiting India in 1999, the pope delineated the church's approach on the Asian continent, where he predicted "a great harvest of faith" in the years to come. He praised his hosts' non-Christian spiritual traditions but also preached the Gospel, and said the best way for Christians to evangelize was by living the Gospel values.

As the pope has aged, his rapport with young people has remained consistently—and sometimes amazingly—fresh and energetic. World Youth Day celebrations, like the most recent one in Toronto in 2002, seem to bring out the pope's good humor and vigor. He jokes more easily with the young, but there is a serious side to all this, too. [...]

"At the start of the 21st century, the pope continues to open people up to the transcendent, telling them that we're more than genetics, we're more than psychology, we're more than DNA," said [Vatican spokesman Joaquín] Navarro-Valls. This is a message that is resonating with Catholics and non-Catholics around the world, he added. [...]

How will Pope John Paul II be remembered in the history books? On an ecclesial level, for his energetic missionary ministry that took him around the globe and saw rapid church growth in the third world. Internationally, he will go down as the godfather of Communism's demise in Europe, and as a moral statesman whose pronouncements on poverty, human life and war often challenged conventional policies. But much of the world will remember him simply as a man of deep prayer, whose spiritual intensity impressed believers of every faith. **A**



# One Pilgrim's Progress

When Malcolm X became El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz

BY PATRICK J. RYAN

We have been deluged with 50th anniversaries in recent months. This past November the nation stopped to remember the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. On a more frivolous note, much has been made of the 50th anniversary of the Beatles' first appearance on American television on Feb. 9, 1964.

It will be interesting to see on Feb. 21, 2015, how many people stop to remember the assassination of the man who was born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925, in Omaha, Neb., and who eventually changed what he would have called his slave surname to become Malcolm X. In between the tragic memories suggested by November 2013 and February 2015, a better date for commemorating Malcolm X might be April 2014, the 50th anniversary of Malcolm's pilgrimage (hajj) to the places in the Arabian Peninsula that Muslims associate with Abraham, especially but not exclusively Mecca.

Pilgrimage plays a more central role in the practice of Islam than it does in post-biblical Judaism or the traditions of Christians at any period. One of the five pillars of Islam, the hajj is not quite as rigorously required of all Muslims as the other four pillars. Problems in financing the hajj could excuse a faithful Muslim from undertaking this special pilgrimage.

What purpose does the hajj serve? Like many other pilgrimages, the hajj includes not a little of the penitential. Much emphasis is laid on the ritual separation of the pilgrim from his or her ordinary, sinful life. For many Muslims the hajj also serves, even more importantly, as an education in Islam—either a deepening of what is already known or an introduction to those elements of the Islamic tradition that have never been emphasized or properly understood.

Many Muslim pilgrims have experienced dramatic changes in their lives as a result of their experiences on the hajj, and in modern times perhaps none more dramatically than Malcolm X. The son of a fiery Baptist Pan-African nationalist preacher and a mother born in Grenada, Malcolm spent his earliest years in various poor urban settings in the U.S. Midwest. After the death of his father in 1931 and his



mother's committal to a mental hospital when Malcolm was 13, his teenage years led him into a life of petty crime in Boston and New York City. Early in 1946, the year he turned 21, Malcolm went to jail in Boston and spent the next seven years behind bars. During those years, after a period of militant atheism, he eventually felt attracted to the doctrine and practice of the Nation of Islam, submitting to the discipline it involved after 1948.

## Founding of a Nation

The Nation of Islam, an African-American religious and political movement, originated in Detroit in 1930, the creation of an extremely elusive person named Wallace Fard, later known as Wallace Fard Muhammad. Much mystery surrounds the origins and the later history of this founder, with claims that he was a New Zealander of East Indian descent, an Oregonian of Spanish descent, a native of Mecca or even an emigrant from the areas of Asia that are now Afghanistan or Pakistan. After some brushes with the law in California, Fard moved to Chicago and joined the Moorish Science Temple, a religious foundation with Islamic overtones aimed

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PHOTO: MURAL BY ERIC NORBERG AND KAMAU AYUBBO, SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

principally at an African-American audience. The Moorish Science Temple, somewhat Masonic in its imagery and rhetoric, bore only a distant relationship to normative Sunni or Shiite interpretations of Islam. Eventually, after internal struggles in that Chicago-based organization, Fard departed for Detroit in 1929. There he founded the Nation of Islam with Elijah Poole—an African-American man who later



## Malcolm X's pilgrimage transformed him into a genuine Muslim.

went by Elijah Muhammad—as his principal disciple and apostle after 1931.

Much of the teaching of the Nation of Islam centered on a doctrine of African racial superiority, the mirror image of the ideology of white racism. Fard disappeared from history in 1934, but Elijah Muhammad reconstructed Fard's past, making him out to be much more than a mere human being. Malcolm X in his autobiography sums up the message of Elijah Muhammad about Fard succinctly, narrating how "Mr. Wallace D. Fard...was 'God in person'...and had given to Elijah Muhammad Allah's message for the black people who were the 'Lost-Found Nation of Islam here in the wilderness of North America.'" Such incarnational ideology bears no resemblance to normative Islam, to say nothing of the reverse racism of the nation's creed. Around this time Malcolm Little rejected his surname; thereafter he was known as Malcolm X, although he eventually embraced the more obviously Muslim name, Malik El-Shabazz, the name on his passport when he made his Muslim pilgrimage in 1964.

That pilgrimage came about as a result of a spiritual and personal crisis in Malcolm's life. Shortly after the assassina-

tion of President Kennedy, Malcolm X disobeyed an order from Elijah Muhammad that no member of the Nation of Islam should make any comment about the president's death. Previous to the assassination, the Nation of Islam in its publications and through its spokespersons had often criticized the president. Elijah Muhammad was determined to avoid the inevitable obloquy if the Nation of Islam continued in that vein after the events of Nov. 22, 1963.

Replacing Elijah Muhammad at an event held in New York City on Dec. 1, 1963, nine days after the assassination, Malcolm X delivered a fiery lecture on "God's Judgment of White America." It was only in the question-and-answer period after the lecture that Malcolm disobeyed Elijah Muhammad's prohibition. Asked his opinion of the Kennedy assassination, Malcolm said it was a case of "the chickens coming home to roost....the same thing as had happened with Medgar Evers, with Patrice Lumumba, with Madam Nhu's husband." On Dec. 2, 1963, The New York Times headlined its story: "Malcolm X Scores U.S. and Kennedy: Likens Slaying to 'Chickens Coming Home to Roost.'" Elijah Muhammad, furious with Malcolm's insubordination, suspended him from any public speaking for 90 days, a period that gave Malcolm time to reflect on his continued adherence to the Nation of Islam. In any case, the relationship between Elijah Muhammad and his much more charismatic lieutenant had begun to sour long before the speech of Dec. 1, 1963.

On March 8, 1964, Malcolm broke publicly with the Nation of Islam, announcing the founding of the Muslim Mosque Inc., as well as the foundation of its secular, Pan-Africanist counterpart, the Organization of Afro-American Unity, a society that could appeal for membership from the ranks of non-Muslim African-Americans. Furthermore, with the encouragement of Sunni Muslims of Middle Eastern origin, Malcolm converted to Sunni Islam and made plans to make the hajj in April 1964.

### An Education

As a member of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm never learned many of the basics of the Islamic tradition. He was, for instance, unfamiliar with the Arabic prayers that all Muslims must employ in the five daily times of worship (*salat*). At the urging of Sunni Muslims he had met in New York, Malcolm made the acquaintance of a scholar of Egyptian origin, Dr. Mahmoud Youssef Shawarbi, then the director of the Federation of Islamic Associations in the United States and Canada. In a series of private tutorials, Shawarbi gradually weaned Malcolm away from the peculiar doctrines of the Nation of Islam. Once that was accomplished, Dr. Shawarbi interceded with the Saudi Embassy to grant Malcolm a visa to make the hajj.

Had it not been for connections he had made through



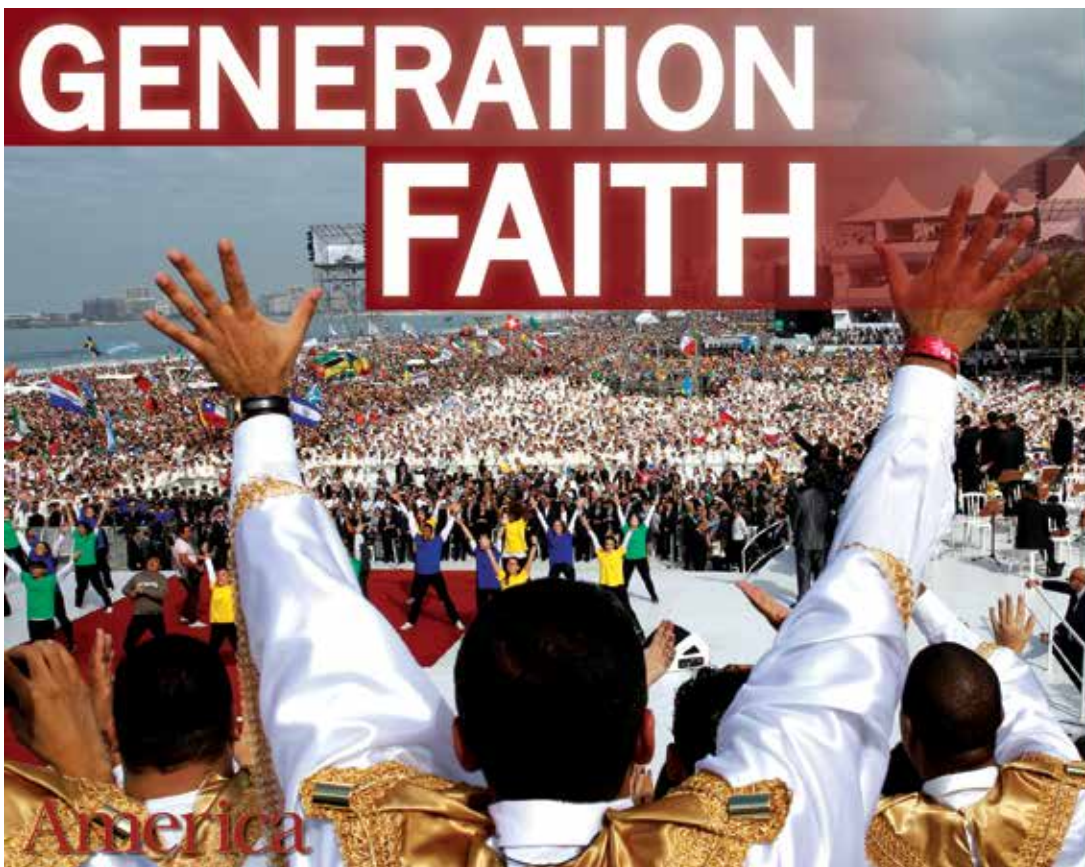
Dr. Shawarbi and other prominent Muslims in the United States, it is unlikely that Malcolm would have passed muster as a Muslim on arrival in Jeddah, the traditional gateway to Mecca. As it turned out, after some initial difficulties, he became an official guest of then-Crown Prince Faisal and was accompanied throughout his hajj by a *mutawwif*, a guide who accompanies new pilgrims on their journey and shows them how to perform the various rites involved.

When Malcolm first saw the Kaaba, the empty, windowless shrine within the precincts of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca sometimes called the House of God, he was struck by the diversity of the worshipers processing around it, “thousands upon thousands of praying pilgrims, both sexes, and every size, shape, color, and race in the world.” Recognition of the multiracial, multiethnic nature of the worldwide Muslim community confirmed what Malcolm had imbibed of genuine Sunni Islam from Dr. Shawarbi. It also allowed him to make progress into a deeper and more theocentric appreciation of what life for a Muslim means.

The hajj ritual invocation called the *talbiya*—often called *Labbayka* from its first word in Arabic—is recited in a loud voice by pilgrims when they enter into the consecrated state for the pilgrimage rites. It sums up the absolute theocentrism of Islam and the hajj most eloquently: “Here I am, O God, here I am! You have no associate in divinity! To You are due praise, grace and power! Here I am!” On the day following

his visit to the Kaaba, Malcolm participated in the highpoint of the hajj, the rite of standing (*wuquf*) on Mount Arafat, the “hill of mercy” nearly 20 miles east of Mecca. “Arriving about noon, we prayed and chanted from noon until sunset,” he later wrote. “Finally, we lifted our hands in prayer and thanksgiving, repeating Allah’s words: “There is no God but Allah. He has no partner. His are authority and praise. Good emanates from Him, and He has power over all things.”

Ten months after the completion of his hajj, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz was assassinated on the stage of the Audubon Ballroom in New York City, a few months short of his 40th birthday. El-Hajj Malik’s family members were convinced that former associates in the Nation of Islam were responsible for the murder, and several—but not all—went to jail. Had he lived to 2014, the 50th anniversary of his pilgrimage, El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz might have participated in the development of mainstream Sunni Islam among African-Americans. That development has been principally identified, by an irony of history, with the work of Warith Deen Muhammad (1933-2008), the son of Elijah Muhammad, a man very different from his father. Suffice it to say that the pilgrimage of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz transformed him and made him into a genuine Muslim. His tragic death prevents us from ever knowing how he might have evolved in later years, but even in his short life he offered spiritual seekers much to consider. ■



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# Supply and Demand

One man reflects on a drug war—and market—without end.

BY ROBERT JOE STOUT

**F**irst and most important is to think business and not crime,” he tells me. “The Zetas and members of the other drug corporations commit crimes—lots of them—but their *raison d’être* is to make money, the same as any other business. And they want to do it as efficiently as possible.”

As he spoke, Gonzalo Osorio twitched his shoulders and patted his more than ample paunch. His real name, he cautioned, “might not be” Gonzalo Osorio. In contemporary Oaxaca one takes care to not reveal too many personal details. His connections with the Zetas were “peripheral”—how peripheral he wasn’t willing to elaborate—but he’d had dealings with some of them and knew what he could and couldn’t say.

“So thinking ‘business not crime’ in order to understand what is happening in southern Mexico, one focuses on the product. The product is drugs—cocaine, marijuana. Like pulpwood, like strawberries, like cotton, it originates with

the soil—a farm product. One can’t grow oranges in Canada or oak trees in the Sahara: You have to grow them where they grow best, *verdad*?

“*Adormidera* [the poppy], marijuana, grow best in Mexico. Colombia. Peru. So in those places you grow them. Then what? The locals buy what you harvest? Maybe a little, but business—everybody knows this—responds to demand. The demand comes first, then the supply,” he explains. “One could grow begonias, prickly pears, pine nuts instead, but....

“See, this is where business comes in. The Zetas are not farmers, they’re wholesalers. That’s their business. Very profitable. Like any wholesalers, they have to get their product to consumers.

“Where are the consumers? In Oaxaca? In Mexico City? *Pues, unos pocos*. But remember demand; demand comes first. The demand is in the U.S. So it is the job of the wholesalers to get the product from the farmers to the United States.

“Now we’re talking business here, demand and supply, not legal/illegal. Business has no morals. You spend US \$100 on a whore, you spend \$100 on a Communion service; either way it’s a transaction—you get what you pay for.” The consumers creating the demand want the product and they

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ROBERT JOE STOUT, of Oaxaca, Mexico, is the author of several non-fiction books, including *Why Immigrants Come to America* and *The Blood of the Serpent: Mexican Lives*. He also has published two novels and numerous essays about Mexico.



**RETURN ON INVESTMENT.** A girl looks at blood stains and graffiti left by gunmen at the scene of a triple homicide in Monterrey, Mexico, in June 2011.

PHOTO: REUTERS/TOMAS BRAVO



have the cash to buy it, he says, like in a normal market.”

“But in this case the product is illegal,” Osorio says, “so you can’t do your business like Walmart out in the open, you have to do it in the shadows. You have to organize, really organize, or the cops will steal your product. Or another wholesaler will steal it.” In those situations, the Zeta wholesalers can’t exactly take their grievances to the police. “So you have to become your own law and order. Like any business, eliminate the competition.”

That is where, he explains, the Mexican State of Oaxaca comes in. It is the pathway between Central America and key distribution points north: Acapulco, Veracruz. “Now anybody can slip a few grams through, but tons? *Mano, te digo* for that you need organization. The trucks need not to be stopped. The planes need not to be inspected. Not something a few bloodthirsty teenaged Zetas can do by themselves: We’re talking big business.

“In business you have to pay in order to operate: licenses,

taxes, fees, right of way, salaries,” Osorio says. “The Zetas are a business: They have to pay drivers, pilots, mechanics, look-outs—over 800 kilometers and the Zetas know every kilometer. They know every cop by name, every gas station owner, every restaurant, *hijole!*, every teenage prostitute.

“They have to pay, but they have to protect themselves. How? *Ay mano!* Everybody knows! Say the wrong thing and you’re dead. Fail to pay protection and you disappear.

“*Ya ves*, that’s another thing about business. You’re never content. So you branch out. You got the money, the manpower,

the control, you take over small businesses, fringe businesses. Bars, taxi companies, repair shops. You see an opportunity, you jump at it.

“The immigrants from Central America, they’re illegal. So they’re unprotected. A saleable product. *Te digo mano*, that’s what smart business is. Taking advantage of opportunity. Discard the culls that won’t sell, keep some of the good ones for your own use. Profit, that’s the bottom line! That’s what business is all about.

“The higher the profits, the greater the competition, the greater the risk. The Zetas risk their lives. Ask anyone who’s been in combat, any Salvadoreño guerrilla, any veteran from Vietnam—one who risks his life doesn’t put a high value on other lives. Life is temporary. One lives for the moment. Thrills. Money. Power.

“But at the same time: organization, discipline, training. The Zetas are commandos, commandos with a mission. Recruit X’s job is to ride the transfer route on a motorcycle to report on traffic, army units, cops. Recruit Y’s job is to be with Comandante Fulano of the state police to make sure a shipment goes through. Recruit Z—*quién sabe?*—to stand armed guard on a safe house crammed with hijacked refugees.

“Business. Very profitable business. Enough money to buy whatever is needed: guns, airplanes, police, nightclubs, politicians. And a funny thing. You arrest a Z-40 or a Z-Whatever and you do the rest of the Zetas a favor.

“Why? Because there’s a horde of Z’s behind him who want to move up. Take his place,” Osorio says. “Just like in legitimate business everybody wants to claw their way to the top.

“You can’t put a business out of business if there’s demand for the product. All you can do is change suppliers. That’s how the Zetas got in; the only way they’ll get out is if somebody bigger comes in. Or if there’s no demand.

‘Where are the consumers? In Oaxaca? In Mexico City? *Pues, unos pocos*. But remember: demand comes first. The demand is in the U.S. So it is the job of the wholesalers to get the product from the farmers to the United States.’

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“And I tell you the truth. I don’t think that’s going to happen.”

I didn’t tape record this conversation with Gonzalo Osorio, although I did take notes. As he commented himself, most of what he said was common knowledge—common at least to the extent that if one wanted, one could come to the same conclusions without having connections to Zetas or to political officeholders.

The organizational structure that Osorio described was verified by federal and state elaborations after the arrest of Oaxaca Zeta leader Marcos (El Cabrito) Carmona Hernandez in 2011. Only 29 when he was captured, Carmona had worked his way from being a shipment guard and advance scout to becoming the chief of the southern Mexico branch of the Zeta organization.


Besides being responsible for getting shipments of imported cocaine through Oaxaca, he managed the wholesaling of smaller amounts of drugs to Oaxaca retailers and supervised the paid-for protection of nightclubs, bars, stolen car dealers, pirated goods and contraband. He acknowledged (and news organizations reported) that he operated with the support of municipal and state police, who kept him informed of their activities. No investigations of these connections have been reported either by news or law enforcement sources.

As Osorio indicated, the capture or killing of a Zeta leader has had little effect on the overall operations of the organization. It is tightly structured, and the next in line is ready to step up the day a vacancy occurs. That is not to say that within the Zetas conflict does not exist. There is a constant jockeying for advancement: betrayals, subgroups, dissidents, even executions. Zetas risk their lives not only in combat with other drug corporations and with law enforcement but with each other. Nevertheless discipline is tight and nonconformity punished.

A former Oaxaca state policeman, who declined to have his name published, ridiculed the commonly held idea that a Zeta is a snarling, wild-eyed 20-something high on drugs with blood dripping from his fingertips. “He is the guy in a polo shirt next to you in a bar, the fellow checking out laptops in Office Depot, the clean-cut big spender with a beautiful *novia* at an auto show.”

Zeta recruits, many still in their teens, get a starting salary of US \$800 a month—approximately 10,000 pesos—twice that of a policeman and more than a schoolteacher. In a state where federal statistics list nearly 70 percent of the population living in poverty, a teenage Zeta messenger, guard, hit man or scout is financially in the upper echelon of Oaxaca society. Payment to strategically placed citizens—bureaucrats, officeholders, police, bankers—is even higher. Arresting a Z-40 does little to alter business as usual.

As Osorio advises, think business, not crime.

The profits are very high. 

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# Just Friends

A historian once noted that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is the most commonly taught text in the philosophy classrooms of Jesuit colleges. A member of the great Jesuit Aristotelian procession, I always look forward to teaching the *Ethics* in my moral philosophy courses. It is a particular joy to gloss Books VIII and IX, where Aristotle presents his theory of friendship.

For Aristotle, friendship comes in three sizes. In the friendship of utility, we exercise good-willed sociability as we engage others in pursuing our own interests. In the friendship of pleasure, affection easily turns erotic as we desire to pursue the other for the romantic ecstasy he or she promises. In authentic friendship, the rarest kind, utilitarian interest and erotic desire recede. We come to love the other for his or her own sake. A bond between the morally and intellectually mature, this authentic friendship helps the partners to grow mutually in the virtues, those hard-won habits of intellect and will necessary for human happiness.

In the Aristotelian perspective, friendship does not confine itself to the private sphere. It constitutes the soul of the political order, enabling citizens to work harmoniously in promoting the common good through laws and actions. The virtues generated by mature friendship free the moral agent to face reversals of fortune with a courage unobtainable elsewhere.

Students react favorably to the Aristotelian portrait of friendship.

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They often claim, much to the consternation of the faculty, that the friendships made at college are more important than the courses undertaken. But they are also baffled. What does friendship, a private relationship, have to do with politics? Whatever is happening in Washington these days, it is obviously not driven by *philia* or *agape*. Moreover, they rarely experience their own friendships as a place for growth in temperance or justice.

The students' bafflement reflects the broader difficulty of comprehending, let alone promoting authentic friendship in our society, although we vaguely sense its importance. Conferences on ethics routinely feature endless sessions on sexuality, marriage and family life. Panels on friendship are rare.

The church is not free from this blind spot. We are preparing for yet another Synod on the Family. But the celebrated questionnaire preparing the ground for the synod poses no questions concerning friendship inside or outside the family. A synod on friendship would be dismissed as eccentric or a hoax. The current ecclesiastical inattention to the phenomenon of friendship is an odd omission in a church that otherwise prides itself on the Aristotelian pedigree of its ethical doctrine. It is also a costly omission, since it is only in the authentic friendship of the virtuous that we are free to love each other neither as instruments of self-aggrandizement nor as objects of sexual desire but simply for own sakes as rational but fragile creatures in need of encouragement.

When I was a graduate student at Louvain, I often attended services at the Benedictine convent of St. Gertrude. One day I was struck by the feast they were celebrating: Saints Mary, Martha and Lazarus, friends of the Lord. The preacher related the friendship of Jesus for these siblings to the eternal friendship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Trinity.

Unsurprisingly in our sex-drenched culture, a thousand novels and films have reduced the friendship of Jesus with Mary Magdalene and St. John the Apostle to a sexual romp. Chaste friendship built on virtue and the mutual love of God can no longer be easily grasped, let alone esteemed. St. Ignatius Loyola and St. Teresa

of Avila counsel their disciples to engage during prayer in conversation with Jesus or the saints "as one friend speaks to another." But when the simple believer claims that "God is my best friend," we are quick to pounce on the remark as a cliché of civil religion.

In discovering God as eternal friend, we unearth the mystery of freedom, personal vocation and mutual love God offers us in the covenant. The coolness of the Supreme Being recedes. In discovering other human beings as mature friends, we give the lie to our society's myth that other people exist only to fulfill our economic or sexual ambition. The path to a truly humane life, one built on virtue, disinterested service and an ungrasping praise of God, is suddenly open.

JOHN J. CONLEY

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

## WATERWORLD

*The biblical ambition of Darren Aronofsky's 'Noah'*

Is it blasphemous to say that the problem with Noah is the story? That it may not be substantial enough to float a star-driven, effects-laden, \$125-million movie? Or that director Darren Aronofsky's attempt to hang flesh, blood, human logic and nautical mechanics on a tale that takes up barely 2,500 metaphorical words of biblical text turns out to have been a crazier idea than collecting two of every species on a very big boat and waiting for the flood—a flood, by the way, that only you think is coming?

It comes, of course, but no, God does not actually speak to the fuming ark-builder, played by Russell Crowe, who occupies the center of Aronofsky's film and its cubits and cubits of special effects. Noah looks skyward; he operates on the edge of mental collapse. He is passionate, obsessed, even homicidal. But he's pretty sure he knows the divine plan. Because Noah has had a vision.

Likewise Aronofsky. And it's not entirely dismissible. It ranges far, wide and clumsily in expanding its slender source material, but "Noah" aches with aspiration, its sincerity and ambition virtually leaping off the screen, while Aronofsky's virtuosity as a visual artist has the viewer praying that the whole enterprise will somehow coalesce into a coherent, convincing story.

Coherent it may well be. There is a flood; there is a renewal of a world that had been drenched in sin. Convincing, however, is another matter. Several of Aronofsky's more audacious innovations certainly work against him. The Watchers, for example—the "gi-

ants" (Nephilim) of Gen 6:4 who, in Aronofsky's world, are angels of light whom an angry Yahweh has turned to stone, given multiple arms and made to move about like arthritic crabs. There are doves on the wing that seem to have escaped from a toilet-paper commercial. Everything that creepeth upon the earth makes its way, in waves of phylum, genus and species, toward Noah's lumberous boat; the sequences apparently taxed even the FX capacity



BEFORE THE DELUGE. Jennifer Connelly as Naameh and Russell Crowe as Noah

of George Lucas's Industrial Light & Magic. But nothing is going to fit, not on Aronofsky's ark.

It's an interesting conundrum the director has fashioned for himself. As a 13-year-old schoolboy in Brooklyn, he was entered by his teacher in a poetry contest sponsored by the United Nations and his Noah-inspired composition, "The Dove," won first prize. Thus inspired, Aronofsky has been nursing a Noah fixation for 30-odd years, during which time he has established himself as a visual artist who gleefully bends the rules of filmmak-

ing, but always remains rooted in emotional reality (even the phantasmagorical "Fountain" was about real love and real death).

What he has arrived at with "Noah" is based on irreconcilable desires: to make the Noah story both physically believable and close to faithful. The two aims work against each other. Even as "Noah" is using special effects to promote the idea that thousands of slogging, flying, slithering beasts are making their way onto the Ark, the audience is being provoked constantly into asking, how this can possibly be? The so-called salesmanship is killing the sale.

There is a discordant artistic logic running throughout the film, as Aronofsky tries to stretch the scant details of Genesis into what he wants to accomplish overall. The building of the ark requires real toil and real years—Noah was, after all, 500 years old at the time of his job assignment, and 950 by the time he died. The flinty look of the film, especially at its beginning, portrays a scorched plain, a world that has gone barren and that

God has forsaken. It's unwellcoming, but honest. Then you have the introduction of those craggy watchers, and you don't know if you are in an art film or a video game.

And then, of course, there is the engorged narrative. Noah, the 10th antediluvian patriarch who figures not only in the Old and New Testaments but the Koran as well, sees his father (Lamech) killed and begins to have visions—of the palpating fruit of the Garden, the murder of Abel, of being underwater. These recurring visual sequences are not only an Aronofsky trademark (the "hip-hop montages"



that first featured in “Pi”) but also suggest the Abrahamic tradition in which Noah belongs; his lineage—back to Adam and Eve’s third son, Seth—and the curse of Cain, which has led to a world of corruption and violence and convinced the Almighty to destroy and start again.

Which is where Aronofsky starts getting worrisomely creative. Tubalcain, who is mentioned once in Genesis and is portrayed here by the great British character actor Ray Winstone, bemoans the fact that God does not speak to him, as God does to Noah, but it may be because Tubalcain leads a barbaric horde that is laying waste to the earth and inviting divine wrath. The dramatic conflict that occupies the greater part of the film is about Noah having the flood information, not sharing it, agreeing to waste the whole of humanity to save his immediate family (a valid enough point among students of the Bible) and Tubalcain trying to get himself a state-room on the ark. O.K.

Where the story starts bobbing even more crazily is when we get to the Noah family dynamics, which smack of Aronofskian antics: Noah’s wife, for instance, unnamed in the Bible, here is named Naameh—the name of Tubalcain’s sister in Genesis. That Noah’s wife and his nemesis are siblings goes unmentioned, as does the fact that they both would have been considerably older than Noah, even given the lifespans common in Genesis.

As Naameh, Jennifer Connelly is almost too good—she puts such convincing emotional power into some of her scenes that you almost forget that most of what she says is blather. Her sons—all of whom, in the original, boarded the ark with unnamed wives in tow—are concerned that God has not brought them mates before he brought the rain. Naameh is sympathetic. Noah is not. He believes, and his evidence is all circumstantial, that if God wanted to perpetuate mankind he would have made

sure his sons were hooked up. Ham (Logan Lerman) loses his love (Morgan Davenport) and blames Noah (and thus allows Tubalcain to stow away on the ark). Japhet (Leo McHugh Carroll) is just a boy. Only Shem (Douglas Booth) has a wife, named Ila (Emma Watson), and she is barren because of some earlier savagery. She will be made whole again through the magic of Methuselah, played by a scenery-chewing Anthony Hopkins. But since Noah thinks no one will be reproducing either on board or afterward, he thinks God intends humanity to end.

The lengths to which Aronofsky has Noah go to assure this—his planned murder of the miraculously pregnant Ila’s twin girls—takes the movie off the rails, or whatever the watery equivalent is.

The degree to which Aronofsky is up to mischief should not be underestimated. Religious audiences are obviously a target for “Noah”; and

Paramount Pictures, which has been sweating about the movie since its early survey screenings, has gotten mixed messages back, at best. We wonder if those audiences, chosen to test the waters for a biblical epic that goes its own very eccentric way, picked up on some of the director’s more provocative moves: A visual sequence, for instance, over which Noah relates the Old

Testament version of the creation story, while at the same time the images are depicting a Big Bang scenario and

the evolution of all life crawling out of the sea. Or, for that matter, the very obvious suggestion that post-flood humanity replicates itself by incest. Aronofsky may not have produced a movie that will be thrilling the masses. But a discerning few will definitely be amused. Even appalled.

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**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*.

### ON THE WEB

The Catholic Book Club discusses *Morte D’Urban*.  
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## BOOKS | NICHOLAS P. CAFARDI

# WINNING WAR, LOSING PEACE

### WILSON

By A. Scott Berg  
Putnam. 832p \$40

One hundred years ago today, Woodrow Wilson was president of the United States. His mark on the 20th century is writ so large that it does not seem that long ago. Perhaps that is because his major accomplishments still have a considerable effect on American life: the Federal Reserve system, the Federal Trade Commission and the Internal Revenue Service, all created in his first term; and universal suffrage and the ratification of the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing women the right to vote, in his second term. Yet

all these achievements fade beside the major event of his presidency, the First World War and the failed peace that followed.

Wilson was a strong neutralist and had campaigned for re-election on the slogan, “He kept us out of war.” But less than a month after his second inauguration, after the German Empire had torpedoed more American ships, Wilson saw no other choice. He went to Congress and asked for war. It was a terrible decision for him. He was the descendant of a long line of Presbyterian ministers, and his first wife, Ellen, was the daughter of a minister. Peace was his natural bent. He wept when he returned to the White House after deliv-

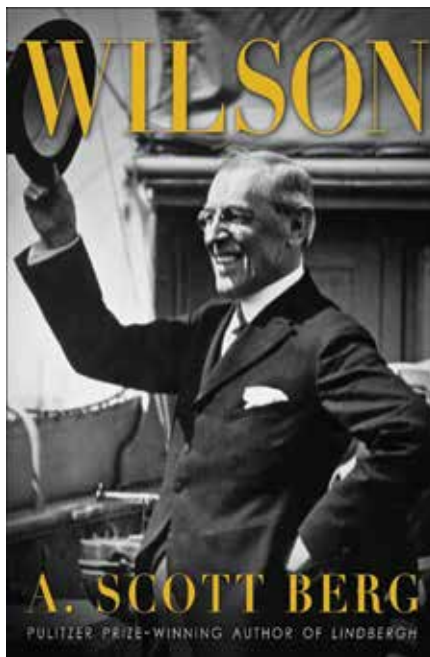
ering his war message.

Scott Berg begins his biography of Woodrow Wilson after the war, on the eve of Wilson's departure for the Paris Peace Conference. Wilson was seen as Europe's savior, and his reception there was adulatory. As Wilson progressed through France, England, Belgium and Italy, the cheering crowds were overwhelming. But, as his triumph marched on, one almost wishes that, as in ancient Roman times, there had been a page at Wilson's elbow, whispering into his ear, "Remember that you are only mortal." Within two years, due to the vagaries of American politics, all of these accolades would be ashes in Wilson's mouth.

The mark of a good historian is that he makes the times, the events, the people and places that he recounts come alive in the reader's mind. Berg certainly does that for Wilson, the people who filled his life and the epoch in which he lived. Playing off Wilson's own religious upbringing, Berg titles his chapters with scriptural references and quotations from the King James Bible that seem to imply a Christ-like status for Wilson. That is perhaps a verse too far. Wilson, after all, was a politician, a principled one, but nonetheless a politician who understood his base. Elected president primarily with Democratic votes from the "Solid South," he had no trouble, for instance, allowing members of his cabinet to re-segregate the previously integrated Department of the Treasury and the Post Office, even while he himself made several key, but minor, appointments of black Americans.

Wilson's times as professor and then president at Princeton are well-detailed, down to the fights with the faculty over piddling issues. Berg's description of those days plays out that old saw that academic politics are so vicious because the prizes are so small. Engaged in a bitter disagreement about where to build a planned graduate college, Wilson jumped at the

chance to leave Princeton when he was offered the nomination for New Jersey governor by Democratic party bosses (whom he later jettisoned). Wilson resigned from Princeton in October 1910, was elected governor of New



Jersey that November, and within two years, in an astonishingly quick ascent to the national stage, was elected president of the United States.

Berg does not neglect Wilson's uxoriousness. His first wife, Ellen, was the love of his life, and her picture remained on the mantle of his bedroom until the day he died. Their love letters to each other were the 19th-century versions of what young adults text to each other today. During that

marriage, however, Wilson developed a deep friendship with Mary Allen Peck, although Berg disagrees with the assessment of Wilson's detractors that their relationship was sexual. Just over a year after Ellen's death, Wilson had met and married his second wife, Edith Bolling. Wilson had time to write Edith two or three love letters a day during the summer of 1915, including the day that the Lusitania was sunk.

If there are Christ-like characters in the book, apart from Berg's designation of Wilson, one is the Dickensian-named, long-suffering Joseph Tumulty, a lawyer and New Jersey assemblyman who followed Wilson to the White House and devoted years to him as his secretary and adviser. Another is Cary Grayson, the Navy admiral who became Wilson's personal physician and who saw Wilson through physical mishaps, hypochondria and the tragic effects of the stroke in October 1919 that left Wilson paralyzed on the left side of his body. As did Tumulty, Grayson allowed Wilson's needs to subsume his own life. After Wilson's stroke, Tumulty, Grayson and Edith conspired to hide the president's incapacity from the people and from Congress.

The stroke was a direct result of Wilson's over-exhaustion from barnstorming the country in a failed attempt to get Congress to accept the peace terms he had negotiated in Paris, especially the League of Nations. His

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political nemesis was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, who was hostile to the treaty more out of personal dislike for Wilson than anything else. Lodge's weapon was the big lie: the League would result in a loss of American sovereignty, he argued. In fact, as Wilson predicted, without American presence in the League, it would prove to be an ineffective tool to combat the rise of new aggression in Europe, and World War II simply started where World War I had left off. Lodge's animus for

Wilson cost the United States and the world a very high price.

It also cost Wilson. He died less than three years after leaving the White House, a defeated man, with the cheers of his victory tour of Europe ringing hollowly in his ears. Berg's description of Wilson's last years is touching, an effective end to a very effective retelling of Wilson's life.

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PIOTR FLORCZYK

## POLES APART

### TRANS-ATLANTYK An Alternate Translation

By Witold Gombrowicz, translated by Danuta Borchartd  
Yale University Press. 192p \$15

Witold Gombrowicz (1904–69) began his monumental *Diary*, spanning the years 1953 to 1969, with the words “Monday / Me. // Tuesday / Me. // Wednesday / Me. // Thursday / Me.” While the statement might appear to be an expression of unbridled egocentrism, it also signals the author's commitment to escape the role of the writer as a prophetic bard, a voice of the nation, which is so common to Polish literature. Gombrowicz will always remain himself. Not only does he wage a battle against Polishness and what he calls Form—patterns of thought and behavior others aim to impress upon us—but also against his own desire to fit in, to be accepted. Gombrowicz remains relevant because he embodies the existential aches and pains we all experience in one degree or another.

Gombrowicz began and ended his writing life by speaking out against the prevailing norms and customs of Poland, but his voice only grew louder once he was cut off from his native country. When as a young writer he accepted

an invitation to take part in the maiden voyage of *The Chrobry*, the Polish fleet's jewel ocean liner, to Argentina in 1939, he had no idea that he would never see his homeland again. With the news that World War II had broken out on Sept. 1, a decision was made to send *The Chrobry* (the name means “The Brave One”) back to Europe, but to everyone's surprise and dismay, Gombrowicz decided to stay in Buenos Aires. For the next 23 years Gombrowicz wrote in order to create a new “Gombrowicz,” one that constantly redefines himself vis-à-vis tradition, narrow-mindedness and parochialism.

Many writers periodically strive to rid themselves of cultural and political baggage, but Gombrowicz turned this endeavor into a life-long project. As a novelist, essayist and playwright, he railed against Poland and its complexes, conservatism and anachronistic modes of life. Instead of self-pity, which would have been justified by his penurious circumstances in Argentina, we get formal experimentation and endless polemics.

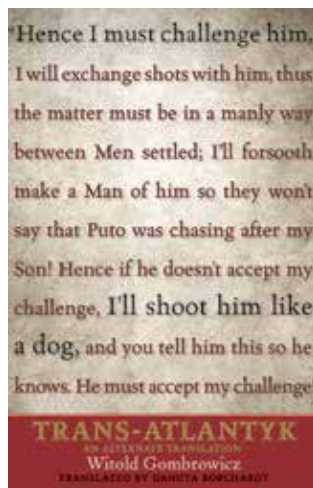
Though his first novel, *Ferdydurke*, remains the most popular of his works in the United States, this new translation of *Trans-Atlantyk*, based on the revised version Gombrowicz himself had approved, rather than an earlier edition, should win him more admirers among today's readers. They might finally see what John Updike meant when he called Gombrowicz “one of the profoundest of the late moderns.”

In the words of *Trans-Atlantyk's* translator, Danuta Borchartd, this work is “Gombrowicz's most iconoclastic novel. It tells the individual and society (not only Polish, but society in general) to rise above its mores—nationalistic, patriotic, sexual—and to liberate itself from its societal manners and constraints.” The threadbare plot merely serves as a backdrop against which the author recounts his own experience of exile, including his exasperation with the Poles he meets in Argentina. He ridicules them, but he cannot free himself of their overbearing presence. Borchartd renders *Trans-Atlantyk's* baroque first-person narrative, which resembles a freewheeling

“fireside chat” by a half-cracked uncle, in an English that brings to mind the works of Laurence Sterne and Samuel Pepys.

What lurks beneath *Trans-Atlantyk's* verbal pyrotechnics and jeering is Gombrowicz's wish to tame his bewildering surroundings—a desire known to all émigrés and displaced persons. The protagon-

ist, named Gombrowicz, finds himself stranded in Argentina, with only \$63 to his name. Though his future looks bleak, the Polish émigré community sees him as a world-famous writer; it is their duty to take him under their wing. This is a dig at the



Poles' undue reverence for poet-prophets, which has sometimes led to disastrous acts of valor. In Gombrowicz's view, however, the local Poles are "Evil, they're No Good, plague-upon-them, they'll just keep biting you 'til they bite you to death." Gombrowicz longs to be independent, but "the hope of a steady and perhaps even a good income" forces him to remain within their orbit, even though he sees "a strange sluggishness in their movements as if of fish in a pond." Their ensuing co-existence, which borders on toxic co-dependency, is what gives the novel its equally comic and tragic heft.

Gombrowicz, our cantankerous protagonist, does meet a man who arouses his interest—the *puto* Gonzalo, a flamboyant and wealthy native. The arrival of this character, who challenges the Polish notion of masculinity with his very being, leads to a number of hilariously petty but rapidly escalating squabbles. Gonzalo is eventually challenged to a duel by Thomas, one of the Polish patriarchs, who suspects him (we surmise) of sexual predation on or, worse yet, tempting his son Ignacy ("Iggy"). Here the Romantic ideals of Polish masculinity, patriarchy and honor will be defended once and for all. Alas, the pistols are loaded with blanks. The duel, and the ideals that have led to it, plays out as a farce. Embroiling his characters in sexual intrigue, betrayal, generational conflicts and downright slapstick, Gombrowicz endlessly ridicules the Poles' inflated sense of self-importance and cultural superiority, which he summarizes with piquant irony: "a Pole is beloved of God and Nature for his Virtues, but mainly for that Chivalry of his, for his Courage, Nobility, Piety and that Confidence of his."

Meanwhile, the progress of World War II is broadcasted occasionally in the background. Thus, when the émigré Poles praise the heroism of the Polish nation, they echo the call to arms issued back in their home country, with the words, "Berlin, Berlin, on to Berlin, on

to Berlin, to Berlin!" But instead of advancing toward the German capital, the Poles follow Gonzalo to his sprawling hacienda, where Gombrowicz succeeds once again in pushing everyone's buttons by having the host show up wearing a skirt. While the Poles look on in disgust, he explains that the heat makes wearing a skirt more comfortable than regular clothes, before adding "and I have likewise powdered myself a bit, because my skin chaps from the heat." Eventually, Gombrowicz tells Thomas that he and Gonzalo had rigged the duel, which sends Thomas into a frenzy of vengeance. Gombrowicz then pits

Iggy against Thomas, evidently hoping that the Son will kill the Father and all for which he stands. In the end, we are left to ponder the "Terrifying Lack of Terror" expressed by the protagonist and the farcical fit of unstoppable laughter that spontaneously overwhelms the other characters. Who's the butt of the joke? *Trans-Atlantyk* is indeed an uproarious book, but it is also deadly serious, exploring the dire straits into which blind allegiance to tradition can lead us.

**PIOTR FLORCZYK**, now a resident of Los Angeles, Calif., is a poet, essayist and translator from Polish.

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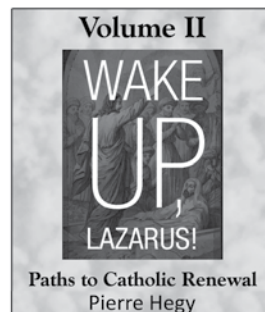
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# The Witness of the Bread

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER (A), MAY 4, 2014

Readings: Acts 2:14–33; Ps 16:1–11; 1 Pt 1:17–21; Lk 24:13–35

*“He was made known to them in the breaking of bread” (Acts 2:33)*

There is a richness to the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus that makes it difficult to consume it in its entirety or to exhaust its sustenance. Even seemingly minor details nourish the reader in surprising ways. Emmaus itself, the village to which Cleopas and the unnamed disciple are journeying, appears elsewhere in the Bible in 1 Mc 3:40. It seems to bear little connection to Luke’s notice of the city, but there are intriguing links.

Emmaus was the site of Judah Maccabee’s great victory over the Seleucid general Lysias and the army of Antiochus Epiphanes in 166 B.C. Judah’s army “marched out and encamped to the south of Emmaus” (1 Mc 3:57), and against great odds the Maccabees prevailed over the Seleucid army. The goal was to purify and restore the Temple, which ultimately resulted in the establishment of Hanukkah, but the means by which this would be accomplished was military battle. At stake was the freedom to live and worship as Jews. Prior to the battle Judah says, “And now, let us cry to Heaven, to see whether he will favor us and remember his covenant with our ancestors and crush this army before us today. Then all the Gentiles will know that there is one who redeems and saves Israel” (1 Mc 4:10–11).

Judah’s hope was that the Gentiles would come to know that it was God who gave Israel victory, that it was God who was Israel’s redeemer. A variant of the Greek verb for “redeem” used by

Judah is used by Cleopas as he walks in sadness toward that same village of Emmaus, the site of one of Israel’s greatest military victories. He speaks to the stranger beside him (Jesus), telling him, “We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.”

Is Luke telling us, by using the same Greek word, why Cleopas and the other disciples had such a hard time comprehending Jesus’ crucifixion? Compared to Judah’s crushing military victory, which was proof that “there is one who redeems and saves Israel,” did not Jesus’ mission, which ended on the cross, appear to be an abject failure?

It is here that the radical witness of Jesus and the church would be shaped: God’s redemption would be like nothing they had imagined. It would be made known along the road to Emmaus but in a way that renounced the weapons of war and embraced the food of hospitality. The recognition of the risen Jesus, mysteriously hidden to Cleopas and the unnamed disciple, occurred “when he was at the table with them” and when “he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.”

But it must be said that even though Cleopas and his companion did not initially recognize Jesus and were immersed in hopelessness, they still invited the stranger to eat with them, to share their table. It was this act of simple hospitality that led to the breaking

of the bread and the opening of their spiritual eyes. Jesus was with them; the victory had been the resurrection.

The breaking of the bread takes us both backward into the life of Jesus and forward into the life of the church. For the Emmaus story uses the same language as the story in Luke of the feeding of the 5,000: “Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd” (9:16–17).



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How can we, as individuals and parish communities, make clearer the hospitality by which Jesus is made known?

This miracle certainly points toward the eucharistic celebration, but we ought not to ignore the basic acts of hospitality and physical feeding by which and through which spiritual nourishment can take place.

And so the breaking of the bread on the road to Emmaus also points forward to the need for hospitality in the life of the church, the means by which Jesus is seen in the face of the stranger and the spiritual nourishment of community, through which we share the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ. Because Jesus had been raised, the church dedicated itself “to the breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42, 46), in which hospitality and spiritual nourishment are combined to make clear that he is the one through whom redemption has come.

**JOHN W. MARTENS** is an associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn. Follow him @BibleJunkies.

ART: TAD A. DUNNE

# The Witness of Suffering

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (A), MAY 11, 2014

Readings: Acts 2:14–41; Ps 23:1–6; 1 Pt 2:20–25; Jn 10:1–10

*“He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross” (1 Pt 2:24)*

Slaves in the Greco-Roman world were sometimes treated with kindness, but this was dependent upon the whims of masters, not legally required. Even domestic slaves, as mentioned in 1 Peter, were vulnerable to the demands of their masters, and 1 Pt 2:18 asks that they “accept the authority” of masters “with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh.” Possessing no right to the integrity of their own bodies, such a request could entail all forms of abuse, whether sexual, physical or other.

It is difficult in the 21st century to read the first-century advice that “if you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God’s approval.” This sort of advice seems to require a mute acceptance of cruelty and tacitly reward those who perpetrate it. As we have become more aware of human trafficking today, a form of slavery that flourishes all around us, what sort of message does this passage send?

It is important to remember that in the first century, slavery was a legal institution, and manumission was dependent upon individual owners. People who helped slaves escape were accountable to the law, and runaway slaves would be subject to bloody (and legal) retribution. Since the early church was small in number and politically insignificant, the early Christian response was to encourage slaves by

offering Jesus’ own unjust suffering as “an example, so that you should follow in his steps.”

1 Pt 2:22–24, which some scholars believe was part of an early Christian hymn, offers a meditation on Jesus’ suffering in the context of Is 53:4–12, a Suffering Servant song. The genuine suffering of slaves in the first century is not denied, but aligned with Jesus’ own experience. In fact, all who suffer unjustly, even in the 21st century, can identify with Jesus as the one who “when he was abused, he did not return abuse...but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.” Suffering is now given spiritual meaning, so that the effects of Christ’s own suffering are applied to those who suffer in the body of Christ.

But is there a danger here that we will watch silently from the sidelines as the weak and abused suffer? It cannot mean that. St. John Chrysostom, in his treatise “On Vainglory” (No. 69), instructed Christian boys to accept misfortune when it occurred, but “never to allow another to undergo this.” Wherever suffering and injustice occur, it is our task to bring it to an end through our witness. Yet there are times when we or others might suffer unjustly, and despite all attempts to bring it to an end, we must endure it. It is here that the model of Jesus helps us understand that as Jesus was vindicated through his innocent suffering, so, too, through his suffering he has healed us and will heal us from all our wounds.

I do not want to suffer. I do not want those I care for to suffer. Really, I do not want anyone to suffer, but when we do, it is important to know that the Good Shepherd knows our suffering. 1 Peter says that we “were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.” Is 53:6 makes it clear, in fact, that the source of the Good Shepherd’s suffering emerges because the sheep have gone astray and “the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Jesus’ innocent suffering can help us make sense of our own suffering and

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

As you reflect on Jesus’ innocent suffering, how does this aid you in making sense of your own suffering or aiding others who suffer?

give it spiritual purpose as we work to end it. His suffering also allows us to align ourselves with those who today are enslaved, physically abused, bullied or who are vulnerable for myriad other reasons. As we ourselves endure suffering and act to bring the suffering of others to an end, it is important to recognize that the goal of the Good Shepherd is not to create suffering, but to bring it to an end. We bear witness that the Good Shepherd has come that we “may have life, and have it abundantly” and to bring us all safely into the sheepfold.

**JOHN W. MARTENS**



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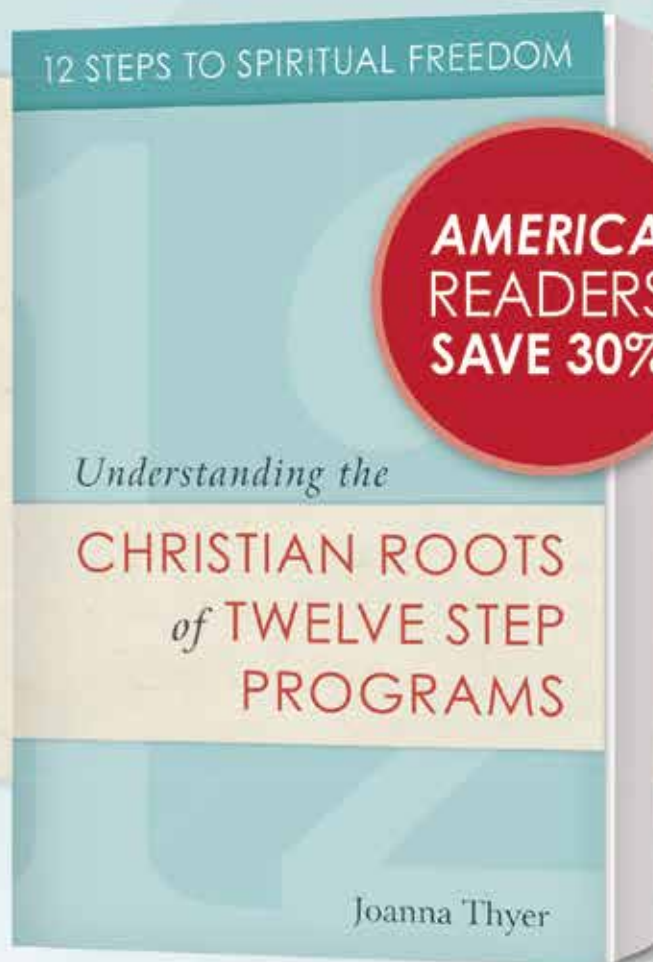
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