

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

America

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Throw Open the Doors

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN A WELCOMING CHURCH

FRANK DESIANO · ADAM M. GREEN · NICK WAGNER

TEACHING THE
IMPRISONED

ERIN ELIZABETH CLUNE

OF MANY THINGS

The exercise is brief, but revealing. During the first session of my parish's adult Christian initiation program, the leader challenges the group: Draw what you think of when you hear the word *church*. The potential candidates and catechumens furrow their brows and grab a marker. Most of them produce a skeletal picture of a building—a square structure beneath a pointy roof with a cross on top, a few stained glass windows, a large door. Sometimes there is an open Bible floating somewhere in the scene.

These images, while not works of art, do feature a vital element of our lives as Catholics. But it is just one element. Thankfully, the RCIA at my parish (full disclosure: the director is Robert C. Collins, S.J., executive editor of **America**) offers inquirers the chance to delve into the many dimensions of our faith. Through Scripture study and discussion, through helpful handouts and honest feedback, by providing a faithful, familiar place to ask questions about the great Church Tradition and the many church traditions, the rite guides candidates and catechumens as they grow in their love for the beautiful, messy, historic, justice-oriented, creative, global faith community they are about to join.

Months later, following the Easter Vigil, the neophytes try their hand at a second image of what *church* means. Some draw church structures once again, but this time populate the pews with stick figures—the members of the body of Christ. Others draw a cross or a globe or a heart or fire or a dove. Many arrived at the first session inspired by our particular parish, but by the time the Easter Vigil arrives, they are prepared to be part of our larger church. They are looking for ways to continue their growth in faith. And they understand that the essence of the church can't be captured on paper, but must be drawn with our lives.

Many Catholics, old and new, are drawn to the depth and breadth of the

church and its good works across the globe, the universality of the Mass, the sense that they are part of something larger than themselves. And yet, in the midst of our busy lives, it remains all too easy to forget about this larger community, those who may live some distance from us, but are just as much a part of the body of Christ as the man or woman in the pew beside us. Whether it is the Christians of South Korea, recently visited by Pope Francis (pg. 28), or the unaccompanied minors crossing the U.S. border (pg. 11), we are called to be in solidarity with this global community.

It is in this spirit of solidarity that **America** presents the first fruits of our expanded national and international coverage. This issue includes the debut of the column Vatican Dispatch by the distinguished journalist Gerard O'Connell, who joins our staff as an associate editor and Vatican correspondent, based in Rome. He will offer weekly insights and updates from there in the magazine and across **America's** digital platforms.

You'll also notice a new page of reporting in the Signs of the Times. Each week correspondents from around the globe will provide a glimpse into pressing issues of the day. This week features a report from Jim McDermott, S.J., a one-time associate editor here, who returns to our pages as **America's** West Coast correspondent. His report from Murrieta is brief but revealing. Future issues will feature reporting by Judith Valente from Chicago, Tim Padgett from Miami and Steve Schwankert from Beijing, with more correspondents to come. We hope these reports will serve as a kind of faith education. Their variety of perspectives will, we hope, better enable our Christian community to learn from one another as we strive to be men and women for others. Through this international and national reporting, we aim to draw a fuller image of what church means today.

KERRY WEBER

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Cover: Parish representatives in Green Bay, Wis., present the names of catechumens to the diocesan bishop on the First Sunday of Lent. CNS photo/Sam Lucero, The Compass.

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ON THE WEB

Gerard O'Connell reports from **Pope Francis' visit to South Korea** on In All Things. Plus, John Anderson reviews the film "**Love Is Strange.**" Full digital highlights on page 18 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



Into Africa

President Obama probably hoped that his unprecedented summit with 50 African leaders, an effort to shore up relations with emerging African states, could be put to good public relations use, highlighting for a change some good news out of Africa. Indeed, there are positive developments to report: Six of the world's 10 fastest-growing economies can be found in Africa; and by the summit's close on Aug. 6, the heads of state were able to celebrate the announcement of \$33 billion in new private investment.

Unfortunately, reality kept intruding on the grandstanding at the summit. Sierra Leone, with a per capita growth rate this year of 13.8 percent, could be lauded as an African tiger, but the Ebola crisis overshadowed any good news from West Africa. Protesters outside the summit properly reminded everyone that corruption and despotism on the continent remain matters of urgency. The signing in late July of a cease-fire agreement between Seleka, which is mostly Muslim, and anti-balaka (mostly Christian) antagonists in the Central African Republic should have been another cause for celebration. (See "Allowed to Hope?" 6/9.) But hope that this awful conflict could finally be drawing to a close was hit hard by realities on the ground as fighting between the two sides resumed even before the ink was dry on the truce.

This first-ever African summit marks a laudable recognition that this troubled part of the world is as filled with potential and youth as it is overburdened with poverty and problems. But Washington's attention must remain patient and persistent if it is to be a true friend to Africa and not just another power lining up to extract riches from these developing states and their rising peoples.

Tortured History

Torture is back in the news. In early August the executive editor of *The New York Times*, Dean Baquet, announced the paper will use the word *torture* to describe practices like waterboarding, sleep deprivation and stress positions that the *Times* and other leading news outlets have in the past instead referred to as harsh or brutal interrogation techniques.

The editorial about-face came, not incidentally, ahead of the much-anticipated release of the Senate Intelligence Committee's report on the Central Intelligence Agency's detention and interrogation program in the years after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The C.I.A. was given an opportunity to apply its black marker liberally to the 500-

page executive summary before its public disclosure. But Senator Dianne Feinstein, the committee chair, has rejected the redactions, which she claims "eliminate or obscure key facts that support the report's findings and conclusions." She has asked President Obama, who approved the C.I.A.'s initial cuts, to restore key information. Until a compromise is reached, Ms. Feinstein will not declassify the report.

On Aug. 1, the day the report was set to be released, the president stated candidly, "We tortured some folks." That much we have known for years, even if we have tried to minimize the sting of moral failure by calling it something else. People familiar with the report indicate that the congressional investigation found the use of torture more widespread, more brutal and less effective at gathering actionable intelligence than the C.I.A. had led the White House, its overseers and the public to believe. "We" might not have approved of this torture, but it was done in our name and purportedly in our interest. It is therefore our right and indeed our duty to know as much as can responsibly be disclosed about this dark chapter in U.S. history.

Evangelizing Rural Catholics

In recent years, the church has placed great emphasis on the new evangelization, seeking to renew belief and religious practice, especially among those who for whatever reason have drifted away from active or complete participation in church life. There is one segment, however, that has not received much attention—rural Catholics.

It is hard to believe that in a prosperous country like ours, there are still Catholics in poor rural communities in need of our pastoral care and concern. In a recent interview with Catholic News Service, Jim Ennis, head of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, spoke of the need to care for those Catholics in the United States who live in rural areas, places that do not readily come to mind when discussing pastoral needs. Rural dwellers make up less than 20 percent of the U.S. population; but, as Mr. Ennis notes, people living beyond the cities and sprawling suburbs are still critical for the life of the church, and if we neglect them, we do so "at our peril."

Additionally, Mr. Ennis emphasized the need for the laity to become more involved in ministering to fellow Catholics in rural areas, for without attention from clergy and laity alike, rural Catholics will feel like second-class citizens in their own church. Catholic Rural Life sponsors lay leadership programs to help scarce clergy minister to an important part of the Catholic family; and thanks to efforts like these, an important part of the church will not be left out.

Labor Lights

By noon the parade was over, and the revelers had gathered in a park on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. They shared cigars, gave speeches and drank from kegs of lager “mounted in every conceivable place.” The occasion was the first Labor Day parade, held on Sept. 5, 1882, and though police feared riots, the day passed without incident. The lively crowd of union workers and supporters represented a burgeoning force in American public life.

This year, Labor Day festivities are likely to be more muted. Given its well-reported setbacks, the labor movement can seem hardly worth celebrating. In addition to a steady decrease in union membership, labor leaders face formidable opponents in Congress and statehouses across the country. In June the Supreme Court ruled that home health workers employed by the state did not have to pay union dues, a decision some worry will lead to nationalizing state-level “right to work” laws. Meanwhile, many people are having difficulty finding full-time work as more employers use part-time workers to reduce costs.

Still, the labor movement is far from moribund, and the past year saw signs of hope for the American worker. These developments may not herald a new birth for unions, but they are evidence that the campaign for just economic and labor policy can bear fruit.

The economy. American businesses saw an increase of 209,000 jobs in July. This marks the sixth straight month of job growth above 200,000. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate is at 6.2 percent, far below the 10 percent mark hit as a result of the Great Recession. The news is not all good: the average work week is less than 40 hours, and job rates among young people are near historic lows. This is a critical long-term problem. As the U.S. bishops write in their statement for Labor Day 2014, “Meaningful and decent work is vital if young adults hope to form healthy and stable families.”

Fast-food ruling. A one-sentence ruling by the National Labor Relations Board in July could mark a major breakthrough for labor organizers. Commenting on 43 labor suits filed against McDonald’s since 2012, the board’s general counsel held that the chain was jointly responsible for employment practices along with its franchise owners. For years McDonald’s and other large retailers have sought to distance themselves from the labor practices of their local operators. The long-term effects of the ruling are unclear, but they could help fast food workers who are seeking to unionize. It will be more efficient and potentially more

fruitful to bargain collectively with a multinational company than with multiple franchise owners.

“Ban the box.” Many public and private employers have adopted a practice of requiring job applicants to check a box if they were ever convicted of a crime; in many cases, this means immediate disqualification for the position. The ban-the-box movement has challenged this screening practice in courts across the country. More important, it has persuaded many states and cities to adopt ban-the-box laws as good public policy. Leaders in both red and blue states are interested in ensuring that ex-offenders have a practical opportunity for employment and rehabilitation. Employers are still permitted to review criminal records later in the process, but banning this initial screening practice gives many applicants who made a mistake in their youth a fairer chance at consideration.

Minimum wage hikes. Though Congress failed to pass an increase in the minimum wage, 10 states passed increases in the 2014 legislative session. Nearly half the states have now implemented a minimum wage higher than the federal level of \$7.25. Meanwhile, in February President Obama issued an executive order requiring federal contractors receiving taxpayer dollars to pay workers a minimum of \$10.10 per hour. Some economists point to an increase in the earned income tax credit as a better way to help lower income families. We agree, and this increase should be pursued in Congress. But minimum wage increases on the state level are a healthy sign that local governments are responding to the needs of working families in their communities. Meanwhile, some American businesses, like Gap, are raising their hourly wages in an effort to lure more qualified workers.

In “Economic Justice for All” (1986), the U.S. bishops wrote about the challenges facing workers in a globalized economy: “In these difficult circumstances, guaranteeing the rights of U.S. workers calls for imaginative vision and creative new steps, not reactive or simply defensive strategies.” The positive developments outlined above are the fruit of creative thinking on the part of national and local labor leaders. Reliable, middle-class jobs may be hard to come by, but new networks of solidarity are taking root. A celebratory parade may not be necessary, but our support is. There is still work to be done.



REPLY ALL

Not Exempt

Taking the advice of Matt Malone, S.J., I read “side-by-side” the two essays on Israel/Palestine, “For Israel,” by John Conley, S.J., and “Gaza Again,” by Margot Patterson (8/4). Father Conley disappointed.

My disappointment, bordering on intellectual shock, is not because I side with those who so annoyed him with calls to “divest in and sanction Israel” but because his rejoinder seems devoid of sound logic. He himself says his reaction was “simple.” His argument reads like something we might expect from a teenager trying to justify some transgression: “Hey, everybody else is doing it, so what’s the big deal?”

Violations of human decency and moral conduct, actions barely short of war crimes, must be condemned. So, yes, condemn them all—loudly and clearly—including Israel. Of all the countries “doing the same thing,” Israel alone is the democratic country; Israel alone is a people whose history most graphically exposes the evil of one agent raining down massacre on innocents among its enemies. There is not a shred of legal or moral defense for shooting one person through the heart with a pass-through bullet to kill the enemy standing behind.

Israel may not be alone in deserving condemnation, but by no means ought it to be protected against being condemned.

RITA HESSLEY
Cincinnati, Ohio

Taking Sides

Margot Patterson would have us believe that Israel launched its current war against Hamas simply out of animosity for the Palestinians or for some sort of revenge over the kidnapping and killing of the three Israeli settlers. She ignores the fact that Hamas has been shooting rockets into civilian neighborhoods in Israel since 2000, making life for the

people there all but impossible.

And while Ms. Patterson bemoans the fact that the Palestinians “are too weak to induce Israel to make peace,” she conveniently forgets that it was Israel who accepted President Bill Clinton’s final status peace deal in 2000 and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert who offered an even more generous deal in 2008—only to be ignored by the Palestinians.

As people of faith, we have to stop taking sides in what has become a truly tragic situation for both Israelis and Palestinians. When we do this, we do not act as peacemakers, we act as participants in the conflict. I wish **America** would start printing articles that show love and concern for both sides and offer an honest and constructive way out—instead of simplistically trying to make one side look like the bad guy.

JAMES LOUGHRAN, S.A.
New York, N.Y.

Justice for Peace

Congratulations to Margot Patterson on her strong, honest commentary in “Gaza Again.” All the veils that mask the continued Israeli deprivation of the Palestinian people need to be pulled down. The public must free itself from the propaganda that has for too long held U.S. policy hostage.

The Catholic community, even on the 50th anniversary of “Nostra Aetate,” must openly distinguish between its abiding commitment to the Jewish people, including a Jewish homeland, and acquiescence to the relentless Israeli dispossession of the Palestinian people from the last remaining vestiges of their own home.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has made it known—at a Hebrew-language press conference—that he will never agree to a two-state solution. The alternatives, then, are either apartheid, a word Israelis despise but that describes the current and likely future reality, or “transfer”—that is, expulsion or ethnic cleansing, which is much discussed in

the growing right-wing Israeli community.

It is time for the world and the church to insist that justice for Palestinians be the foundation of a peaceful order in the Holy Land.

DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J.
Washington, D.C.

Sr. Cora’s Care

Thank you for the article by Cora Marie Billings, R.S.M., “Saved by Grace” (7/7).

In 1993-94, I was a newly ordained priest of the Maryland Province of the Society of Jesus—the one that owned and sold slaves. Before my doctoral studies, I asked to spend two years in parish ministry and was missioned to the Jesuit parish in south-side Richmond, Va. Part of my ministry involved assisting other parishes in the diocese, including St. Elizabeth’s church, where Sister Cora served as pastoral coordinator. Reading her article called to mind my ministry as occasional “Mass priest” for her parish and the many ways in which Sister Cora contributed to my priestly formation.

I especially recall Holy Week 1994, when I served as presider and preacher for her mostly African-American parish. Sister Cora wisely and graciously guided this Irish-American Jesuit through all the Easter triduum liturgies. It is a tribute to Sister Cora that since then it has never been said of me that I am “as helpless as a Jesuit during Holy Week.” Sister Cora’s life of ministry and commitment continues to encourage and inspire me as a Catholic, a Jesuit and a priest.

FRANCIS X. McALOON, S.J.
Bronx, N.Y.

More to the Story

In “Saved By Grace” (7/7), Cora Marie Billings, R.S.M., told the sad story of her great-grandfather, a slave owned by the Jesuits, transporting the priests to Visitation convent in Georgetown to celebrate Mass. Her article begged for some additional information about

Jesuit slaveholding, and **America** provided it in a sidebar by Thomas Murphy, S.J., author of *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717-1838*.

Father Murphy's book is well written, researched in depth and very instructive. His sidebar within the Billings article outlined in just a few paragraphs the complicated web of circumstances that led the Jesuits to become slaveholders, to oppose abolition and to sell off the final 272 slaves to Louisiana and how they rationalized it all. But he did not mention that they also rejected gradual manumission and that they did not teach their slaves to read and write. Nor did he repeat the inescapable and embarrassing conclusion in his own Epilogue, that "the Jesuits contradicted their own teaching about human dignity through their possession of slaves."

DENIS WOODS
Shepherdstown, W.Va.

A Worthy Defense

In "After Hobby Lobby" (Editorial, 7/21), the editors react to the recent Supreme Court decision, stating, "**America** has vigorously denounced government overstepping in this arena while at the same time expressing concern that the church may have joined the public policy discussions in too great detail."

Were the Jesuits in El Salvador, who were at the forefront of the battle against governmental oppression, which denied the poor's basic Christian rights to religious liberty, food and housing, guilty of joining "the public policy discussion in too great detail"? Aren't religious liberty and the right to life also rudimentary Catholic values worthy of our unwavering defense? If so, why the editorial critique of other Catholic institutions, like the University of Notre Dame, to name one, for their "willingness to join the courtroom fray," which the editorial board feels "risks diminishing the church's ability to engage in a mutually respectful dialogue with civil society"? We rightly look to our Jesuits

for moral leadership, not timid political correctness, on such fundamentals as religious liberty and the protection of life from the moment of conception.

PATRICK ROBINSON
Online Comment

Dysfunctional Corrections

"Prisoners Dilemma" (Editorial, 8/4) succinctly captures the sorry state of our "correctional" system. Its dysfunction has been apparent for many years. Not only does it woefully fail to "correct" the conduct of prisoners, it succeeds in producing better-trained criminals upon their release.

Recently, some realistic hope for reform has emerged. Conservative Republicans—many of whose policies helped exacerbate the problem—are now championing reforms. Gov. Rick Perry of Texas, former House speaker Newt Gingrich, Senator Rand Paul and the anti-tax lobbyist Grover Norquist have embraced ideas like repeal of mandatory minimum sentences, increased rehabilitation programs and alternative sanctions for low-level drug offenses. Let's hope the Congress, whose dysfunction and inability to agree on any legislative reforms have been staggeringly depressing, can come together to pass some common sense reforms.

While there have been sporadic attempts to integrate schools and universities into the reform movement meaningfully, as recommended in the editorial, stronger involvement by academia should be encouraged by our civic and elected leaders.

JOHN HOLL
Online Comment

A More Effective Audit

Having served as a diocesan director of safe environment for seven years, I read "How Effective Is Annual Audit?" (Signs of the Times, 8/4) with great interest. During my tenure, the diocese was audited three times for compliance with the charter, so I have some experience with the process. As the article indicates, "The annual audits rely on self-reporting and record-keeping by the dioceses themselves." Although I had records to support the data I reported, no auditor ever asked to see them. Instead, they accepted the data at face value. Certainly, allowing the auditors access to source records, including clergy records used for self-reporting, and requiring them to verify the accuracy of the reported data would be a first step in improving the audit process.

COLLEEN E. GUDREAU
Salt Lake City, Utah



WRITTEN BY JAKE MARTIN, S.J. ART BY BOB ECKSTEIN

SOUTH KOREA

Pope Francis Sets Out Bold Vision Of Dialogue for Asian Bishops

Pope Francis opened new horizons for the Catholic Churches in Asia with a groundbreaking talk on Aug. 17 to 70 bishops from 36 countries of this vast continent, in which he encouraged them to engage in a dialogue that must not only be based on identity but also must be done with “empathy.”

Near the end of his talk, the pope told the bishops he earnestly hopes those countries of Asia “with whom the Holy See does not yet enjoy a full relationship, may not hesitate to further a dialogue for the benefit of all.”

Six Asian countries do not have diplomatic relations with the Holy See today: China, North Korea, Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos and Brunei. Francis explained that he wished to dialogue with them and made clear that “I am not only talking here of a political dialogue, but of a fraternal one.”

The pope extended the hand of friendship to those countries when he spoke to his “brother bishops” in the crypt chapel of the Shrine of Martyrs at Haemi, about 80 miles south of Seoul. Afterward he had lunch with the bishops and later that day celebrated the closing Mass for the Asian Youth Day. The pope spent a busy five days in South Korea, where he also beatified 124 martyrs from the infancy period of the local church.

Pope Francis began his talk to the bishops by telling them that in Asia, with its great variety of cultures, “the church is called to be versatile and creative in her witness to the Gospel through dialogue and openness to all.”

He reaffirmed the conclusion of the Synod for Asia in 1998 that “dialogue is an essential part of the mission of the church in Asia.”

His immediate predecessors, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, had firmly insisted that the fundamental point of reference for Catholics who engage in dialogue with individuals and cultures must be their own identity as Christians.

In his talk on Aug. 17, Pope Francis also insisted on the crucial importance of identity: “We cannot engage in real dialogue unless we are conscious of our own identity.” But he significantly added, “Nor can there be authentic dialogue unless we are capable of opening our minds and hearts, in empathy and sincere receptivity, to those with whom we speak.”

By putting emphasis on empathy as well as identity, Pope Francis is bringing in a whole new dimension to the understanding of dialogue with other cultures and other religions. It is a dimension that has been given little—if any—attention in recent decades in pontifical and Vatican documents.

Explaining this dual emphasis, Francis said: “A clear sense of one’s own identity and a capacity for empathy are thus the point of departure for all dialogue. If we are to speak freely, openly and fruitfully with others, we must be clear about who we are, what God has done for us, and what it is that he asks of us. And if our communication is not to be a monologue, there has to be openness of heart and mind to accepting individuals and cultures.”

He explained that empathy in dialogue “challenges us to listen not only to the words others speak, but to the



unspoken communication of their experiences, their hopes and aspirations, their struggles and their deepest concerns.”

This kind of empathy, he said, “must be the fruit of our spiritual insight and personal experience, which lead us to see others as brothers and sisters, and to ‘hear,’ in and beyond their words and actions, what their hearts wish to communicate.”

GERARD O’CONNELL

FERGUSON, MO.

Calls for Peace After Street Unrest

As groups across the country held vigils to remember Michael Brown, a teenager whose death on Aug. 9 has sparked a

GENERATION NEXT. Young people join Pope Francis at the closing Mass of the sixth Asian Youth Day at Haemi Castle in Haemi, South Korea, on Aug. 17.



wave of unrest in his Missouri hometown and raised questions about racial profiling and police militarization, religious leaders in the St. Louis area called upon “all people to pray for calm and peace and to be part of healing.”

“We must examine the tragic events taking place in the St. Louis area, seek to understand ‘Why?’ and work toward dismantling systemic racism,” read a statement on Aug. 12 from the Interfaith Partnership of St. Louis, which was signed by Archbishop Robert J. Carlson of St. Louis and the Rev. C. Jessel Strong of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. “Until the causes are addressed and rectified, there will be no change.”

In a column in *The St. Louis Review*, the archdiocesan newspaper, the Rev. Arthur J. Cavitt compared the unrest in Ferguson to “those fateful times in the 1960s and ’70s when parts of our cities erupted in flames.

For many, the wounds haven’t fully healed; the underlying smoldering still exists.

“Systemic and personal racism have taken on less overt but no less sinister forms in the past few decades,” Father Cavitt continued. “None of our institutions are immune. It is found in government, including law enforcement and the criminal justice system; business and industry; and even in churches, regardless of denomination. These violations of the human spirit are being seen in the present generation: reactionary, disrespectful, destructive behavior within oneself, families and community. Where do we go from here? How are these insipid cycles ever broken?”

Father Cavitt is the executive director of the St. Charles Lwanga Center in St. Louis, which seeks to foster spiritual formation and leadership development within the African American Catholic Community.

Two miles from the demonstrations, members of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Ferguson responded in perhaps the only way they could—they prayed.

“As a community, we needed to come together in prayer,” said Cathy Cunningham, a parishioner. “We just have to put it in Jesus’ hands, and he will heal us.”

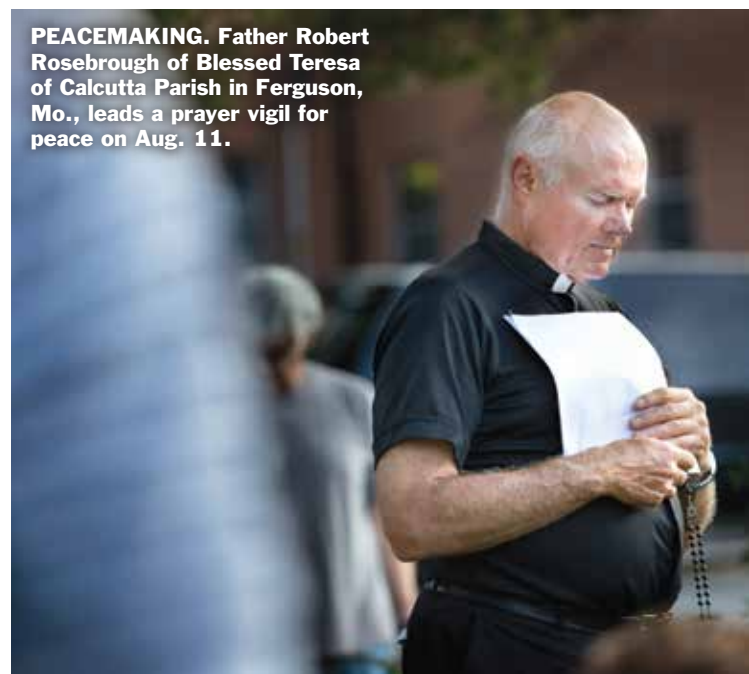
Led by their pastor, the Rev. Robert Rosebrough, about 100 people gathered to pray the rosary at the parish’s Our Lady of Lourdes grotto.

“We don’t have the answers,” Father Rosebrough said. “We just ask for his presence and consolation; that’s what people need.”

In his column, Father Cavitt wrote that “our prayer should lead us to sound investing in our young people. We must inspire them to maintain and build their relationship with God for a greater sense of self and their role in this community and the larger world.”

On Aug. 14 President Obama addressed the nation, calling on the police investigating the shooting to be open and transparent. On the same night vigils were held across the country. From Maine to Michigan, Florida to New York, Vermont, Colorado and California, attendees wore red ribbons to honor Brown, 18. Many shared their stories of alleged police brutality, and called for a new compact between officers and civilians.

PEACEMAKING. Father Robert Rosebrough of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Parish in Ferguson, Mo., leads a prayer vigil for peace on Aug. 11.



Pope Francis Condemns ISIS

“Thousands of people, including many Christians, driven from their homes in a brutal manner; children dying of thirst and hunger in their flight; women kidnapped; people massacred; violence of every kind”—Pope Francis was clear in his condemnation of the actions of the militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in his remarks on Aug. 10: “All this greatly offends God and humanity. Hatred is not to be carried in the name of God. War is not to be waged in the name of God.” In a letter to U.N. General Secretary Ban Ki-moon on Aug. 9, Pope Francis appealed to the international community “to take action to end the humanitarian tragedy now underway.” He added, “The violent attacks that are sweeping across Northern Iraq cannot but awaken the consciences of all men and women of goodwill to concrete acts of solidarity by protecting those affected or threatened by violence and assuring the necessary and urgent assistance for the many displaced people as well as their safe return to their cities and their homes.”

Johnson Honored by Women Religious

Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., a theology professor at Fordham University, was given the top award of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious’ on Aug. 15 during its national assembly in Nashville, Tenn. During her acceptance speech, she strongly criticized the U.S. bishops for their formal critique of her book *Quest for the Living God*. “To this day, no one, not myself or the theological community, the media or the general public knows what doctrinal issue is at stake,” she told about 900 sisters, delegates of 80 percent of the nation’s nuns. Johnson also criticized the ongoing in-

NEWS BRIEFS

The death of Miguel Pajares, O.H., on Aug. 12 brought to six the number of caregivers at a Catholic-run hospital in Monrovia, Liberia, who died of Ebola in August. + An official with the Catholic Near East Welfare Association said humanitarian agencies are “trying to pick up the pieces” of Gaza’s badly destroyed infrastructure, hoping that the declared truce between Israel and the militant Hamas will hold. + The Catholic-Jewish dialogue, a partnership of the National Council of Synagogues and the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, called on Aug. 14 for “effective measures” to end violent acts taking place against Christians and Christians sites across the globe. + Representatives of 22 bishops’ conferences in Latin America emerged from the First Latin American Congress of Family Pastoral Agents in Panama on Aug. 9 pledging to strengthen the church’s work to promote the role of the family in society. + “Religious are those whose lives only make sense in light of our passion to live for God,” said John S. Edmunds, S.T., in his final address as president of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men.



vestigation of the L.C.W.R. itself. In 2012 the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ordered the nuns’ group to reform its statutes and appointed Archbishop J. Peter Sartain of Seattle to oversee changes, including a rewriting of the group’s charter, and to approve of all speakers at future assemblies. Johnson stated that “the waste of time on this investigation is unconscionable,” while commending the L.C.W.R. for its charitable response: “To a polarized church and a world racked by violence, your willingness to stay at the table seeking reconciliation through truthful, courageous conversation has given powerful witness.”

Anti-Gay Law Struck Down in Uganda

Uganda’s gay rights supporters caught a glimpse of hope on Aug. 1 when the country’s constitutional court ruled that

the December 2013 parliamentary vote to pass the Anti-Homosexuality Bill was illegal because of the below-quorum attendance. The new law, hailed by the Ugandan president as a defense of African and family values, brought resounding criticism from political and religious leaders around the globe. In place of the originally intended death penalty, the law prescribed life imprisonment for those found guilty of “aggravated homosexuality” and up to three years for those who fail to report offenders. Gay rights activists warn, however, that homosexual acts are still illegal in Uganda and that the repeal of this law on grounds of illegal voting practices may not postpone its revival for long. On Aug. 13 the attorney general announced that the government has dropped plans to appeal the ruling, and President Museveni has made clear that the law is “not a priority.”

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

Murrieta Revisited

There's something about the sunlight in Southern California. It's severe, unforgiving, as though a camera's shutter has been left open too long; everything appears overexposed.

One hour northeast of San Diego, in the area of California known as the Inland Empire, the town of Murrieta has recently found itself thrust into a similarly harsh light. On July 1 hundreds of protesters in Murrieta prevented three buses filled with Central American migrants—mothers with small children and often children traveling alone, the “unaccompanied minors” who have collected into a crisis at the border—from being processed at the Murrieta Border Patrol Center. The event made national news and incited similar demonstrations elsewhere.

Since those first dramatic confrontations, border agents have stopped using Murrieta, and the press has left, but orange plastic poles still dot the area around the protest site, warning people not to park there. Rotating teams of protesters relax under a tent in canvas chairs with sleeves for their drinks, chatting and checking their cellphones, their “Stop Obama's Invasion” signs unattended nearby.

By most accounts, low-key amiability is much more the character of this community than the events of early July would suggest. While the town has over 100,000 residents, it has repeatedly been ranked by the F.B.I. as the second safest city in the United States. Alongside subdivisions with fancy names like Provence, Montserrat

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., a Los Angeles-based screenwriter, is *America's* West Coast correspondent.

and Encanto lie small shops where you can buy “local bread and honey,” cut firewood, RVs and “a full line” of firearms.

The people of Murrieta are easy to talk to and quick to respond with warmth.

Some of the community's residents even debate how many of the protesters were from Murrieta. “When I started my business here,” says an Ethiopian-American businessman, Ryan Haggerty, 28, “people welcomed

The example of Christ looms large over some of the debate here.

me with open arms. Open arms. My siblings have gone to every school here, and their friends are a rainbow.”

The Rev. Jack Barker, pastor of St. Martha Catholic Church in Murrieta, notes that the local community is over 25 percent Latino, 15 percent Filipino and 10 percent black. Since the protests began, some parishioners—including some not in favor of the government's immigration policies—have told him, “We'll take one of the kids on the buses, Father. Don't send them to foster care. We'll take them.”

A white cross more than 70 feet tall adorns one of the hills of Murrieta, painted there by a Christian landowner who felt its presence might encourage passersby to think about the salvation that Christ offers.

And the example of Christ looms large over some of the debate here. Local bloggers with handles like “S.O.S.” and “Enough!” write how the protest was not about the children, but about “when this government would do something

to solve the crisis going on in unprotected borders.”

Even some immigration supporters here feel besieged by government policy. The Murrieta processing center was meant to house 40 people at a time; the buses would have brought 140 every 72 hours. The patrol agents' union representative complained vigorously.

Yet some of them also wonder how Jesus would respond. Enough! goes so far as to ask, “Jesus...what should I do?” and in another entry she asks, “Why Lord? Why Murrieta?” Remarkably, God answers back: “Why not Murrieta?”

Movements of the spirit bring other things to light. Eileen, a friendly Catholic mother of four from Costa Rica, sits at the protest site regularly. She says she has shed tears over the plight of immigrant children and their families. But when she prays to God

for insight, the message she gets is that “it's okay to stand for our Constitution and to keep all illegals out, [as long as it is] accompanied with processing how to help them in their country.” God “knows what could happen if the masses came over here,” she says, adding confidentially, “I'm talking about terrorists.”

When asked to name a favorite story about Jesus, believer Diana Serafin—a candidate for Murrieta City Council who used her mailing list to help mobilize the initial protests against the bus caravan—recalls the story of the loaves and the fishes.

It's about sharing, she says. “Jesus took care of the people. And then he sent them back home.”

When it's pointed out to her that in fact that is not how that story ends, Ms. Serafin chuckles like a kid caught with her hand in the cookie jar, conceding the point. Then she insists, as though she had been there, “But when it was over, the crowds did go home.”

JIM McDERMOTT



Grace on the Greyhound

If you want to meet the poor, take the bus.” That’s a saying I’ve heard many times from my brother Jesuits. It refers not so much to transportation within cities (though it certainly could) as to long-distance travel. My own preference, especially here in the Northeastern United States, is traveling by train: in these parts Amtrak is quick, reliable and relatively inexpensive if you plan far enough in advance. As for planes, well, to be charitable, I’ll pass over that in silence. But generally speaking, those who are poor and need to travel from city to city take neither the plane nor the train—but the bus.

So a few months ago, when I was invited to speak at an event sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph in Springfield, Mass., I happily accepted their suggestion to return to New York City by Greyhound bus, or “the Dog,” as some of my friends call it.

Before continuing this tale, which takes some surprising turns, I would like to say three things. First, I love the Sisters of St. Joseph, no matter where they are—from Springfield, Mass., to Chestnut Hill, Pa. Second, I admire women religious in general: they are my heroes. Third, on that particular Sunday, there was only one convenient way to travel from Springfield to New York: the bus. The trains were not running at that time, and of course I don’t own a car; so when a bus ticket was offered, I eagerly accepted. In short, none of what I’m about to recount was the “fault” of the generous Sisters of St. Joseph.

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

In any event, after my afternoon talk, a friendly S.S.J. dropped me off at the Springfield bus station. The sisters had even packed me a nourishing dinner in a brown bag: a ham sandwich, a ginger ale, a bag of peanuts and a banana. I located a comfortable seat on the bus, took out the latest copy of *The New Yorker* from my backpack and looked forward to an enjoyable and economical drive back to New York on the Dog.

But it was not to be. Directly behind me were two people who, it soon became clear, were a prostitute and her pimp. (I’m not sure if “pimp” is still the correct term: I’m not up to date on prostitution slang.) From the moment the bus pulled out of Springfield station, the two started arguing loudly. The woman was furious at the man, who was also her erstwhile boyfriend. She recounted in lavish detail his cheating on her. For a good hour she shouted, over and over, “Stupid! Stupid! Stupid!” while hitting him. In response to her invective and her punches, he unleashed his own fusillade of foul-mouthed rage, all the while dropping the “F-bomb” liberally.

Since the bus driver seemed largely unconcerned, I thought of saying something. At the time, I was in my clerical collar, and so I thought perhaps a glance might effect some sort of change. But given that the two of them seemed as high as kites, I figured that they might (a) have a gun, (b) freak out and punch me or (c) have a gun, freak out, punch me and then kill me. So I figured I’d wait it out. How long could

it last, anyway?

It lasted the entire trip.

But in the midst of this seedy drama was grace. Sitting beside me was a dark-haired, middle-aged woman, wearing a white nurse’s uniform, who read her Bible through the entire trip. She gave no indication that the commotion from behind us bothered her at all.

As the Dog raced on through the night and the two continued their

In their
dignity and
in their
hard work,
the poor can
be our
models.

very public battle, my traveling companion calmly pored over her Bible (*Romans*, I noticed). Once again, I was reminded that the poor put up with such indignities all the time. It filled me with admiration for the woman seated next to me, and I wondered if her serenity might not be the result of long experience. It

was probably not the first, or last, time she would endure something like this.

Talking about “the poor” is very often misleading. They are, after all, individuals, as was the woman on the bus. So it’s often inaccurate to generalize, and say, “The poor are like this.” On the other hand, many are the things we can learn from people with personal experience of poverty. Many are the experiences that they take for granted that others would find intolerable. In their patience, in their fortitude, in their dignity and in their hard work, the poor can often be our models. And so blessed are they.

Women religious, then, aren’t the only women who are my heroes. Now I have a new one: the woman who sat beside me on the Dog.

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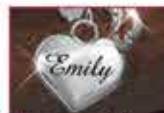
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Faithful Aspirations

HOW CAN WE MAKE ROOM FOR EVERYBODY IN THE CHURCH?

BY FRANK DESIANO

I was stunned. I had asked a prominent leader in evangelization, a priest, if he thought his parents were evangelized. He shook his head “No” and explained that he did not think his parents were disciples in the sense in which the church calls Catholics to be disciples today. I wondered: If they were not disciples, if generations of Catholics over centuries were not disciples, then have we developed too high a definition of discipleship?

In his first apostolic exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel” (No. 3), Pope Francis sounds a very open note, one that should get our full attention:

I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since “no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord.”

Something like this more inclusive approach might be a key ingredient to include in our thinking about and practice of evangelization.

A few years ago, it was popular to cite some words of Pope Benedict to the effect that the church had to become smaller, to shrink in order for committed Catholics to show themselves and support each other. This seemed to lead to an attitude in which some priests were somewhat willing to see Catholics slip away because they were not “true” Catholics in the first place.

I have often observed how that “smallness” happens in parishes. A group of parishioners gets “more involved” through one or another process—perhaps a prayer group or some parish program. This group then starts looking at the rest of the parishioners as somehow “doing less” than they should. As this smaller group starts to talk, they imply that the rest of the parishioners—who come to Mass and maybe even serve in one or another ministry—are not really committed or are not really evangelized or are not really disciples. Once this dynamic sets in, you can bet the process of

evangelization ministry, or renewing the parish, will come to a standstill.

Looking at Assumptions

Sherry A. Weddell, in her influential book *Forming Intentional Disciples* (2012), says that “in calling Catholics to a deliberate discipleship and intentional faith, our goal is not to create a community of spiritual elites. Rather it is to create a spiritual culture that recognizes, openly talks about, and honors both the inward and outward dimensions of the sacraments and the liturgy.” This is related to her argument that many Catholics receive sacraments externally without the inner transformation and conversion that they imply. “The majority of Catholics in the United States are sacramentalized but not evangelized,” she writes.

Ms. Weddell believes conversion and discipleship can be small: “If roughly 2 percent of your parishioners are intentional disciples today, why not shoot for 4 percent five years from now? If you think that roughly 5 percent are disciples right now, what could you do to help raise that percentage to 10 percent?” At this rate it would take a parish five years to double its number of “intentional disciples”; obviously, intentional discipleship, while offered to the many, is accepted only by the few. By that assumption, if it takes five years to double the number of intentional disciples, discipleship is not a mass movement. Just the opposite.

As we work our way through our vision of evangelization and discipleship, we have to be attentive at every level to debug the presumptions and unintended consequences of our approach to church involvement. If we keep raising the bar, do we not automatically at least marginalize, if not exclude, more and more ordinary Catholics? Is it possible to use ideas of discipleship in a manner that can be in effect exclusive rather than, as Jesus seems to have done, use those ideas to a more inclusive effect? Jesus reached out to tax collectors, prostitutes and those excluded by the interpretations of holiness of his day. The approach of Jesus and his followers is helpful to reflect on.

No parable, I think, says more about life in the early church than that of the sower and the seed. It is the opening parable in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. The seed that is not productive seems to be a rather straightforward description of things that led followers away from their commitments

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to Christ: wealth, shallowness or fear of persecution. But of the seed that is productive, there clearly seems to be a sense of gradation. Not all the seed produces the same. As Mark puts it, “It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” And Mark wryly adds, “Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear” (Mk 4:8-9). Matthew varies the words slightly, making the same point: “But some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit a hundred or sixty or thirty fold. Whoever has ears ought to hear” (Mt: 13:8).

We note: It is the good seed that produces in varying quantities. We hear 30, 60, 100, but are we not also encouraged by the parable to hear 10, 20, 40 or 70? In other words, the increased productivity of one range of seeds does not exclude the lesser productivity of the other seeds. This indicates a wide acceptance, in the early church, of different levels of discipleship without an assumption that everyone had to fulfill the highest expectation—to produce a hundredfold. Surely there is a huge difference between the seed that falls on bad soil, yielding nothing, and the seed that is productive. But that should not prevent us from noticing the different yields of the seeds that fall on good ground.

Not Far From the Kingdom

In Mark 12, Jesus is approached by a scribe who overhears how well Jesus is responding to those who were disputing with him. The scribe asks Jesus about the greatest commandment. When the scribe endorses the answer Jesus gave, Matthew tells us: “Jesus saw that [he] answered with understanding, [and] he said to him, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God’” (12:34). This phrase deserves to be

tossed around in our apostolic minds for quite some time. Obviously the scribe belongs to a group that is, as Matthew says, “disputing” with Jesus. All the scribe does is recite back what Jesus said to him. Yet this seems to be enough for Jesus to recognize the scribe as somehow drawing close to the kingdom of God. In other words, wherever insight comes, it should be recognized and celebrated.

Even more, Matthew’s great parable of the final judgment (25:31 ff.) should give all believers pause. In this image, the king gathers all the nations of the world (the word *nation* has special impact for Jewish listeners because it represents the gentiles and, therefore, presumably those who are not chosen) and divides them as a shepherd might, between sheep and goats. When Jesus explains why the sheep are entering the kingdom (because they fed, clothed and visited him), the hearers are shocked. “When did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?” In other words, the righteous, the saved, are not even aware that they are doing the king’s will. They are not even aware of their righteousness or even

of all the motives for righteousness. Of course, they fed, gave water, helped and visited. The accursed, the goats, did not do these things for Christ’s “least ones.” Can it be that people are involved in God’s grace without even the dimmest recognition of it? Can it be that God’s grace is far wider than those who are consciously followers and, even more, than those who are “intentionally” followers of Christ?

The story of the good thief should make us wonder what and whom in Luke’s community this unexpectedly attentive criminal represents. What personal experience did he have with Jesus? Were there early Christians who got only



a glimmer of Christ, but for whom that seems to have been enough? And look at Paul's tolerance for preachers who preached out of false motives—"as long in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being proclaimed" (Phil 1:18). How does that standard hold up when it comes to strict orthodoxy? We Catholics in particular need to recall how often in our eucharistic prayers we refer to those whose faith God alone knows.

A Discipleship of Inclusion

Of course we need to call all Catholics to the fullness of discipleship, expressed through their involvement with the word of God (conversion and relationship), prayer (private and communal through liturgy), community (connectedness with other disciples in faith and life) and service (reaching outward to those who are not being served, helping all live a fullness of life). We can never let up on this. Catholics need to be continually called to more explicit commitment to Christ, which includes a more open sharing with the world of the grace that comes from Jesus. Catholics need ongoing conversion as part of their being followers of Jesus.

But instead of setting up criteria and then judging one another according to those, can we just presume an ideal and acknowledge that we all, even the most committed and active disciples, inevitably fall short of that ideal and that as part of a continuum of discipleship, all Catholics may be exercising more or less involvement with their faith and faith community? Instead, for example, of thinking of our children who do not attend church as frequently as some older Catholics as if they were fallen-away cretins, maybe we could think of them as people to be invited to fuller discipleship, given the variations of their lives and experiences. Can we not think of these people as being on a continuum with the more active?

In this more inclusive model of evangelization and discipleship I am trying to sketch, we do not have "true" disciples and "not disciples," but a church in which, at different times, we produce fruit that may range from 5 percent to 95 percent of the ideal yield, to use the Gospel metaphors. What we do as a church is continually call ourselves to produce more, whoever we are, as the fruit of our baptism. What we see in each other are the seeds of discipleship, some of which have

What we do as a church is continually call ourselves to produce more, whoever we are, as the fruit of our baptism.

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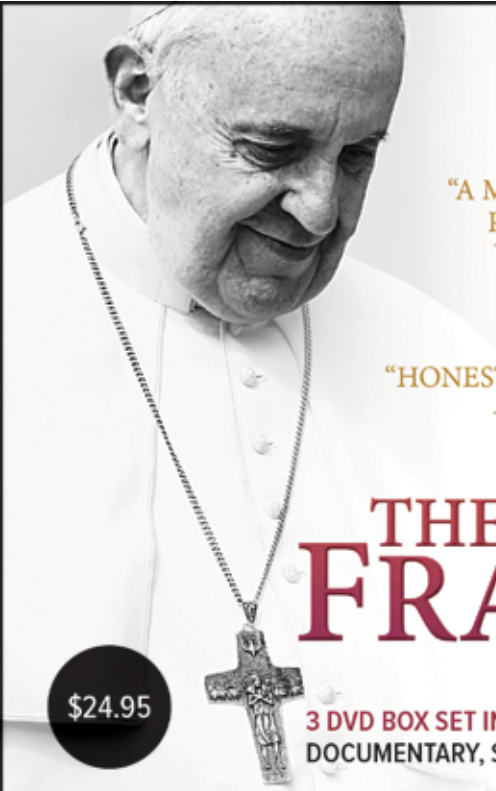


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sprung into plants while others still lie latent. What we acknowledge about all of us is our ongoing need for greater conversion, for reconciliation and the expression of God's grace in more explicit ways in our lives.

Are there stages of discipleship? We can certainly recognize phases of discipleship as we look back on our faith lives. They may not necessarily follow those Sherry Weddell outlines (trust, curiosity, openness, conversion, intentional discipleship) in any strict order. At varying times in our lives as disciples we have experienced deepening trust or been drawn along by curiosity about one or another aspect of faith or powerfully experienced Jesus' presence or, perhaps, have powerfully experienced something like God's absence (our own "dark nights of the soul") or have been clear in the direction of our vocations or have been confused. Catholic mystics have taught us well about phases of discipleship. The founder of the Paulist Fathers, Servant of God Isaac Hecker, experienced years of what seemed like internal confusion as part of his journey in faith but came to see this as the work of the Spirit. The Spirit, Hecker would say, can work through all—and many different—phases of our spiritual lives.

'Open the Doors'

Might a more inclusive attitude end up enabling lax discipleship? Perhaps. But giving the impression that evangeli-

zation and discipleship are almost "elitist" might do something worse than encourage lax discipleship; it might lead people to dismiss church, discipleship and evangelization altogether. Everyone remarks about the growing number of young people who respond "none" to the question of their preferred faith. One feature of the growth of this group is surely a pushing back at churches that seemed to be pushing against them, as the 2010 book *American Grace*, by Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, shows.

Of course it is premature to generalize about the ministry of Pope Francis. But one thing is clear: He is not interested in exclusive or exclusivizing notions of faith. "Open up the doors," he says. Let's get away from our small-minded approaches. He mentions the unmarried pregnant woman who comes to get her baby baptized—how, in place of some of our approaches, we should celebrate this woman and warmly welcome her and her child. He washes the feet of Muslim women. He prays with evangelical pastors. He places in the same category as ordinary evangelizing ministry caring both for Catholics who go to Mass every Sunday and for Catholics who have a strong attachment to the church but do not go to Mass ("The Joy of the Gospel," No. 14). It is as if Francis is pointing out a vast ocean of divine love and grace and inviting us all to swim in it, letting as many into that ocean as possible. A

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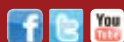
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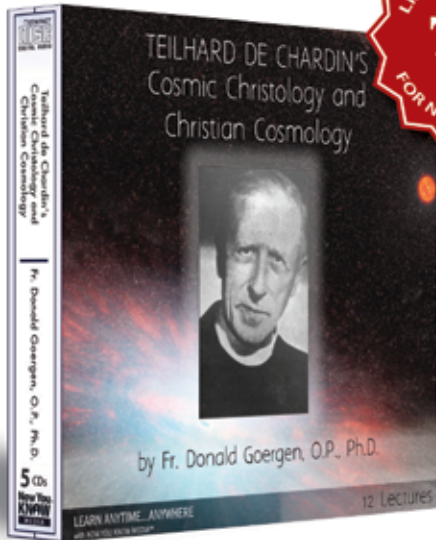
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A More Authentic Way

Can the RCIA meet the needs of modern-day spiritual seekers?

BY NICK WAGNER

In his new book, *Becoming Catholic*, the sociologist David Yamane tells the story of Deacon Zeke, the coordinator of adult religious education for a parish in the Midwest. Professor Yamane sat in on several of Deacon Zeke's classes for people participating in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults and notes that for 90 percent of the time, Zeke lectures from a diocesan-approved "comprehensive catechesis for the RCIA." When he does ask an occasional question, Zeke does not seem to expect a response from the participants. "He fills in the dead spaces himself with more lecturing," says Mr. Yamane. The participants, as one might expect, "are not visibly responsive: no acknowledgement of what he is saying with facial expressions, nods of the head, or audible confirmations."

The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions will meet in October to discuss the current practice of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults in the United States and to offer consultation to the U.S. bishops on a possible revision of the "National Statutes on the Catechumenate," the guidelines for implementing the catechumenate in the United States. If instructional sessions like Zeke's are any indication, this meeting arrives not a moment too soon. This event also is timely given that a retranslation of the ritual texts may be on the way, now that the Roman Missal project is complete. This moment in the history of adult Christian initiation in the United States can have a major impact on the way seekers are initiated into the faith in coming decades. It offers both hope and challenges.

NICK WAGNER is the founder and president of TeamRCIA.com, a free online resource for parishes that want to form Christians for life.

Finally, Full Implementation

To paraphrase G. K. Chesterton, the Christian initiation process for adults has not been tried and found wanting—but it has been found hard and, too often, has not been tried.

Mr. Yamane reports that more than 80 percent of U.S. parishes are using "some version of the RCIA process." While that might sound as though the rite has been widely and successfully implemented, the qualifier—"some version"—is telling. Many parishes are engaged largely in a membership transfer process that helps already baptized members of other Christian communities to understand the differences between the faith tradition of their childhoods and the requirements of the faith tradition of their Catholic spouses or fiancées. While this is not insignificant, the process of joining the Catholic Church too often is for them a rather bland process, not a spiritual journey by which they, having heard "the mystery Christ proclaimed, seek the living God and enter the way of faith and conversion" (RCIA, No. 1). Conversion, as David Snow and Richard Machalek define it in an article in the *Annual Review of Sociology* (1984), is a "complete disruption" and a "radical discontinuity in a person's life." Less extreme changes are identified as "alternation" or "consolidation"—"actions that combine two prior but contradictory world views or identities."

Certainly, elements of the RCIA can be helpful for those who are moving toward full communion with the church.

The U.S. bishops say as much in the "National Statutes": "Those who have been baptized but have received relatively little Christian upbringing may participate in elements of catechumenal formation so far as necessary and appropriate...." However, they "should not take part in rites intended for the unbaptized catechumens" (No. 31).

WHAT IS THE RCIA?

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. This is the English title of the book whose Latin title is *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum* ("Order of Christian Initiation of Adults").

This book contains the scripts for more than a dozen liturgical ceremonies—that is, the prayers, Scripture readings and the rubrics specifying how each ritual should be carried out.

It also contains general introductory material describing the goals and in a general way the methods recommended for the entire initiation process.

There are also introductions to the individual rites that spell out at what point in the initiation process they are to be used and what criteria are to be used to determine when the catechumens and candidates are ready to celebrate them.

The "National Statutes on the Catechumenate" are also included, which were drawn up by the U.S. bishops as guidelines for implementing and adapting the initiation process for the United States.

All of these elements—ritual texts, introductory materials and the national statutes—are often referred to globally as "the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults" or simply "the RCIA."

THE EDITORS



CNS PHOTO/ASHLEIGH BUYERS

THE RITE STUFF. Ennio Mastroianni, center, helps lead a group of catechumens with Patrick Rogers, S.J., and Minerva San Juan in a chapel at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., Feb. 20.

However, consider as an example a faithful Christian whose father was an ordained Methodist minister, who went to a Methodist college with the intent of perhaps seeking ordination himself, who can quote copious amounts of Scripture from memory, who has an active prayer life and who has assisted his Catholic wife in preparing their three children for first Communion. He now seeks to become Catholic. When we put him “in the RCIA,” we not only fail to recognize properly the dignity of his baptism; we also do not fully honor the “radical discontinuity” of the conversion process of other participants, seekers who were truly lost and are now found. If we view the catechumenate process as simply a membership-switching mechanism, we diminish the normative vision of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults as a process of radical conversion.

Renewed Interest in Evangelization

I once suggested to a pastor that he stop receiving catechized, baptized Christians into full communion at the Easter Vigil, though this is a valid option according to the “National Statutes” (No. 33). His face turned pale, and he said, “If we did that, we wouldn’t have anyone to do the rites with at the Vigil!” Years later, I heard someone give a response that I wished I had thought of at the time: “If no one died in our parish this year, would we press someone into service as a pseudo-corpse just so we could celebrate the funeral rites?” If we have no catechumens at our Easter Vigil, what does that say about our parish as an evangelizing community? This is not an idle question. According to statistics from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, the number of adult baptisms has

dropped by approximately half since 2000.

The reason baptisms are declining certainly is not because we have accomplished the mission and there is no one left who needs to hear the good news. The Pew Research Group reports that “the number of Americans who do not identify with any religion continues to grow at a rapid pace. One-fifth of the U.S. public—and a third of adults under 30—are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling.” The reason for this growing lack of affiliation is not completely clear. The Pew study suggests that young adults, in particular, are steering clear of organized religion because of political backlash, broad social disengagement, secularization of American society and the fact that many are delaying marriage, a life event that traditionally brought couples back to the church.

It might seem odd to say it, but this moment of crisis can also be a moment of hope—a moment of grace. We Catholics always have been a little shy about sharing our faith. Now, we have no choice. If we are going to grow as a church and, more important, if we are going to continue to spread the Gospel, we will have to learn (or relearn) how to live our faith out loud.

Replacing Stories With Teachings

One fear I have is that in the wake of the coming discussions and the eventual retranslation of the ritual texts, instead of going out into the world and sharing the stories of our faith journeys with those who may need to hear them, we will become like Deacon Zeke and read doctrinal texts to the few seekers who manage to find their way to us. Indeed, if you Google “new evangelization” or “RCIA,” you will find count-

less study programs, video series, PowerPoint presentations, lecture notes and syllabi. It sometimes seems as though religious educators got together and decided that the reason people are no longer interested in becoming Catholic is that they have not yet had a proper systematic classroom presentation on salvation history. I am all for systematic classroom teaching. I am a successful product of it. But we cannot put the cart before the horse.

The *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997) reminds us there are three levels of catechesis. We too often start at the third level, which the directory calls ongoing or postbaptismal catechesis. The first level of catechesis is evangelization, or primary proclamation, which is addressed to those living in religious indifference (No. 61). As I noted, we Catholics can be hesitant to evangelize others. We are very fond of citing the line attributed to St. Francis that we should always proclaim the Gospel and, if necessary, use words. It is now necessary to use words.

For many of the religiously unaffiliated, the best way we can share the story of our faith is at the level the directory calls initiatory catechesis. This is classically the catechesis called for in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, which is also the model for all other forms of catechesis (No. 59). When we hear the word *catechesis*, however, many of us immediately think of *catechism* and a Deacon Zeke-style classroom experience. The directory does not tell us that.

Instead, the aim of initiatory catechesis “consists in precisely this: to encourage a living, explicit and fruitful profession of faith” (No. 66). The RCIA tells us that catechesis at this level includes an explanation of church teaching, but it “also enlightens faith, directs the heart towards God, fosters participation in the liturgy, inspires apostolic activity, and nurtures a life completely in accord with the spirit of Christ” (No. 78). This is the way the first disciples proclaimed the good news. They had no classrooms and no syllabi. They came together in faith, broke bread and shared the cup and showed generosity of heart to all people. The result of this simple initiatory catechesis was that “day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). This approach might speak to those who, although unaffiliated, are not religiously indifferent. According to the Pew study, two-thirds of this group believe in God and “the majority describe themselves either as a religious person (18 percent) or as spiritual but not religious (37 percent).”

The Christian initiation process for adults should not be accompanied by mandatory syllabi, suggested or required textbooks, or a set number of hours that seekers will need to be in the classroom. All of this violates the core principle that the way of faith is a spiritual journey that “varies according to the many forms of God’s grace” and that “nothing, therefore, can be settled a priori” (Nos. 5 and 76).

I used to teach like Deacon Zeke. I did so because I was afraid I did not know enough and that my own faith story was not strong enough or holy enough to lead seekers to Christ. Often, I am still afraid. When I meet a new seeker, when I hear the often wrenching story of his or her struggle to find peace and hope, I wonder what could possibly qualify me to be any kind of guide for this person. My faith is weak, and I have repeatedly failed to live up to what I will be calling this person before me to do. Wouldn’t it be easier to do a “read along” with a diocesan-approved text? Easier, for sure. But ineffective for most.

Catechists are not teachers in the usual sense of classroom instructors. Pope Francis, in his homily at a Mass for catechists, said:

Catechists are people who keep the memory of God alive; they keep it alive in themselves and they are able to revive it in others.... This is not easy! It engages our entire existence!... Dear catechists, I ask you: Are we in fact the memory of God?

The upcoming meeting of the F.D.L.C. and a new translation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults will not, by themselves, help us become the memory of God. But they will give us an opportunity to think more deliberately about whether or not we are working toward this goal and, if we are not, to ask ourselves what we are going to do about it. **A**



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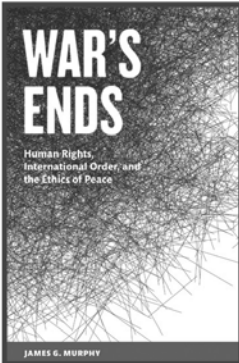
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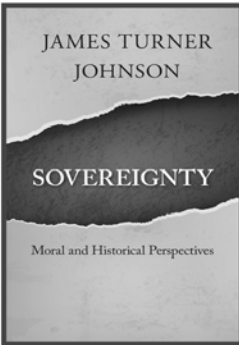
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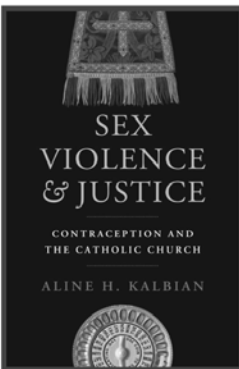
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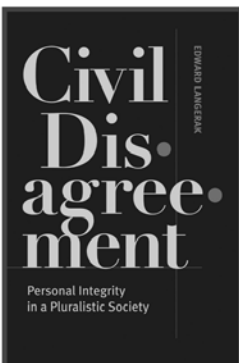
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Happiness 101

Thomas Aquinas can help students understand the purpose of theology.

BY ADAM M. GREEN



One would expect a class on happiness to be fairly popular among high school students. In one way or other, every Catholic high school offers just this type of class—only we call it theology. St. Thomas Aquinas held that happiness is one of the foundational characteristics of the mind's assent to God, and in this light theology is a discipline in which we seek not only to understand but ultimately to attain happiness.

Yet it is often difficult to get students engaged in theology, much less excited about it. I have been teaching theology in a formal setting for only three years. But in that time I have come to realize that many students have an overwhelmingly negative view of religion class. I teach freshmen who have come primarily from Catholic grade schools and parish religion programs. In our conversations there is nearly universal agreement that when religion class is reduced to religious information, it has 1) made them feel worse about themselves rather than better, 2) made them feel farther from God rather than closer and 3) caused them to think that faith is foolish and anti-reason, rather than thought-provoking and life-giving.

ADAM M. GREEN is a theology teacher at Walsh Jesuit High School, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. He received a master's degree in theological studies from the School of Theology and Ministry of Boston College.

It seems their negative experiences of theology stem from two opposite poles. For many, religious education has been on the one hand too nebulous and vague or, on the other hand, overly authoritative. When nebulous, religious education is described as having the extremely vague goal of simply "growing closer to God." Under this approach, theology becomes the "easy-A" course in grade school and parish education programs, where general statements like "Jesus is love" or "God is good" suffice for outstanding work. While statements like these are not wrong, failing to dig deeper into them with follow-up questions like "Why is God good?" "How is God good?" or "What does 'good' mean?" does a gross injustice to their richness and depth.

On the other end of the spectrum, religious education often has been justified with arguments from authority and tradition. At this extreme, religious educators hammer home to students that they must study theology "because that is what a religious school does" or that they "need to know this to fit in at church." These demands for obedience and conformity manifest themselves in a religious education that is not much more than mechanical memorization of dogmas and doctrines, which may ultimately result in a robotic pseudo-relationship between the student and God. What is even more unfortunate is that many times these seemingly

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contradictory poles of intellectual laxity and blind obedience coexist in one school or classroom.

But these justifications for and experiences of religious education could not be farther from the actual goal of theology, particularly as articulated by Aquinas. The Thomistic commentator Thomas O'Meara, O.P., writes in his book *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian* that "the life of knowing, faith, and love has for its specifying goal not religious obedience but happiness." While this statement is true, leaving it at that runs the risk of falling into the aforementioned pious imprecision. If religious education is to be a positive and meaningful experience for today's students, we must rearticulate why theology is taught. To do this, we must wrestle with the important question Father O'Meara's statement raises, which he succinctly formulates a few lines later: "But what is real happiness?"

Many False Paths

Consciously or not, all adolescents (and adults, for that matter) wrestle with this question every day. When it comes to how they spend their free time, why they study and what they envision for their life beyond the classroom, students are trying to pursue happiness. Too often, however, this wrestling does not go far enough. Hampered by the simple answers promoted in popular culture and the media, students can be misled about what will bring them lasting happiness. It is not surprising to find that St. Thomas Aquinas, with his deep understanding of human nature, speaks clearly to adolescents in the 21st century, although he wrote over 500 years ago. The First Part of the Second Part of his *Summa Theologiae* remains a masterful guide for all who seek to travel far along the path to happiness in this life and the next.

Aquinas first goes to great lengths to point out what happiness is not: it is not wealth, pleasure, fame, honors or power. Not only are these things not in themselves happiness, they often become obstacles to true happiness because they entrap the seeker with enjoyments that are ultimately fleeting and unsatisfying. Aquinas explains that wealth cannot contain happiness because the true value of wealth is that it can be used to buy other things (I.II.2.1). For example, a teenager may desire wealth in order to buy fashionable clothes. Now because the goal of the wealth is precisely something else—in this case, clothes—the objects wealth buys are more desirable than the wealth itself. Because wealth itself is not the final step in the pursuit of happiness, we cannot say that wealth is happiness.

On a related but different level, Aquinas points out that pleasure also cannot of itself be happiness (I.II.2.6). This

is primarily because pleasure is dependent on the senses. Good food is pleasurable because of the sense of taste, beautiful possessions are pleasurable because of the sense of sight and sexual gratification is pleasurable because of the sense of touch. As such, these pleasures are neither supreme nor eternal. Put positively, in order to be pleased by something that is beautiful or tastes good you must have good eyesight and functioning taste buds. If you are blind or do not have proper olfactory functions, less happiness will be found in

these things. So while these are things that often give pleasure, they cannot be equated with happiness.

Next, Aquinas points out that happiness is not contained in honors because honor (or "reputation") is given to a person as a result of some achievement or personal quality (I.II.2.2). Thus, the achievement or quality is primary because it precipitates the honor, in the same way that an object obtained through wealth is primary to the wealth itself. Likewise, Aquinas concludes that neither fame (I.II.2.3) nor power (I.II.2.4) contain happiness. This is because both fame and power are temporary and neither is self-sufficient. Likewise, it is very rare for a person who has power to retain that power *ad infinitum*. A teacher can simply show students a newspaper or magazine from a decade ago, or even a few months ago, to illustrate this point: From professional athletes to pop culture icons to politicians, there seems to be no shortage of people who reach great heights of honor, fame and power only to come crashing down into infamy or obscurity.

As he concludes his section on what happiness is not, Aquinas states that happiness cannot exist in any created good, because the ultimate object of our longings is supreme and eternal goodness and truth, which belong to the Creator alone: "For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls the appetite altogether; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired" (I.II.2.8).

An Imperfect Pursuit

This is admittedly a lengthy explanation of what happiness is not. The purpose was not to evade the original question. In fact, it seems the largest impediment to happiness for high school students is that they believe they have already found it in the aforementioned categories; their quest to understand happiness ceases because they begin searching for things they think will bring happiness. Having removed these false leads, however, we can now direct our attention more positively to what happiness is. Aquinas says that there are ultimately two kinds of happiness, imperfect happiness and perfect happiness (I.II.4.5). We can obtain imperfect

I tell students that ultimately the point of learning theology is to be happy.

happiness (*felicitas*) in this life by growing in our knowledge of God through the “operation of the intellect.” Perfect happiness (*beatitudo*) is the “vision of God” (I.II.4.5), which, Aquinas argues, is not dependent on a body. This vision does not mean sight in the literal sense, since that would make it dependent on the eyes; rather it is a perception that transcends the senses. This logically makes perfect happiness supreme because it is not dependent on anything other than God. We could lose everything we know, even our own bodies, and the happiness of being with God still remains.

Moving one step further, since happiness is full perception of God, and theology is about studying God, theology contributes to happiness in the same way that learning about a friend or partner allows your intimacy with them to expand and deepen. Theology, when taught and understood properly, should contribute both to imperfect happiness—through the operation of the intellect—as well as ideally and eventually to perfect happiness at the end of a person’s earthly life. These are ambitious goals, to say the least. Additionally, simply stating these goals at the outset of a theology course will not necessarily change the subject matter itself. However, rearticulating these goals explicitly and directly for students will hopefully at the very least correct their orientation and at the very most increase their interest and efforts—not to mention those of their teacher.

In my own classroom, I have tried to take three concrete

steps to bring this rearticulation full circle. First, I tell students that ultimately the point of learning theology is to be happy, and I discuss how we might see this in the content of a given course. How might understanding the Bible, its genres, nuances, literary devices and message add to a student’s happiness? How might understanding the growth, development and sometimes regression of the church over the course of history increase a student’s identification with his or her own faith? How might understanding ethics transcend merely “following the rules” and become an avenue for living a fulfilled life? Next, I explain how many common conceptions of happiness may “make us happy,” in the sense of pleasing us, but that happiness is about something much deeper, less dependent, more lasting—and rooted in God.

Finally, while I primarily help students entertain questions about happiness at a concrete level—using situations and examples from their own experiences—from that foundation, I encourage personal reflection and contemplation to propel the conceptual knowledge into the realm of prayer, because, as Father O’Meara says, “Ultimately God instructs not through epiphany but through presence.” When students realize theology class is not about “giving answers” but rather about “learning how to seek them,” I find they come to class more willing to engage openly and thoughtfully with the Catholic faith and tradition. And that is enough to make any theology teacher happy. ▲

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Following Francis

Francis, the first Jesuit pope in history, is a missionary. Like his fellow Jesuits Francis Xavier and Matteo Ricci before him, he passionately desires to share “the joy of the Gospel” with the peoples of Asia, a continent with a rich diversity of peoples, religions and cultures, where 60 percent of the world’s population lives, among them a tiny Christian minority.

He has just been to South Korea, where he met some 100 Asian bishops and thousands of young Catholics from 30 Asian countries and beatified 124 martyrs. He will visit Sri Lanka and the Philippines in January.

Francis is the third pope to visit Asia. Paul VI went twice, in 1964 and 1970; John Paul II made seven trips between 1981 and 1999.

Bergoglio was attracted to Asia long before he became pope. After meeting Pedro Arrupe, the newly elected general superior of the Jesuits, in Argentina in 1965, he wrote to him asking to be sent as a missionary to Japan. His request was declined for health reasons, but the dream lived on. As the Jesuit provincial superior of Argentina (1973-79), he sent young men to Japan as missionaries; he later visited them in 1987.

Now, as pope, he is reaching out to the peoples of Asia, particularly its 720 million young people (ages 15 to 24) and those on the peripheries, seeking to share with them the good news of Jesus by promoting a culture of encounter and by his own personal witness to God’s love and mercy.

GERARD O’CONNELL, *America’s Rome correspondent, traveled with Pope Francis on his recent visit to South Korea. America’s Vatican coverage is sponsored in part by the Jesuit communities of the United States.*

This approach is particularly important in Asia, where over 60 percent of the world’s Muslims live, as do the overwhelming majority of Hindus and Buddhists, many followers of other religions and millions who profess no faith. Francis’ advocacy of the culture of encounter resonates well here, where cultural and religious diversity sometimes sparks animosity and conflict between peoples. It could also open the door to a dialogue of friendship with China’s leadership, like that of Ricci in the late 1500s—something Francis greatly desires.

The first pope from the Southern Hemisphere understands that the setting for evangelization in Asia is complex. Conscious of Rome’s past mistakes there, he wishes to open a new chapter by empowering the local churches and encouraging them to explore new ways.

Pope Francis knows that Asia, with its different political systems, is emerging as the world’s dominant economic powerhouse and is spawning what Paul VI described as “flagrant inequalities not merely in the enjoyment of possessions, but even more in the exercise of power.” Over half the world’s 900 million absolutely poor people live here, surviving on less than \$1.25 a day.

The pope is concerned over this poverty, economies that exclude, the threats to peace emerging from Asia’s increasing militarization and its ongoing pollution of the environment.

He is concerned too that in Asia women experience a low level of gender equality, the right to life is widely disregarded, and a great many are de-

nied full religious freedom.

As pope, Francis is visiting Asia’s Catholic Church with its 140 million faithful, a mere 3.3 percent of the population (only 1.3 percent without the Philippines). He wants to embrace and encourage this tiny flock because he is convinced that, like the mustard seed, it has potential for great growth and could bring a new springtime for the church.

Asia’s
Catholic
Church has
great
potential
for growth.

The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences also believes this and, in its evangelizing mission, has committed its churches to a triple dialogue: with the poor, with the religions and with the cultures of Asia. Its former secretary general, Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of the Philippines, told me the bishops hope Francis

will endorse and give new impetus to this dialogue.

A great many Asians already have a positive image of Pope Francis, thanks to the media. They are impressed by his humility, simple lifestyle, the coherence between his words and actions, and the way he embraces the poor, the disabled, the sick and the outcasts.

“He’s struck a chord immediately among Asians with his consistent concern for the poor, the marginalized, and by telling the church to be for the poor,” Cardinal Oswald Gracias of India told me recently. “Francis has sparked an atmosphere of joy, enthusiasm and excitement,” he added; “There’s life, vitality and enthusiasm for the church now. People say this is the church that I like to belong to.” **GERARD O’CONNELL**

Stumbling Onward

Learning from my third graders

BY JEFFREY ESSMANN

I have come to trust my stumbles. Philosophically, I believe stumbling to be the natural human gait and that humanity's steady march of progress has, indeed, generally been a matter of tripping, bumping into walls and clipping corners. As for my own march of progress, such as it is, it's the times when I have assumed the most confident stride that often have proved the most delusional and disappointing. On the other hand, there has been an ontological honesty to my stumbles, an odd sense of direction beneath their unsure footing, and they've usually landed me in places I need to be, places confidence never would have brought me.

I stumbled into catechesis. Last summer I was looking for a way to become more involved at my church when I noticed on the parish website a call for catechists for the upcoming year. So I shot an email to the director of religious education telling her that I had taught young children, had done confirmation preparation with teenagers and was looking to get more involved—what did she think? She wrote back within minutes saying yes, I should definitely do this, and attached a list of available positions. It hardly felt like a stumble at all. Yet right after I hit “send” on the email message agreeing to be the catechist for the third-grade students that fall, my heart started pounding. At the

time, I wasn't quite sure why. I told myself I was just excited. But there was a deeper tug to the excitement, and on some level, I think I knew that my life



was about to change.

The most profound change was in my experience of time, and I could feel it almost immediately. Having very little past and so much future that it is hardly real, third graders exist almost entirely in the present. Large blocks of time are absurdities to them; history is a mix-and-match book of fantastic characters and far-off lands, and when I told them the church was over 2,000 years old, they thought that Jesus and

the apostles had to watch out for dinosaurs.

This same immediacy means that they can carom wildly between intensity and distraction, passion and disinterest. But it also creates a dizzying openness in which there can be a sudden upsurge of the Spirit that carries us somewhere beyond the day's lesson and closer to the God we know without following any lesson plan at all. (Once we were talking about doing nice things for people, and a girl told us about visiting her aunt when she was sick in the hospital. “We brought her a candy bar,” she said, “but she still died.”)

They live by a simple code: Things should be fun. And if something is fun, it should be repeated and, if possible, be even more fun the next time. They love Aesop's fables. I used them to introduce a unit on parables and they were a big hit, so now we start each class with a couple of them. This is where third graders are terrific. They love it that the fables are animal stories, but they also love the moral discussion afterwards, which I've come to call “Baptizing Aesop,” since more often than not the kids totally Christianize the moral. (“The donkey should have forgiven the rooster.”)

They love reading about the saints, though at first they thought martyrdom was stupid. I realized I had to teach about Martin Luther King Jr. first and then backpedal to St. Agnes. (They also love Moses, and I've fielded several requests to return briefly to the

Old Testament.)

They love to ask questions:

“What’s a pagan?”

“What’s a convent?”

“Why is Mary stepping on a snake?”

And they love fire. Their favorite part of our in-class prayer service is the lighting of the candle. By third-grade logic, if you’re going to light a candle, the rest of the room should be as dark as possible. First, they wanted the lights out; the next week they decided the shades should also be drawn. (The lights-putter-outer, shades-drawer and candle-lighter are now highly coveted nonordained ministries.) I realized that they thought a prayer

service should be kind of spooky, and I think they are probably right. One week we did an entirely silent service. I had been teaching them the Apostles’ Creed in American Sign Language, and we decided to do the part we knew for the prayer service. And as my eyes adjusted to the light after the candle was lit, I saw them at their desks in the shadows at the soft periphery of the candlelight, their arms moving slowly in the gestures of the Creed.

I have come to believe that it is the graced immediacy of children that made Jesus say they were close to the Kingdom of God, and spending an hour a week so close to the Kingdom

has changed my own sense of time as well. I have a past with this faith community, and I very much have a present, but now I even have a future. Part of me, I hope, will live on in this parish, in these children, in their faith; part of me—the best part—I hope will live on in the church. In the meantime I shall stumble onward, because the good thing about stumbling is that sometimes you stumble right into the arms of God.

JEFFREY ESSMANN, a writer whose work has appeared in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* as well as numerous literary journals and magazines, is a catechist at St. Francis Xavier Parish in New York.

House of Corrections

Lessons from behind bars

BY ERIN ELIZABETH CLUNE

I stayed on the phone with my husband as I drove up to the prison, its jagged stone facade stretching outward from a large, pointed, central turret. If it had not been nestled within the beautiful, rolling landscape of the lower Catskill mountains, I thought, this building would look much more ominous. I had taught plenty of college classes before—but never inside a maximum security prison. This semester, my students would be incarcerated men, some of them presumably doing time for violent crimes. During the hefty two-hour commute from my apartment in New York City, I had plenty of time to conjure up some worst-case scenarios. Would the students be tough, I wondered, or intimidating? Was it really safe for women to work in this environment? “See you tonight,” I said to my husband, nervously signing off. “Wish me luck.”



When I agreed to work at the prison, I had not even been looking for a

job. Tom, an old friend of mine from graduate school, had called me up one day quite out of the blue and said his prison college program was looking for an instructor, and he had thought of me. It was run, Tom said, by a highly reputable organization called the Bard Prison Initiative. In the absence of public funding, the program enabled incarcerated men and women to take college courses and get college degrees. Teaching in a prison might take some getting used to, Tom admitted. But they really needed someone. And, he promised, it would be extremely rewarding.

Once I was inside the facility and simply focused on the people around me, my apprehension started to fade. While I waited for my paperwork to be processed, a few employees entered through the main doors, passed

through the security scanners in the lobby and chatted with the front desk officers. These folks obviously knew each other well; they shared stories about their children, their holidays, their health. Eventually, two young men dressed in sweatshirts and prison-issued khaki pants came to clean the front hallway floors. They worked steadily, quietly, occasionally exchanging a few words. To me, they looked tired and depleted. Worse, I thought, they barely looked old enough to be teenagers.

After almost an hour, a corrections officer took me back to the prison's school. Every few minutes we stopped at a security gate and waited for a guard to buzz us through to the next checkpoint. Maybe it was because I was being led around, somewhat blindly, in an unfamiliar place; but each of these gates served as a sobering reminder to me that I was now in someone else's protective custody, locked away, several times over, from everyone I loved.

Still, it was not the physical isolation of prison that struck me most. It was the spiritual bleakness. Being put away from the rest of humanity is just the beginning. For a number of years—or in the case of one man I met, possibly the rest of his life—the prisoner now has roughly four places to go: the yard, the cafeteria, the job site, the cell. He goes every day, whether he wants to or not. He can express individuality within that framework of control. He can sit and read a book, for example, in his cell. But he may well have to read it amid a constant din of yelling, clanging, chaos and commotion. The worst prisons subject people to physical cruelty. But within the normal bounds of captivity, it seemed to me, prison deprives people of even their freedom to rest, be restored and think.

When we finally got to the prison school, the atmosphere changed. In contrast to other parts of the building that I passed through, the prison school seemed alive with hope and pur-

pose. There were only seven or eight students there at any given time—one typing quietly at a computer, another talking to the program director, another sorting through books in the tiny side room they called the library. But their small number contributed to my impression that they had come together to do more than just study or learn. It felt like they were gathered there, inside that small intellectual oasis, to drive the bleakness away.

The course I was there to teach was a weekly seminar that focused on one 768-page book: W. E. B. Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction in America 1860–1880*. Initially, I had worried that the material might be too difficult or the focus too intensive. But in fact, the students demonstrated a degree of engagement that I had rarely encountered in a traditional college class. And far from being intimidating or tough, they were helpful and respectful. As I approached the small desk at the front of the musty classroom, one student brought me a chair and asked if I wanted some coffee. As we talked, I understood why this program was so important. It was designed partly to rehabilitate inmates through education. Ideally, it empowered them to manage life on the outside. But regardless of their sentence or ultimate chance for parole, it also offered them a chance for intellectual—and spiritual—transformation. It was one restorative place, deep within that warehouse of human deprivation, where men had the freedom to think. In that sense, it really was an oasis—and not only for those living on the inside.

When Tom called me, I was struggling with a new life transition. After spending eight years in a doctoral program, one year in a postdoctoral fellowship and another year as a new assistant professor, I had become pregnant—happily, fortunately, but unexpectedly. Because my husband could not find a new job—and because I really didn't feel we could raise a child

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in a household dictated by two intense and demanding full-time careers—I quit my job.

Frequently in academia, biological clocks and tenure clocks conspire to knock women off their predicted career paths, and I had known this. But my professional detour was rather sudden and severe. I didn't regret my choice, but I regretted having had to make it, and I missed my career. I also found new motherhood more challenging—and isolating—than I had imagined. Raising a toddler full time requires you to be present and engaged for 12 to 14 hours a day with someone whose own attention span is roughly 15 seconds. I spent a lot of time feeling suspended, unfulfilled and unresolved. As my world narrowed into a life that centered on my daughter's immediate needs, I waited for a time when I'd feel ready to leave her in someone else's care and go back to working full time. But somehow that readiness never materialized.

I decided I could manage the prison course because it didn't require me to make a huge time commitment. I found it exhilarating to teach again. This was not a career-track job like the one I'd left. But it was an opportunity to share ideas with students—people who clearly appreciated my efforts. As we made our way through weighty topics like land redistribution, slavery and emancipation, their thoughtfulness inspired me. The fact that I was sitting in a prison completely receded into the back of my mind. And grad-

ually, so did my professional angst. Regardless of my traditional career prospects, I realized, I could still make a valuable contribution. I could still do rewarding, meaningful work. That simple fact made me feel peaceful and restored.

During my short tenure as an instructor at the prison—and later, as a thesis advisor for one of the students—I talked with people about the job. I talked about its bleakness and its transformative rewards. But, more privately, I knew the job was also transforming me. Growing up Catholic, I had learned about the concept of mercy. Or as a less religious person might call it, compassion. My Catholic instructors taught about mercy in terms of specific acts: feed the hungry, for example, or give drink to the thirsty. And most of them made intuitive sense to me. But I never really understood why visiting the imprisoned was considered an act of mercy on a par with tending to basic human needs. Were prisoners really so needy? Did mercy really reject a distinction between supposedly deserving and undeserving souls?

When I experienced life inside a prison first-hand, it became abundantly clear to me why prisoners are on that list. *Black Reconstruction* always has been one of my favorite historical texts. "Easily the most dramatic episode in American history," Du Bois writes at the outset, "was the sudden move to free four million black slaves in an effort to stop a great civil war, to end forty years of bitter controversy,

and to appease the moral sense of civilization." It is a beautiful and powerful book. In the prison, however, these words took on even broader relevance than they had before. Talking about freedom with people who had lost it—but who were so diligently and painstakingly striving to make their way back to it—was a profound experience. Getting to know these men as individuals gave me personal insight into the meaning of mercy that my religious education had not given me. It reminded me that compassion can have unexpected rewards, in the smallest of ways and the unlikeliest of places.

Not long ago, I got a letter from one of my students. He had been one of the most engaged students in the course, and the following year, I had served as the primary advisor for his senior thesis. When my family moved away from New York, I had missed his graduation by just a few days. But before I left, I had driven up to the prison one last time for his thesis defense. The faculty committee who sat with us roundly praised his work. It was one of the proudest and most rewarding moments of my professional life.

In his letter, he thanked me profusely, again, for working with him. I would never know how much it meant, he wrote, that I had come all that way to teach at the prison when I could have just stayed home with my own children.

I wrote back, yes, my children were very important to me. At times, the teaching and driving schedule had been difficult for me and my family. But I had gained so much from it. Working at the prison school—for such a worthy program and with such deserving students—had been more rewarding than I could ever have expected. So, I said, let's just agree to be mutually grateful.

ERIN ELIZABETH CLUNE is a writer in Madison, Wis.

FROM IN ALL THINGS

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

"The Humbling History of World War I," Margot Patterson

americamagazine.org/things

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

LIFE ITSELF

Richard Linklater's journey through 'Boyhood'

There is perhaps no better example of the motion picture as an act of faith than Richard Linklater's **Boyhood**. The best-reviewed film of 2014 thus far, it was shot in a little over a month of days spread over a time span of 12 years, with the same actors playing the same roles, aging as their characters aged, changing as their characters changed. What could possibly have gone wrong, other than everything?

Because it is impossible to address "Boyhood" without first explaining

how it was made suggests that this close-to-three-hour drama is all about the gimmick. It's not. Watching the principal boy in the 'hood, Mason (Ellar Coltrane) progress from kindergarten to college, clumsily negotiating the obstacle course of modern American childhood, is an exhilarating, melancholic and spiritually uplifting thing. Linklater, through music, décor and attitudes, creates a kind of time trip that cinema never has undertaken before—a movie cannot be a "period piece" if it is shot during the

period it covers, can it? "Boyhood" is as immersive as it is observational, and at the same time inescapably self-reflective. In terms of manipulating the relationship between viewer and screen, there is nothing quite like it.

But while Linklater's novel approach to character study, a.k.a. the gimmick, should not be overstressed, it can hardly be ignored. Nor should it be. That the viewer knows what he/she knows about the making of the film—the years spent, the actual boyhood intruded upon—adds to one's emotional investment and elation. The aspirations of an artist may not save a failed work, but when something works this well, the sense of daring behind it can be an intoxicant.

Linklater has always had an appetite for the unorthodox. He rode



GROWING UP. Ellar Coltrane in "Boyhood."

out of Texas with “Slacker,” his un-conventionally plotted—as in un-plotted—indie-festival fave of 1991. The shaggy, druggy “Dazed and Confused” (1993) brought him a cult following. The animated navel-gazer “Waking Life” (2001) bestowed on him a degree of intellectual heft, and

You fold this sweater the way a moth
builds halls from the darkness it needs
to go on living—safe inside this closet

a family is gathering for dinner, cashmere
with oil, some garlic, a little salt, lit
and wings warmed by mealtime stories

about flying at night into small fires
grazing on the somewhere that became
the out-of-tune hum older than falling

—you close the drawer and slowly
your eyes shut—with both hands
make a sign in the air as if death matters.

SIMON PERCHIK

Simon Perchik is an attorney whose poems have appeared in Partisan Review, The Nation, Poetry, The New Yorker and elsewhere. His most recent collection is Almost Rain, published by River Otter Press (2013).

the “Before” movies of 1995-2013 (“Before Sunrise,” “Before Sunset” and “Before Midnight”) somehow made him synonymous with the realpolitik of romance, and romance itself. Meh. This reviewer prefers “School of Rock” (2003) and “Bernie” (2011), deftly hilarious and pretension-free comedies.

But “Boyhood” is in some other league. Alongside a couple of his regulars (Ethan Hawke, Patricia Arquette) he cast young Coltrane, who, to Linklater’s unending good fortune,

happened to progress from appealing kid to attractive man. Coltrane does not carry the movie as much as he is carried along by its story, which Linklater reportedly developed from one year of shooting to the next and which touches on aspects of contemporary life (as in 2002-13) that might, in another era,

have been the basis for dramas all their own. Divorce. Marriage. Domestic abuse. Drunkenness. Unemployment. And the ever popular coming of age. Mason never “comes of age,” whatever that means. Life is a river, and “Boyhood” is merely a sizable chunk of waterfront.

It is also an immigrant story, in a very particular and peculiar sense, the immigrant being Mason’s mother, Olivia (Patricia Arquette). She is a refugee in a new world, where women have not only been given rights but have also been saddled with most of the responsibilities. Olivia responds like an ambitious arriviste: She rids herself of Mason Sr., father of Mason and Samantha (played by Linklater’s daughter, Lorelei), goes to college, marries her professor, becomes a professor, makes a home, raises her kids and does it without much help from the men in her life, who are either angry

or aimless. One of the more poignant moments occurs during a Houston Astros game (Roger Clemens, blast from the past, is pitching) when Mason turns to Dad and asks him if he has a job. That college professor Mom mar-

ries? Bill (Marco Perella) becomes increasingly loathsome as he descends into secret drinking and overt violence.

“Boyhood” could not feel as true as it does about life among the 99 percent in the United States without being bitter-sweet bordering on dour. Religion plays no more part in Mason’s family life than politics. The family may live in Texas, but there is very little about them that conforms to what the rest of the country perceives Texas to be. Not only do these people lack any interest in values and virtues beyond the four walls of their home, they lack the time for devotion to them. Mason’s mother is constantly busy making ends meet or furthering her career; Dad, driving his dad-like GTO, is occupied with being a metaphor for the eternal rootlessness of Americans. Mom’s third husband Ted (Steven Prince), an Iraq vet who becomes a corrections officer—great choice, by the way—is symbolic of the anger and frustration evident among a certain constituency of white American males for whom the world has refused to conform to expectations.

So, in a kind of sidelong way, Linklater does comment on current affairs, while keeping Mason at the center of his concerns, with a boy’s point of view informed by both the narcissism of childhood and the myopia of the eye witness. One would not trust Mason to report on the proceedings in “Boyhood,” any more than one would trust a civilian in a war zone to give an evenhanded account of the conflict. But Linklater, reporting from the front, seizes our confidence from the start.

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

FROM IN ALL THINGS

Even if he couldn’t see the light at the end of the tunnel, he clearly never stopped fighting to find a way to get there.

“Not a Hollywood Ending: Robin Williams, RIP,” Jim McDermott, S.J.

americamagazine.org/things

INVITATION TO MILLENNIAL WOMEN

*The Church needs you, your enthusiasm, your creativity,
and the joy that is so characteristic of you.*

—Pope Francis
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*Kaleigh, Emily, Haley, Kristen, Malea, Devrée,
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ALONE IN A CROWD

I'm not exactly an imposing guy. I don't pump much iron. I guess I can wear a lot of dark clothing, but that's usually accompanied by a clerical collar. And the Iowa niceness I grew up around comes across pretty quickly.

Recently, however, during the course of many long walks in a bustling urban neighborhood, people seemed afraid to look at me. I tried to smile at others as I walked, but most were too busy looking at their phones, or their dogs, or a crack in the sidewalk—anything but the person passing them—so that they did not have to make uncomfortable eye contact with a stranger.

Even a woman wearing a shirt that said, "It takes a smile" didn't, well, take my smile and return it. She was too busy looking down to notice me.

I don't think this experience is unique to this city or because of my (not exactly) threatening appearance. These passersby were simply following "the rules" when it comes to walking through most large American cities.

I spent the past two years in East Africa unable to go anywhere in public without people staring at me, calling out to me from across the street or striking up a conversation. It was never boring. At times, however, especially after a long day, I often yearned for a little more peace and quiet and the ability to go somewhere without being noticed.

Now, back in the States, I can pass thousands of people without anyone saying a single word to me. It might feel more comfortable not to be interrupted, but it's not exactly comforting

when people do not acknowledge my existence.

As I passed crowds of people and felt a mission to connect with others on the sidewalk, I found myself thinking, "Don't you know I want to say hi to you? Please look at me!" I was surrounded by people in the heart of the city but still felt lonely.

I thought being in a place where I could walk without being bothered would be refreshing, but now that I have returned to a place where I blend in and can walk without drawing attention, I can't help but feel that I have lost something instead.

Recent research seems to support my own experience. Nicholas Epley and Juliana Schroeder, behavioral scientists at the University of Chicago, asked a group of experiment participants to keep to themselves and "enjoy their solitude" while commuting on a train. They asked another group to initiate a conversation with a fellow passenger.

Before the experiment, participants expected to prefer the solitary ride, but afterward those who spoke reported a more pleasant commute than those told to savor their solitude. Those who talked to someone were often surprised by just how enjoyable it was.

Often, when I am tired or stressed, I think that what I need is some "me" time. Perhaps, however, I actually need more "we" time.

The rules for keeping to ourselves in a city, instead of reaching out to stran-

gers, might not be helpful. They might in fact make us much less happy.

In a Chicago Tribune article describing the results, Epley writes, "People have strong beliefs about what will make them happy. Sometimes those beliefs are systematically wrong."

Additionally, while we may hold relationships with family members and close friends to be far more important than encounters like these with strangers, some studies indicate that the more social interactions we have—even with the person who tells you your shoe is untied, or the sneezing stranger to whom you say, "God bless you"—the happier we tend to be.

When I think of my day, I might not even remember all the spontaneous, short encounters with strangers or recognize their importance. At the same time, if I have

extra pep in my step for seemingly no reason, it's often because of seeing the goodness of humanity in the kindness of a stranger.

During my recent attempts to get people to notice my smile or say hi on the sidewalk, many of the people who said something to me were paid to do it. They were working for a bar or restaurant and were trying to get people to come inside. While such brief greetings—"How's it going? We have some great specials today..."—are not very profound encounters, they at least make us feel that we're noticed, that we're human, that we're not alone.

And isn't that what we really want?

I can pass
thousands of
people
without
anyone
saying a word
to me.



MICHAEL ROSSMANN, S.J., after teaching at Loyola High School in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, is now a student at the School of Theology and Ministry of Boston College. Twitter: @RossmannSJ.



"The Church needs you, counts on you and continues to turn to you with confidence, particularly to reach the geographical and spiritual places where others do not reach or find it difficult to reach."

Pope Benedict XVI, address to the Society of Jesus, General Congregation 35, February 21, 2008



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LOST YOUTH

ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE

By Anthony Doerr
Scribner. 531p \$27

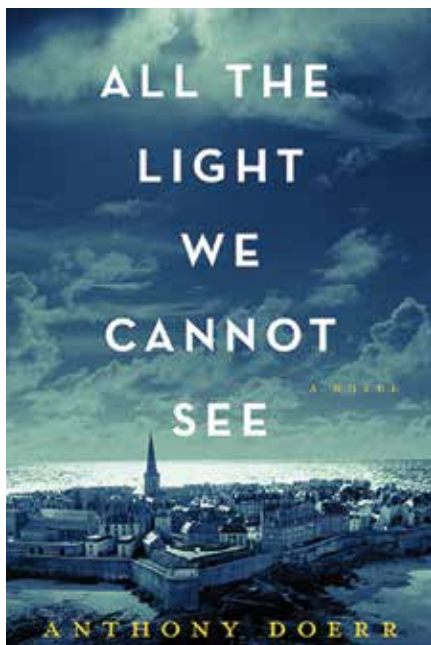
Anthony Doerr has previously published four books—one nonfiction, one novel and two story collections. His collection *Memory Wall* in particular helped him stand out from the crowds of writers; it was strange, magical and bold. He has won a number of awards, which is always partly a matter of luck, but he deserved them. His newest book, another novel, takes place primarily during World War II, the main characters a German boy and a blind French girl who spend less than a day together. Its title, *All the Light We Cannot See*, may suggest that we are all largely or often blind, or that light surrounds us even as we are unaware, or that somewhere else there is more light and we may yet see that promising more.

For long sections, chapters about the boy (Werner) and the girl (Marie-Laure) take turns, which brought to my mind Haruki Murakami's *1Q84*, in which chapters are divided between a young lady and a young man. In *1Q84* that arrangement allowed the book to accumulate enormous suspense. But it fizzled at the end, when the reader learned that all the obstacles that kept the two apart were merely an instance of true love not running smoothly. One thousand pages were thereby trivialized.

The same device in Doerr's novel, however, works, both because he does not hold to it so rigidly and because the novel is historical fiction. The obstacles Marie-Laure and Werner face are not mere fantasies of the author; they are the kinds of loss, confusion and horror that real people really en-

counter in war.

Nevertheless, for the first 18 pages I fretted. The writing seemed a bit unsteady, as if the author were standing on a chair to do it. Images came and went rather too quickly, as Dorothy said soon after she arrived in



Munchkinland: "My! People come and go so quickly here!"

But on page 19 we meet Marie-Laure's father, controller of all the keys to the National Museum of Natural History (as many as 12,000 of them), and take a headlong dive into the story, which is mysterious, complex, rich with diverse and full characters and written with what must be love. Daniel LeBlanc's fearless love and affection for his daughter are utterly convincing, and there must be other readers who wish they'd had him for their dad, as did I. Alas, he is taken off a train to parts unknown, perhaps a work camp, perhaps a concentration camp. Marie-Laure is now living in a fabulously narrow and

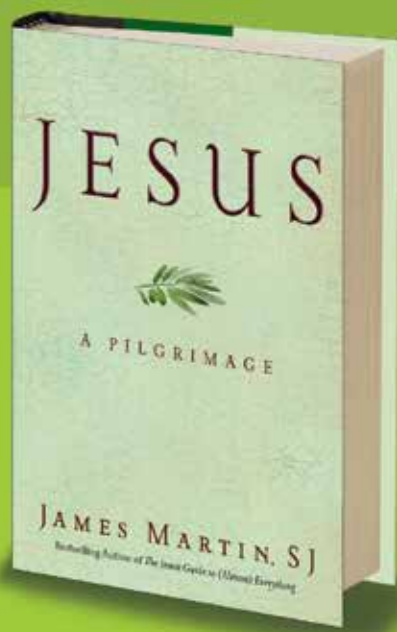
tall building in Saint-Malo with her uncle, Étienne, who, having endured World War I, remains frozen with terror until the need to care for his niece causes him to recover his courage.

We have also met Werner Pfennig, a very small youngster with ears that stick out and white hair, who is intellectually gifted and dreams of escaping work in the mines, the normal occupation for poor boys in his town (his father died in a mine accident). He longs to study math, physics and mechanical engineering. Bright as he is, he learns a good deal about these matters on his own. He and his younger sister, Jutta, listen to radio broadcasts on the receivers he has been able to acquire and fix up. Later, having been conscripted into the Hitler Youth and then the Nazi Army, he will be assigned to track down and destroy illicit radio sets in various countries. Jutta will also play an important part before the book ends.

These children are marvelously described. They come immediately to life, and we share their dreams, disappointments and struggles to survive and thrive. By the time some of them are remembering their youth, we are remembering it with them, in vivid detail that can be both pleasurable and excruciating. That the young grow old is both a joy and a sadness, we all know, but when we can, through a book, experience that journey, similar to yet profoundly different from our own, we have enlarged our world.

But it is war, and not everyone gets to grow old. At the school at Schulpforta, for example...

one hundred and nineteen twelve- and thirteen-years-olds wait in a queue behind a truck to be handed thirty-pound anti-tank landmines, boys who, in almost exactly one year, marooned amid the Russian advance, the entire school cut off like an island, will be given a box



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of the Reich's last bitter chocolate and Wehrmacht helmets salvaged from dead soldiers, and then this final harvest of the nation's youth will rush out with the chocolate melting in their guts and overlarge helmets bobbing on their shorn heads and sixty Panzerfaust rocket launchers in their hands in a last spasm of futility to defend a bridge that no longer requires defending.

There are many charged moments here: The cancer-stricken but threatening German, Sergeant Major von Rumpel, who seeks a "cursed" diamond

MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY

INSIDE STORY

HOTHOUSE

The Art of Survival and the Survival of Art at America's Most Celebrated Publishing House

By Boris Kachka
Simon and Schuster. 433p \$28

To review a book about a publishing house seems a rather dreary assignment. Who but the most ardent bibliophiles care about print runs and author advances? Does it really matter what appeared in the fall catalogue of 1963? But when the publishing house is home to Nobel Prize-winners and Pulitzer darlings and run by a Guggenheim, well, then things get a little more interesting. Add to the mix a brilliant, Jesuit-educated editor who worked with Thomas Merton and Flannery O'Connor, and for the Catholic reader, the story may be worth a look after all.

Hothouse is the story of Farrar, Straus & Giroux, or FSG in the argot of the publishing world. Boris Kachka, a writer for New York magazine, attempts to confer a "Mad Men" style sex-

called the Sea of Flames, tracks Marie-Laure to Étienne's house; Werner and his devoted friend Volkheimer are trapped in the cellar of the Hotel of Bees without food, water or light; drunken, madly victorious Russian troops rampage and rape; a sweet, bird-watching boy, with whom Werner bunked at a military school, becomes one of many ill-fated, heartrending casualties. I shamelessly cried through scenes of pitiable devastation and feel I would do so again if I were to reread *All the Light We Cannot See*.

KELLY CHERRY's new book, *A Kind of Dream*, is a collection of interlinked stories.

iness on the dowdy world of publishing. And in Roger W. Straus Jr., cofounder of the respected publishing house and son of Gladys Guggenheim, he has his Don Draper, a debonair entrepreneur who flirts with female staff, holds court at the Union Square Café and lunches with Seamus Heaney and Derek Wolcott. Known for his outsized personality and colorful cravats, Straus held a decades-long literary salon that stretched from FSG's offices in Union Square to his home in Purchase, N.Y., to his sojourns to the Frankfurt Book Fair every fall.

FSG did not have the financial resources of, say, a Random House, but Straus was more interested in prestige anyway, an elusive asset that he set out to accumulate in a surprisingly shrewd way. FSG's authors did not always sell

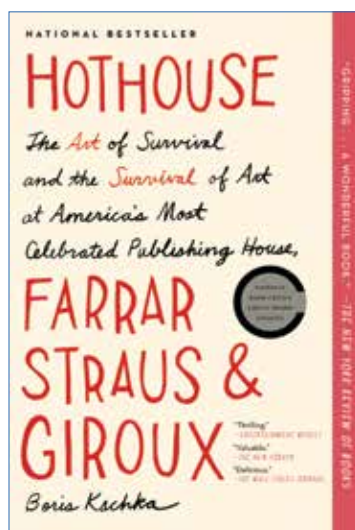
many books, but they were always reviewed in *The New York Times*. Authors like Susan Sontag, Joan Didion and Philip Roth brought to the house a literary value that helped lure other well-respected writers. Tom Wolfe and Scott Turow were top sellers, helping keep the house afloat in lean years. Today's crop of talent includes Jonathan Franzen and Jeffrey Eugenides, as well as Alice McDermott and Paul Elie, two Catholic authors who, one can assume, take pride in writing for a house that once published Merton and O'Connor.

Elie has a special connection with Farrar, Straus & Giroux. A graduate of Fordham University, he worked at FSG for many years and published two books with them, including *The Life You Save May Be Your Own*, an epic study of four mid-century Catholic writers. That three of those writers—Merton, O'Connor and Walker Percy—found a home at FSG is no coincidence. In later years, Elie was FSG's liaison to Robert Giroux, the final addition to FSG's eponymous

triumvirate.

A native of New Jersey who attended the Jesuit-run Regis High School in Manhattan, Giroux was confidant and editor to T. S. Eliot and Thomas Merton, among others. He helped bring *Seven Storey Mountain* to fruition and was among the first to read *Catcher in the Rye*, a book his boss at Harcourt, Brace turned down.

While at Harcourt, he published Jack Kerouac's first book, though he didn't know what to make of a second novel the mercurial writer delivered to his offices on a single roll of paper. When Giroux told him they would need separate pages for editing, Kerouac reacted with indignation and



stormed off. *On The Road* was published by Viking six years later.

Giroux joined FSG in 1955 and stayed for the rest of his career. Unfortunately, he fails to come alive in these pages, not surprising given the ink devoted to his more extroverted partner, Straus. Yet Giroux was obviously a “damned good editor,” in Straus’ words, and helped bring in some of FSG’s most notable writers, including Robert Lowell, Bernard Malamud and John Berryman. “The most sobering of all publishing lessons,” he once said, is that “a great book is often ahead of its time, and the trick is how to keep it afloat until the times catch up with it.” In the case of Flannery O’Connor, Giroux did just that, helping to drawing attention to a writer who died before receiving the recognition she deserved.

Giroux’s letters are now at Loyola University in New Orleans, a deal made possible through Patrick Samway, S.J., a biographer of Walker Percy and former literary editor of *America*. Samway was a close friend of Giroux, and probably could shine a brighter light on the legacy of this brilliant and complicated man, who was briefly married but spent most of his life living next door to a male friend he knew since childhood. Readers will have to wait for a more sensitive portrait to emerge.

Meanwhile, we have the story of a plucky publishing house that still cares a good deal about discovering the next great book. FSG may no longer be independent (they were sold to a German publishing powerhouse in 1994), but they still cultivate a contrarian spirit under the editorship of Jonathan Galassi. How they will fare in the age of Amazon is anyone’s guess. But if you care about good books, and the ideas they bring to the public conversation, then this is a story we can all hope will not end anytime soon.

MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY is an executive editor of *America*.

MARK J. DAVIS

ACTS OF RESISTANCE

WARSAW 1944

Hitler, Himmler and the Warsaw Uprising

By Alexandra Richie
Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 752p \$40

In August Poland commemorated the 70th anniversary of its uprising against the Nazi occupation. The heroic but hopeless 63-day struggle of the poorly armed Polish underground Home Army against the S.S. troops devastated Warsaw, killed thousands and fulfilled, at least temporarily, Hitler’s wish to erase the Polish capital from the face of the earth. Attempting to correct Soviet lies about the uprising and the Poles’ uncritical celebration of its fighters, Alexandra Richie has written an absorbing account of this barely remembered footnote to the war on the Eastern Front.

In September 1939 Germany and the Soviet Union carved up and invaded Poland. In June 1941, however, Germany attacked Russia and quickly occupied all of Poland. Although the Russians suffered staggering losses in population and territory, the tide of battle began to turn after they defeated the Germans at Stalingrad in early 1943. In June 1944, the same month the Western Allies launched the D-Day invasion of France, Russia began an offensive in Byelorussia that within weeks unexpectedly destroyed over one million German troops and brought the Russians to the gates of Warsaw. In July 1944, Hitler narrowly escaped an assassination attempt, which suggested to the Poles that the

Nazi regime was rapidly crumbling.

By August 1944, Warsaw had endured the German occupation for nearly five years. Unlike most of occupied Europe, the Poles refused to collaborate with the Nazis and organized a large resistance army. Hitler hated Warsaw, with its huge Jewish population and its implacable hostility to the occupation, perhaps more than any city in the world. After the Nazis liquidated the Jewish ghetto in 1942 and 1943, Warsaw’s pre-war population of 1.3 million had shrunk to 900,000.

The Poles decided as soon as the occupation began that they would rise up against the Nazis when the timing was right. With the German army unraveling in the face of the Russian offensive in the summer of 1944, the timing seemed right. But, as Richie explains, the Polish Home Army tragically miscalculated.

Richie, the Canadian-born author of *Faust’s Metropolis: A History of Berlin*, lives in Warsaw and writes sympathetically of the plight of the Poles: “The Poles were in an impossible situation in August 1944, caught between two of the most brutal and murderous regimes in history.” The Home Army thought that if it did nothing to liberate Warsaw, it would lack a legitimate claim to self-government. The Home Army knew that it could expect no help from the Russians. Stalin wanted to annihilate the Home Army and install a Soviet satellite in Poland. Stalin had, after all, ordered the murder of 4,410 Polish officers in the Katyn Forest and



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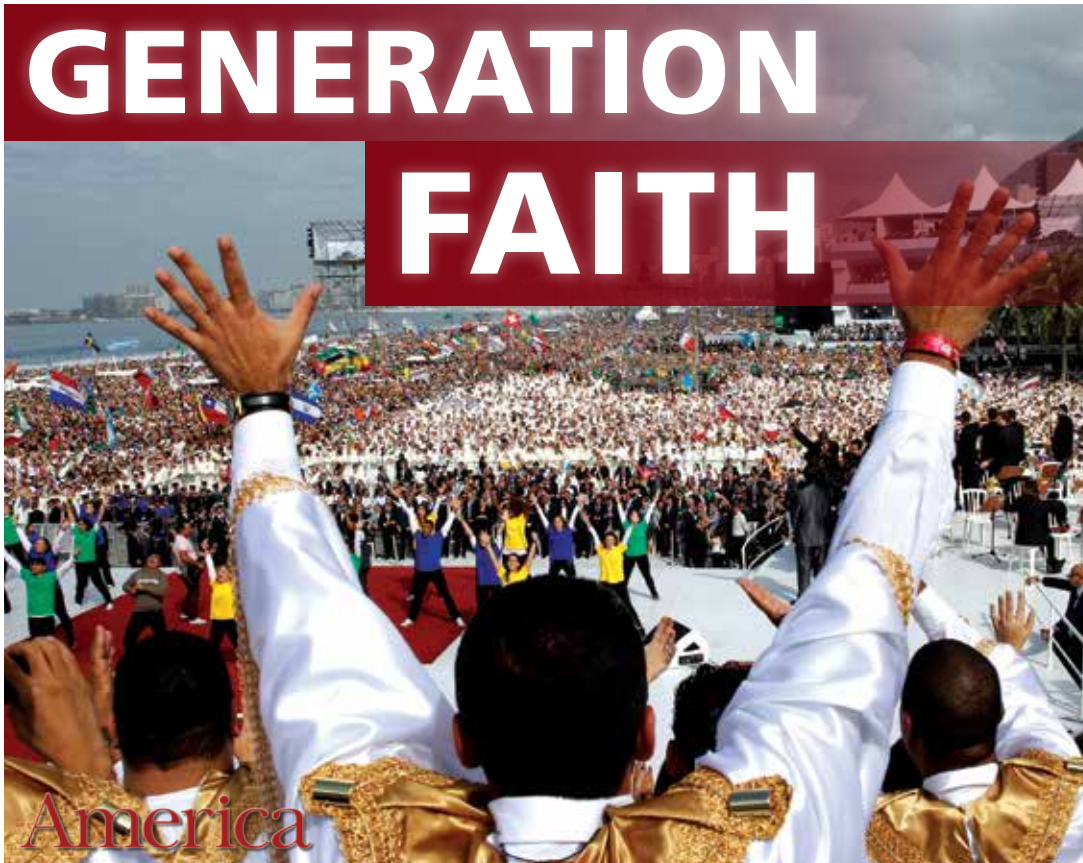
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the arrest of Home Army soldiers who fought with the Red Army in eastern Poland.

Richie, however, criticizes the Home Army command for the timing of the uprising. The uprising was a political rather than a military action, but the Home Army ignored military realities. Recently reinforced by battle-hardened divisions from Italy, the German army launched a counter-offensive that not only stopped the Russian advance but gave Stalin an excuse to avoid assisting the Poles. Richie also explains that the Home Army knew in advance that the Western Allies, who considered Poland part of the Soviet sphere and the Poles little more than a nuisance, would not provide assistance to the uprising. To mount an uprising under these circumstances, according to the respected Polish General Wladyslaw Anders, was “wishful thinking beyond reason.”

The Poles were not alone in making irrational decisions about the uprising. Hitler and Himmler ordered that Warsaw’s civilians, including women and children, be murdered and that the city be reduced to rubble. S.S. officers, who had perfected the art of mass murder in Byelorussia, were happy to oblige. At a time when the German army needed every available resource for the battle against the Russians, the decision to liquidate Warsaw was, in Richie’s view, “sheer madness on every level.”

Drawing on the archives of her father-in-law, a Polish historian, Richie provides testimonials from residents who witnessed the fighting and massacres. These first-hand accounts allow Richie to describe in exhaustive detail the battle in each of the city’s neighborhoods. While this evidence graphically shows the human cost of the uprising, its cumulative effect is numbing. As Stalin infamously remarked, “a single death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic.”

Additional weaknesses stem from Richie’s polonocentric perspective. She

describes Warsaw between the wars as a vibrant and tolerant cultural mecca, glossing over the right-wing government’s antipathy toward Jews, who were excluded from certain professions and had quotas imposed on their university attendance. She also fails to analyze possible explanations for the Western Allies’ reluctance to jeopardize their alliance with the Soviets. Total Russian army war casualties approached 30 million, approximately five million of

which occurred after August 1944. While President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill could have assessed the risks to the alliance of aiding the Poles differently, they cannot be faulted for opting to have the Russians continue to absorb the primary burden of finishing off the German army.

MARK J. DAVIS is a retired attorney in Santa Fe, N.M.



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November 12, 2014 | 6:30 p.m.
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Stephen Grimm, Ph.D.
Fordham University

LECTURE 3

March 11, 2015 | 6:30 p.m.
**EMBODIED SPIRITS
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Howard Robinson, Ph.D.
Central European University
William Jaworski, Ph.D.
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Love's Obligations

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Readings: Ez 33:7–9; Ps 95:1–9; Rom 13:8–10; Mt 18:15–20

“Love does no evil to the neighbor” (Rom 13:10)

What does it mean to love your neighbor? Paul says that “love does no evil to the neighbor” and that “love is the fulfillment of the law.” How do these two statements coalesce to produce a practical Christian ethic of behavior? One is stated negatively—love does no evil—while the other is stated positively—love fulfills the law. But how do we know when we are enacting these demands?

To do no evil seems an amorphous requirement, calling us to ponder the ways our lives affect our neighbors, questioning how love might be made manifest in any given situation. Jesus asks us to consider that one of the ways love of neighbor is realized is by calling our brothers and sisters to turn from sin. There is perhaps no harder path to walk than that of correcting a “neighbor,” whether that is a family member or friend, though when done with genuine compassion, there is no greater act of love.

When friends or family call us to account, anger is often the first response; we are often not interested, at least not initially, in hearing our faults. But Jesus encourages us, because it is an act of love. “If another member of the church sins against you,” he says, “go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.” Yet Jesus also knows the risk of initial rejection:

“If you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.” The path is hard because it hurts to shine a light on sin.

The path is also hard because of mixed motivations. We probably all know cases where people have been condemned by brothers and sisters on the basis of hearsay and rumors, leading to broken relationships and estrangement from the church.

Part of the Christian reality today is that we might not know our neighbors in church well enough to know how they are living. To love someone enough to correct them requires genuine intimacy. The start of doing no evil to our neighbor is learning who they are and taking time to build relationships.

We begin to know people by making certain that our treatment of our neighbors, regardless of our personal relationship with them, is always grounded in the love that emerges from the teaching of the church and the commandments. Paul says that this is what we owe our neighbor, “to love one another.” In fact Paul claims that when we love one another we have “fulfilled the law.” All of the commandments, he says, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet; and any other commandment, are summed

up in this word, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

But the word translated “summed up” (*plêroô*) should really be translated “fulfilled.” To fulfill the law, according to Paul, does not mean to make a summary statement of the commandments. Rather, he is making the profound claim that those in Christ “fulfill” the law through their lives by faith working through love, guided by the Spirit. The law is not reduced in scope, as “summed up” might suggest; “fulfillment” indicates its diffusion into

every action and area of our lives, allowing love of neighbor to guide us even where there is no specific legal prescription.

It should also be noted that Paul claims both here



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How can you express your love of neighbor more fully?

and in Gal 5:14 that the law is summarized by Lv 19:18, “Love your neighbor as yourself;” but does not mention in either place the verses Jesus joins to that verse, Dt 6:4–5, the Shema, which proclaims the heart of Jewish belief: the love of the one, true God.

Why is that? Paul might simply take for granted the presence of the love of God, but he might also have a deeper purpose. While it is easy to claim that you “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might” (Dt 6:5), it can be a lot messier and complex to love our neighbor this way. Paul understood that the way to fulfill the law and to do no evil to our neighbor is to make tangible the love of God.

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

His Humility

EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS (A), SEPT. 14, 2014

Readings: Nm 21:4–9; Ps 78:1–38; Phil 2:6–11; Jn 3:13–17

“Because of this, God greatly exalted him” (Phil 2:9)

We are called to travel many paths, some that challenge us, others that inspire us. To trust in God is to trust that whatever path we are now on is the one that will ultimately bring us to the Promised Land.

This is easy to say, especially when one’s path is not meandering through war zones or famine, caught up in the horrors of this world, and it is important not to dismiss the journey itself as insignificant. It is the locus of our life and salvation.

The Israelites on the path to the Promised Land are a microcosm of humanity as they grumble about their travelling conditions. Their complaints are not trivial. They asked Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” While the questions are ordinary and understandable, they are judged for them because “the people spoke against God and against Moses.” They had lost faith in the one who had brought them out of slavery to walk on a new path home. Poisonous snakes were sent to punish them, but they are saved from these snakes by a strange action directed by God. Moses “made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.”

In the Gospel of John, Jesus explains this event as a prefigurement of his death to come: “Just as Moses lifted up

the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” The Son of Man will be lifted up because “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” As the bronze serpent raised high saved the Israelites’ lives, so the Messiah raised high on the cross will lead to eternal life.

But the lifting up of the Son of Man was not the same as raising an inanimate object; it required the humility of the Son to follow willingly a path strewn with pain, to become “obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” Some wonder what sort of obedience this was, given that Jesus is God incarnate. Would not Jesus know that God’s response to this obedience would result in him being “highly exalted” and given “the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”?

While theologians are divided about what Jesus’ divinity meant in practical terms during his incarnate existence, it is important to insist that Jesus became truly human, a person like us but without sin. This means his obedience to God’s path was a genuinely human choice, not part of an act put on for our benefit. Paul understood that Jesus willingly humbled himself, for he “did

not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.”

We share neither Jesus’ divinity nor his sinlessness, but his emptying of himself by taking on human form and then obediently taking up the cross offers us a guide along our own paths that Jesus did not have. We know that his act of humble sacrifice led to his exaltation. We have the example of the reward for the one who remained faithful even to death on the cross, who was raised up and ascended to God,

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Think of Jesus’ humility and exaltation: how does Jesus’ example inspire you on your own path?

who will be acknowledged by every tongue as Lord. We ought then to trust that when we walk humbly along our paths, we have the promise before us that “everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” The humility of the only Son ought to inspire us to walk our own paths with humility because we know that we have been promised the glory of life everlasting. Humility does not mean never asking questions of God or accepting all suffering along our paths silently, but it does mean trusting that God has as our final goal eternal life with the exalted Son.

JOHN W. MARTENS

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