

FALL BOOKS 2

America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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Understanding ISIS

JEROME DONNELLY

JAMES R. KELLY ON JANE JACOBS

JON SWEENEY ON CATHOLIC FICTION



It might interest you to know that the Society of Jesus really began in a college dorm room. It was September 1529 at the University of Paris. Francis Xavier, a Spaniard, and Peter Faber, a Savoyard, were expecting a new roommate. His name was Ignatius de Loyola, the 37-year-old son of minor Spanish nobility. As Ignacio Echániz, a Spanish Jesuit, has observed, Xavier and Faber “had surely heard about this interesting character. It was widely known that he was from the nobility of Guipúzcoa, that he had a conversion experience and that he had run afoul of the Spanish Inquisition. Above all, everyone spoke of how, after a thirty-day retreat made under him, three Spanish students from the University distributed their goods to the poor, took up residence in the hospice of Saint-Jacques and earned their keep by begging for alms. This caused a big sensation, and friends of the trio rushed to the hospice and forcibly dragged them out. Pedro Ortiz, the Dominican Master at the University, was particularly annoyed by these events.”

Ignatius was cleared of the charges by the Inquisition, but the effects of these bizarre happenings lingered, and both Xavier and Faber were reminded of them every time they saw Ignatius limping to and from class. As they got to know one another, Ignatius would have told his new roommates that he acquired his distinctive gait several years earlier during a series of botched attempts to correct the damage done by a cannonball at the Battle of Pamplona. This would have been an awkward moment for the roomies. Though Ignatius and Xavier were both Basque, their families were allied to opposing camps in the never-ending struggle to determine the destiny of what is now northern Spain. What’s more, Xavier’s brother, as Ignatius surely knew, fought on the opposing side at the Battle of Pamplona. If we can let our historical imaginations take flight for a moment,

he may even have been the one who ordered the volley that canonized, so to speak, the young Captain Ignatius.

It is remarkable, then, that these two men, Francis Xavier and Ignatius de Loyola, separated in age by 10 years, born into warring factions and of markedly different temperaments, would, with the aid of Faber and several other companions, found the Society of Jesus—what one historian has called “the most vibrant, most provocative religious order the Catholic Church has ever produced.” It is all the more remarkable when one considers that the Basques were better known for their worldly adventures than their saintly virtues. “They were especially prized,” according to Mary Purcell, “as soldiers, shepherds, seafarers and administrators, and widely despised as brawlers and ruffians.” Ignatius was no exception. He tells us in his autobiography (referring to himself in the third person) that “up to his thirtieth year he was a man given to worldly vanities, and having a vain and overpowering desire to gain renown, he found special delight in the exercise of arms.”

What is the point of this trip down the Jesuits’ memory lane? Well for one thing, on Nov. 5 we will celebrate, as we do each year, the feast of all the saints and blessed of the Society of Jesus, an impressive company of men in which Ignatius and Xavier occupy pride of place. It is important to remember that none of these men started life as a saint, but that they grew slowly in holiness only after much struggle, only by the patient grace of God. For folks like me, sinners who are called by God to serve, that is very reassuring. But here’s another reason: Just three days after that feast, we will hold a presidential election. It will be worth remembering that even those who have fought on opposite sides of the fiercest battle can, with the aid of grace, come together and do great things for the common good.

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ON THE WEB

America asks pro-life millennial women about the **state of the abortion debate** in the United States. Plus, an interview with cardinal-designate **Archbishop Joseph Tobin**. Full digital highlights on page 29 and at americamagazine.org.



To Our Shame

The United States strives to both honor and assist our wounded veterans; but how do we treat our enemies? One of the most unfortunate legacies of modern warfare is post-traumatic stress disorder: the cumulative, painful psychological damage that lingers tenaciously in its embattled victims for years. Its symptoms include disorientation, anxiety, memory loss, nightmares and pounding headaches. Recent research by The New York Times reveals that the United States, in its torture of at least 39 prisoners at nine C.I.A. “black sites” and Guantánamo Bay, has rendered at least half of them psychologically impaired.

Interrogators stripped the inmates naked, knocked or threw them against walls, suspended them from ceilings, blasted them with rock music and rolled them in their own excrement. According to Hussein Al-Marfadi, released without charges after 12 years, “They killed our youth in Guantánamo and then tossed us away like garbage.” Omar Khadr, a Canadian citizen, wounded and caught after a firefight at age 15, was kept sleepless and threatened with rape until he pleaded guilty to throwing a hand grenade that killed a medic in Afghanistan.

These details should shame all Americans. Torture is both immoral and a violation of international law. Use of these tactics is an incentive for our enemies to commit the same crimes. The social critic Murray Polner recently wrote in a letter to The New York Times: “I wonder anew why those in high places who authorized torture and those who carried it out have never been punished. Equal justice for all?” Given the temptation to abandon accountability in order to avoid unpleasant truths about the conduct of the United States, this reminder is worth hearing.

Redemption on the Alt-Right

Derek Black was royalty among U.S. white nationalists. His godfather, David Duke, is a former leader of the Ku Klux Klan, and his father founded one of the first white supremacist online forums, Stormfront. According to a profile in The Washington Post, at age 10, Mr. Black built a children’s version of the popular hate site; in high school, he hosted a radio show to promote the idea that immigration was leading to a white genocide.

But the wunderkind of white pride did not take a victory lap when, in a speech about the alt-right this summer, Mrs. Clinton said Donald Trump was “helping a radical fringe take over the Republican Party.” Six years ago, Mr. Black enrolled at a small liberal arts school. He kept his racist views

to himself and made some friends, including an immigrant from Peru and the only Orthodox Jew at the school.

When his internet alter ego was revealed in 2011, classmates felt betrayed and disgusted. But Matthew Stevenson decided ostracizing his friend would accomplish nothing; instead, he invited Mr. Black to Shabbat dinner. Over Friday meals and a contentious email thread, the Shabbat crew questioned and challenged Mr. Black, who reconsidered the views he was brought up with and formally renounced white nationalism in 2013.

Hate-hardened hearts are rarely won over in Twitter wars. But what Mr. Stevenson understood, and what our Catholic faith tells us, is that while some ideas—anti-Semitism and racism chief among them—are irredeemable, no person is beyond redemption.

Stand by Taiwan

Cross-strait trade is down almost 10 percent, and tensions are way up between mainland China and Taiwan. Despite its functional independence, Taiwan is still regarded in Beijing as a renegade province, and relations between China’s President Xi Jinping and Taiwan’s first woman leader, President Tsai Ing-wen, have been especially frosty since her election in May. Beijing complains that she failed to acknowledge explicitly the “1992 consensus” reached between the Chinese Communist Party and Taiwan’s Kuomintang.

That vague agreement attests that there is indeed only one China, leaving it to either side to frame the meaning of that acknowledgment. The trouble is that Ms. Tsai and her independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party are growing less willing to pretend they believe in the consensus. It remains hard to imagine this long-simmering tension boiling over into open conflict, but it has happened before. In an effort to punish Ms. Tsai, Beijing has discouraged tourism to Taiwan, cut off official contacts and is reported to be pressing international organizations and individual countries to further shun the already diplomatically isolated self-governing island.

Among the international players feeling that pressure may be the Holy See. The Vatican is Taiwan’s last embassy in Europe. Were the Holy See to seize an opportunity to improve its standing with Beijing by abandoning Taiwan, the impact would be devastating in Taipei. A better time—and a better deal—for normalizing the church’s status on the mainland may be forthcoming. But at this especially tense moment, Taiwan should not be sacrificed in order to accelerate improved China-Vatican relations, however worthy that goal may be.

‘Unjust Discrimination’

In May 2015, one month before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of civil marriage for same-sex couples, a series of unexpected events unfolded in Germany. By a two-thirds vote, the German Catholic bishops’ conference voted to change church labor law so that employees of Catholic institutions who divorce and remarry or who enter same-sex unions will not be subject to dismissal.

Civil unions for same-sex couples have been legal in Germany since 2001. What sparked last year’s policy change? The bishops recognized that the previous church law, which included a “morals clause” for Catholic employees, was being selectively applied.

“People who divorce and remarry are rarely fired,” Cardinal Rainer Woelki, archbishop of Cologne, said at the time, citing another common violation of the morals clause. “The point is to limit the consequences of remarriage or a same-sex union to the most serious cases [that would] compromise the church’s integrity and credibility.”

Under the new law, the church in Germany can dismiss an employee who publicly expresses “opposition to fundamental principles of the Catholic Church—for example by support for abortion or for racial hatred” or who disparages “Catholic faith content, rites or practices,” on the grounds that these infractions would constitute a “grave breach of loyalty.”

Here in the United States, same-sex marriage has been legal for over a year. Many same-sex couples have chosen to enter into a legal marriage, a number that will surely grow larger with time. At some Catholic colleges and universities, employees who enter into these marriages have been able to keep their jobs. On the parish level, however, many married gay employees have been dismissed, an action often met with sadness or anger from parishioners. In some particularly unfortunate cases, individuals have been secretly reported to their supervisors by other members of the community.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, while teaching that homosexual acts cannot be morally accepted, also requires that homosexual persons be “accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided” (No. 2358). The high public profile of these firings, when combined with a lack of due process and the absence of any comparable policing of marital status for heterosexual employees, constitute signs of “unjust discrimination,” and the church in the United States should do more to avoid them. In addition to any possible harm done to the employees who have been fired, the appearance of unjust discrimination weakens the church’s overall witness.

The church will lose talented, devoted workers because of institutional decisions made under pressure or without sufficient discernment.

The church in the United States is living in a complex and challenging time. Regrettably, on a variety of subjects—from views on the death penalty to support for contraception and same-sex marriage—the teachings of the church and the practices of its members often do not match. Meanwhile, the church relies on a large number of lay employees to help administer parishes, schools and hospitals across the country. Very few of them subscribe to the totality of Catholic teaching. How can the church continue to sustain its ministries while bearing witness to the timeless truths of its teaching when its own employees do not accept them all?

The answer is not to downplay or gloss over these teachings. Catholics are called to preach difficult truths about a range of subjects, including but not limited to marriage and sexuality. But what is the best way to do that? It is true that sometimes an employee of a Catholic institution can cause scandal by his or her public words or deeds. But it is also true that treating employees unfairly, by holding them to different standards or dismissing them abruptly or without consultation, can itself cause scandal.

In a recent interview with *America*, Cardinal-designate Joseph Tobin offered some sound advice. First, it is wise to approach these cases one by one. Different standards may apply to a chief financial officer of a Catholic organization than to a grade school teacher. It would be unwise to implement a one-size-fits-all policy for the entire U.S. church. Church leaders should rather circulate guidelines that can help people at the local level to navigate these difficult questions.

Formation is also critical. What does the training of employees look like at Catholic organizations? Do conversations about ethics and morals continue after a person is hired, or are they invoked only when there has been a violation? Do morals clauses account for a range of Catholic teaching, or do they give too much attention to an important but narrow range of issues related to sexual morality?

The church must be free to conduct its ministries without government interference and with room to challenge prevailing social mores. But we also have a duty to proceed with wisdom and mercy, attentive to the dignity of the individual and the common good.



REPLY ALL

All Are Worthy of Love

Re “A Hispanic Moment?” (Editorial 10/17): Engaging diversity and social justice in our society is a moral and ethical obligation, especially if one aligns oneself with Christ’s teachings. “Othering” people is a basic tenet of racism and xenophobia—if we are devaluing another’s life experience or cultural heritage we are culpable of such. The church is a source of major support for many ethnically and linguistically diverse groups, whether their members be citizens, immigrants, refugees or asylum seekers. The church is a place to belong. What can we do to elevate respect for our brothers and sisters, whom our Lord embraced in the Gospels? Will we look with the eyes of Christ and see that all are human, all are worthy of love?

RICHARD MILLER
Online Comment

Prioritize Training

Re “Stand-Down for U.S. Police?” (Current Comment, 10/17): The police, city and county establishments are all in denial. They automatically defend police officers against all accusers, whether they were caught on camera or have received a witness complaint. The high number of suspects shot to death by many police officers at once—with the slightest excuse—is exceptional evidence of a SWAT mindset of “kill or be killed.” In so many instances, the police officer could take cover, defuse the situation and probably negotiate a surrender. It is certainly a tactic missing in the confrontations with mentally ill people, who would benefit from an experienced mental health professional taking the time to calm things down and offer assistance, instead of barking surrender commands. Clearly, most police agencies do not agree. Few see officer training as a significant part of public safety, and those who fund po-

lice training seem even more reluctant to give this issue any priority at all.

MIKE EVANS
Online Comment

Dormitory Living

Re “Dorm in the Dumps” (Current Comment, 10/17): This is quite a good commentary on dormitory living. My three years in a dormitory and a fourth year off campus (in an apartment with two friends) was an incredibly rich experience. There was a diverse range of viewpoints, interests and endeavors among the people who lived around us. This commentary could be expanded by looking specifically at the substandard living options off campus that many collegiate football players are allotted these days. There were once dormitories for athletes that were well supervised by adults; too many athletes go astray today because of unsupervised living off campus.

America would also perform a service by shining some light on how university and college athletic programs rarely support themselves and are subsidized by a surcharge, on average, of \$800 per student. The whole enchilada that is college football finance needs to be put under some scrutiny: the ticket sales, proceeds from tailgating, product endorsements and licenses and television advertisements. The pendulum has swung too far toward athletics and away from academics on campus.

ANDREW DI LIDDO
Online Comment

Let Go of the Old

Re “Digital Growth” by Bishop Christopher J. Coyne (10/17): This is an excellent article with a positive perspective on digital technology. Unfortunately, many of the baby boomer generation think that the young people are going to outgrow their digital toys. Worse yet, by trying to tell the young people to put their smartphones down, they are trying to force the genie back into the bottle. In fact, there is a huge gap be-

tween generations. By referring to Karl Barth’s preaching technique, this article is a good step toward realizing that preaching must transcend all generations. Our real challenge is to begin to prepare for Generation Alpha, which doesn’t just use technology but hopes to integrate it into their lives flawlessly. Connecting with people (to educate, inform and/or establish relationships) will require the use of technology in the future. Now is the time to prepare and begin to let go of old paradigms.

DAVID WITHER
Online Comment

The Same God

Re “Islamic Misinformation” (Current Comment 10/3): It has been my experience that getting to know Muslims is part of my responsibility as a Catholic and apostolic church member. My view of Muslims is extremely favorable because I have gone out of my way to make friends with them. A gas station attendant near my residence, for example, is a prayerful man who goes out of his way to help others. He has said on many occasions, “We have the same God,” as he clasps my hands. Another Muslim friend contributes money to our AIDS facility at Ramadan, and every Christmas he and his wife remember me with a gift.

It seems strange that we Catholics—who are supposed to follow the teachings of Jesus to love God and our neighbor as ourselves—should omit the neighbor because they are different.

(BR.) WARREN LONGO
St. Louis, Mo.

Interfering in the Middle East

Thank you for your charitable, sensible and Catholic statement and exhortation. In response to your detractors, several things could be said, one of which is: Do you realize how much the “democracies” of the West have interfered with the Middle East in the past century? As it stands today, Saudi Arabia is a creation of the West, so that we can get cheap oil. That is why

we have supported the Saudi family, which has grown monstrously wealthy at the expense of Muslims who live there. While the House of Saud grew wealthy, its people suffered from meager investment in their infrastructure. The problems of Saudi Arabia lie in its politics and ruling family, who have kept things there, including religious laws, quite repressive. The United States and the West are to thank for this, too.

RICHARD MURRAY
Online Comment

A Woman's Take

Re "No Precedent Required," by Lisa Weber (Reply All, 10/3): Lisa Weber has it right in her letter on your editorial, "Commending Phoebe." At the heart of the issue of women deacons is: "Would they meet today's needs?" It is clear in the Acts of the Apostles and in Paul's letters that the office of deacon evolves over time, according to need in the church. The first seven deacons were appointed to serve the neglected Hellenist widows. Later we see one of the deacons, Philip, evangelizing the Ethiopian and baptizing him. Later still, it appears Phoebe and Priscilla were left in charge of churches by Paul. Consider the benefit to the church if women deacons could preach to female prisoners in women's prisons. I'm reminded of The Word column in **America** by Barbara Reid; I for one would like to hear a homily with a woman's take on the Gospel.

RICHARD KANE
Stewartsville, N.J.

Opportunities Abound

Re "Lonely Planet" (Current Comment, 9/17): Obviously the dominant character of the word *l-one-ly* is *one*, a reality that even God rejected, preferentially accommodating the Godhead to the companionship of three persons.

One morning in a nearby empty church, visiting the Blessed

Sacrament, I saw a woman weeping, face buried in her hands, head bowed. I went over to her and said, "Is there some way I may help you?" She looked at me and said, "Thank you, I'll be okay." I walked away saying a prayer for her. Years later the same lady stopped me, walking on the street, and said, "Do you remember the day in church when you stopped to ask if you could do something to help, as I was weeping?" I had forgotten having done so, but her question prodded my memory and it all came back. She said, "I want to thank you for caring enough to ask to help me. It meant very much to me."

Imitating the loving spirit of companionship, the togetherness that holds the Godhead together can also hold humanity together, deleting loneliness. Let's choose to be together—it's the godly thing to do; it's the human thing to do. Opportunities abound.

BRUCE SNOWDEN
Online Comment

Put Learning First

Re "Reading, A Social Good" (Editorial, 9/12): The age we live in is depending more on technological voices, sound bites and video snapshots.

One's ability to read is being replaced by objects speaking to us (television, iPhones, cars and the like). For the young, time is of the essence, and it takes too long to read a book.

We had better find a way to communicate that incorporates the ability to absorb the huge amount of information required to educate the members of society. Maybe we humans need to prioritize learning from experience and human interaction, as humanity did before writing and print became the normal means of communication.

We have the most educated world population ever in human history and yet we commit such violence, ignore societal values and disrespect each other within and outside our own cultures. Think about what was written years ago, by H. L. Mencken: "As democracy is perfected, the office of president represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron."

ERNIE SHERRETTA
Online Comment

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CARTOON: BOB ECKSTEIN

IRAQ

Nineveh Christians Await Outcome Of Mosul Offensive Against ISIS

The Rev. Martin Banni, a Chaldean Catholic priest, grabbed the consecrated hosts, the church's official documents and a few personal items shortly before the Islamic State fighters' assault on Karemlash, a town 18 miles southeast of Mosul, two years ago.

More than 100,000 Christians from the area had already left. The archbishop of Mosul begged the remainder to flee, too.

"They [Kurdish fighters] left us alone, and we were few in number with no weapons, and we could do nothing to face the Islamic State," said Banni. "We ran."

As Iraqi forces begin the long-awaited offensive to retake Mosul from the Islamic State group in mid-October, Iraqi Christians on the Nineveh Plain hope their time in exile is soon coming to an end.

"I have not slept—I stay awake all night following the news," said Abu Adrian, a teacher in Alqosh, a mountainous Catholic holdout 31 miles north of Mosul. "We hope to see our towns liberated as soon as possible to enable our people to return to their hometowns and homes after this long struggle."

Alqosh escaped Islamic State control, and since 2014 the town has been host to around 600 Christian families on the run from persecution farther south. The situation for the displaced Christians has become dire, even unbearable. They lack jobs and money, with entire families of up to 10 sharing a tent or a single room. Most fled with only identity papers and the clothes on their back.

"I managed to take my ID, my passport, mobile and laptop," said Banni, who has been a refugee in Irbil in Iraqi Kurdistan since 2014. "We did not think it would be a no-return departure. We thought it will take a day or two."

Some of these Christians say they had all but given up hope of ever being able to return. That frustration grew as Iraqi government forces liberated Fallujah and Ramadi over the past 18 months, but Mosul and its surrounding towns remained under Islamic State control.

And now the Islamic State's fierce resistance to Iraqi forces suggests Mosul exiles could wait for months before they can move back.

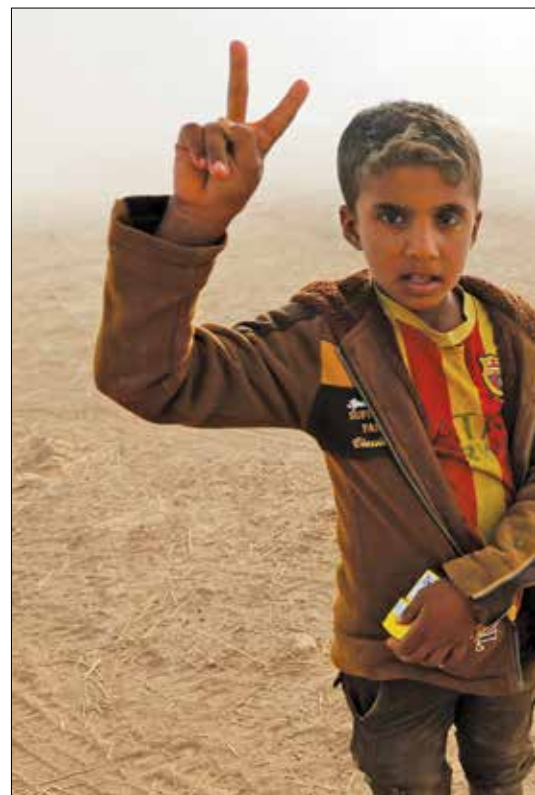
"I have no plans," said Samer Elias, a 42-year-old Christian Iraqi writer

from Mosul who has been living in the Kurdish city of Dohuk. "The future for us Christians seems quite gloomy and obscure."

It remains uncertain what returning Christians will find. Many, like Elias, do not know whether their homes even exist anymore.

Banni acknowledged that some of his flock are too worn down from the past two years and pessimistic about the future. Some have been considering going to Europe or elsewhere instead of returning home. But the 25-year-old priest, who was ordained in Irbil in September instead of in his beloved Mosul, already has a list of priorities for rebuilding hospitals and schools.

"This is most important because it ensures our people can come back to their homeland and live in peace there once again," he said. "The liberation of the region is finally happening, and the



prospect of going home feels closer now than ever before."

In spite of all that has happened, and how his community has been treated, he hopes things will be different in the future.

"We want to face our problems and solve them, not to escape from them," he said. "A people who have borne all these difficulties can never be broken."

CONSISTORY 2016

Discerning a New Role

For American church watchers, Pope Francis' decision to make Archbishop Joseph Tobin of Indianapolis a cardinal was something of a surprise. But maybe they should have seen it coming. The two men met in Rome in 2005 when they were assigned

VICTORY OR PEACE? Returning to his village on Oct. 21 after it was liberated from Islamic State militants near Mosul, Iraq, a boy raises his hand in a familiar gesture.



to the same working group of the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist. When they talked about how happy they were to have a new leader, Archbishop Tobin told then-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio that back in the states, his mother had been rooting for the Argentine Jesuit. Surprised, the future pope asked why.

“Well, she read in the newspaper that you pick up after yourself and you cook your own food and wash your own clothes,” Archbishop Tobin recalled telling him. “She’s had it up to here with the sort of monarchic church!”

The future pope laughed, and the remarks apparently made an impression.

“Whenever I’ve seen him since, one of the questions he immediately asks me is, ‘How’s your mother? Is she still alive? Does she pray for me?’” the archbishop said in an interview on Oct. 14 with *America* at the University of Notre Dame.

Ordained a priest in the Redempto-

rist order in 1978, Archbishop Tobin, who speaks five languages, worked in parishes in Detroit and Chicago. By 1997 he was head of his religious order, based in Rome, and in 2010 Pope Benedict XVI promoted him to archbishop, assigning him the task of managing the Vatican office that oversees religious life.

Around this time the Vatican had launched two investigations of Catholic sisters in the United States, apparently the result of the dissatisfaction among some church officials at what they saw as a drift away from traditional church teaching on contentious social issues among U.S. women religious.

Archbishop Tobin emerged as an advocate for the sisters. Archbishop Tobin believes that the investigation of the Catholic sisters has helped Americans understand the vital role that women religious have played in the U.S. church, and now in Rome, there is a sense of “appreciation and gratitude” toward American sisters among church officials.

He was soon after promoted to serve as archbishop of Indianapolis, traditionally not a premier post in the American church.

When he is elevated to the rank of cardinal on Nov. 18, Archbishop Tobin will be one of the most influential members among the U.S. hierarchy, one that has sometimes struggled to find its footing in the Francis era. He said one of the challenges facing the roughly 400 American bishops is communicating with one another.

Archbishop Tobin said it would be helpful to “develop a spirit of discernment among us, reading

the signs of the times and places in the light of the faith, and being able to talk about that and asking ourselves, what is God’s will? Where is God opening a door?”

Archbishop Tobin cited the need for dialogue on a number of issues, including the question of women being ordained as deacons (the pope will eventually make the call), the rights of openly gay church workers (he suggests a case by case review, not a blanket policy) and how to implement the pope’s apostolic exhortation on family life.

Some bishops believe the exhortation that followed the synod, “The Joy of Love,” provides a route for divorced and remarried Catholic to be welcomed back to Communion, a position that Francis himself reportedly endorsed. Asked if he agreed, Archbishop Tobin reflected a bit.

“If we reduce that reflection, which is really the product of two synods, to a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to this question or that question,” he said, “we’ve done violence to the text.”

But, he said, “What the Holy Father is proposing is a process of dis-

DESIGNATED SPEAKER. Cardinal-designate Joseph W. Tobin of Indianapolis.



cernment as pastors with the people of God.

“That isn’t a fancy name for relativism or changing timeless doctrine,” he continued, “but a way of thinking of what it means to follow or lead a life of discipleship today.”

MICHAEL O’LOUGHLIN

Typhoon Haima Hammers Philippines

Heavy damage was reported to homes and farmland in the northern Philippines on Oct. 20 after the strongest storm in three years struck overnight. Typhoon Haima barreled into northern Cagayan and Isabella provinces, ripping the roofs off homes and flattening crops. By late Oct. 21, 13 people had been reported dead, and Haima had hit southern China. Nearly every building in the city of Tuguegarao was damaged, according to officials quoted in the Philippine media. The city’s communication links were down and phone calls to the archdiocesan office in Tuguegarao did not go through. Across the district, many roads were flooded or blocked by fallen trees. Aid groups said the disruption made it difficult to assess the extent of damage; one aid official called it “a communications black hole.”

Canada Bishops Deplore Refugee Delays

The president of the Canadian bishops’ conference has written a frank letter to Canada’s federal immigration minister urging immediate government action to unclog delays in processing refugee applicants. Bishop Douglas Crosby, president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote to John McCallum to say many sponsoring groups have become frustrated by long wait times and money spent on apartments

NEWS BRIEFS

The Florida Supreme Court ruled on Oct. 14 that the death penalty **cannot be imposed** unless the jury is unanimous in the decision, aligning Florida with sentencing standards in most other states. + As Catholics and Lutherans mark the **500th anniversary** of the start of the Protestant Reformation on Oct. 31, Pope Francis said they should feel “pain for the division that still exists among us but also joy for the brotherhood we have already rediscovered.” + Vatican officials announced on Oct. 20 that Pope Francis, who spends his summers in Rome, is throwing open the doors to the summer papal apartment in the **apostolic palace at Castel Gandolfo** to visitors. + Representatives from the Holy See’s **office of interreligious affairs** traveled to Cairo, Egypt, on Oct. 21 to lay the groundwork for the official restart of talks between the Holy See and the prestigious Sunni Muslim center of learning, Al-Azhar, after a five-year lull. + After chaos broke out at Holy Trinity Church in Johannesburg, South Africa, while it hosted a meeting to resolve the nation’s university tuition-hike crisis, **South Africa’s Jesuits** said on Oct. 20 that the church could no longer be used for such dialogue.



Johannesburg student demonstrations

AP PHOTO/JEROME DELAY

for refugee families who have yet to arrive. “Needless to say, delayed arrivals and the lack of clear and transparent communication about the status of pending cases poses the risk of undermining the faith of Canadians in the government’s ability to follow through on its promises,” Bishop Crosby wrote on Oct. 6. Bishop Crosby said Canadians responded generously in late 2015 and early 2016 when the government promised “arrival timelines of less than two months.” This led to sponsoring groups signing leases and renting properties, as they expected arrivals to be imminent.

Continue Cease-Fire

Colombia’s Catholic bishops urged the government and armed rebels to commit to an indefinite cease-fire while a new peace deal is negotiated after voters rejected an agreement that

would have formally ended the Western Hemisphere’s longest-running war. Following a meeting on Oct. 13-14, the bishops’ conference said in a letter that it wanted to convey a sense of hope and encouragement to the country as it considers the next steps to establishing lasting peace. “We hear the cries and we align ourselves with the hopes of the victims, the peasants, the different ethnic groups, all of those who have suffered the consequences of the conflict in various regions of the country,” said the letter, signed by Archbishop Luis Castro Quiroga of Tunja, president of the bishops’ conference. “Interpreting the feeling of the Colombian people, we ask the government and the FARC to indefinitely keep the cessation of hostilities,” the letter said, referring to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia by its Spanish acronym, FARC.

From America Media, CNS, RNS, AP and other sources.

Black Lives Matter in Canada, Too

The Toronto-based journalist Desmond Cole, a member of the local chapter of #BlackLivesMatter, has emerged as one of the most important voices in Canadian media on the topic of white supremacy and anti-black racism. In a country known for maple-syrupy trivialities and over-politeness, the idea that the U.S.-based campaign against police brutality could secure or even need a national foothold may come as a surprise. But “anti-black racism doesn’t recognize borders,” Mr. Cole says.

Canada is not the United States, but Mr. Cole still sees a country very much a part of a British colonial legacy—with its own history of slavery, its own share of racist policing and its own strange admixture of national pride and self-deception. The mechanics of anti-black racism, he says, are hardly novel.

#BlackLivesMatter began as a recognizably U.S. phenomenon, as it wrestled with its own particular history of racism and policing. But it has found contingents of solidarity across the globe, expressing not only connections among the African diaspora but also exposing the problems of policing and racism outside the United States. Social indicators of systemic racism like disproportionate police shootings and incarceration are not unique to the United States.

In Toronto, the local chapter of #BlackLivesMatter began as a way for black Canadians to demonstrate support for their U.S. neighbors who have been targeted by centuries of sedimented suspicion, but it quickly evolved to

publicize eerily similar pathologies in Canadian society. In 2014, Black Lives Matter Toronto made headlines by shutting down a section of Toronto’s Allen Expressway for two hours, protesting the deaths of Andrew Loku and Jermaine Carby, both black Canadians shot by Ontario police.

B.L.M.T.O. showed up again at Take Back the Night, a historically feminist march that protests rape culture and

‘Racism doesn’t recognize borders.’

sexual violence, drawing attention to anti-black racism and the ongoing crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. Protests also included occupying space at the Toronto police headquarters, blocking the entrance to Ontario’s Special Investigation Unit and disruptions of town hall meetings.

The group’s provocations came to a head when it halted the movement of Toronto’s 2016 Gay Pride parade in a plume of rainbow-colored smoke. B.L.M.T.O. protests certainly gain media attention, but expressing the peculiarly Canadian contours of white racism is more difficult in a society where multiculturalism is often a point of national pride and where only 3 percent of the population is in fact black. As in the United States, black Canadians are disproportionately represented in prisons; one in 10 Canadian inmates is black.

Outside prisons, the controversial Ontario police practice known as “carding” became a central political issue over the last year. Sometimes compared to

“stop and frisk” practices in the United States, Ontario police describe carding as an intelligence-gathering method. Responses are retained in a private database. While police defended the carding policy, officially known as the Community Contacts Policy, arguing that it builds knowledge of communities, the practice came under fire for its tendency to stop and question people of color more than white people. The Toronto Star found that 27 percent of carding incidents targeted black people, who make up 8 percent of Toronto’s population.

In a feature in the monthly Toronto Life in 2015, Mr. Cole reports being stopped more than 50 times. Reflecting on the police database where his information is stored, he wonders, “Does it classify me as Black West African or Brown Caribbean? Are there notes about my attitude? Do any of the cops give a reason as to why they stopped me? All I can say for certain is that over the years, I’ve become known to police.”

In 2016, following a year of investigative reporting and protests, Ontario banned random carding. Mr. Cole was not impressed. He considers that gesture a public relations move, not evidence of a systemic change, and he has continued to hold the province accountable in his regular column at The Toronto Star.

Mr. Cole has some blunt counsel for fellow Canadians as they confront the troubling history and contemporary realities brought to light by #BlackLivesMatter chapters: “Stop being racist.” We like to make these things complicated, he says, but the matter is as simple as refusing to accept internalized attitudes that treat people of color with suspicion and as irrelevant members of society. “It’s not hard to stand up in solidarity,” Mr. Cole says.

DEAN DETTLOFF

DEAN DETTLOFF is a Toronto-based journalist and a junior member of the Institute for Christian Studies. Twitter: @deandettloff.



Value-Free Politics

This demoralizing campaign is a reminder to never say or write anything you do not want to see on the front page or spread across the internet. Donald J. Trump demonstrated this when he was recorded boasting about kissing and grabbing women against their will.

On an entirely different level, hacked emails confirm that Hillary Clinton is more friendly to Wall Street in private than in public and that the Clinton Foundation has been a source of personal and institutional conflicts. In an ordinary campaign, the content and source of these emails would be major issues. But this election is increasingly about Mr. Trump's character and fitness to serve; and his support is fading as voters, especially Catholics, learn more about who he is and how he acts.

In this disarray, Catholics are drawing greater attention. The WikiLeaks deluge included an email from 2010 in which Clinton staffers express disdain for some Catholics and evangelicals. Ridiculing other people's religious choices is a bad idea, but in some progressive circles, it is more acceptable to mock Catholics and evangelicals than Muslims or Jews. The reverse seems to be true for some elements on the right.

An email from 2011 sent to John Podesta, chair of the Clinton campaign, called for a "Catholic Spring" to end what his correspondent called "a Middle Ages dictatorship." Mr. Podesta referred to two organizations he helped to create for such a moment but said they lacked leadership and the movement "will have to be bottom up." There

is, in fact, a Catholic Spring, but it is coming from the top down, with the mission and message of Pope Francis. Also, one of the groups referred to, Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, offers a progressive voice that challenges Democratic extremism on abortion, especially Mrs. Clinton's call for taxpayer funding of the procedure. Ironically, some who seem appalled by such Catholic attempts to influence the agenda of the church engage in their own efforts to advance their causes and candidates among Catholics.

In September, the Trump campaign announced a "Catholic Advisory Group" and released a letter to Catholics. The 33 advisers include Republican officeholders, anti-abortion activists and conservative leaders but not a single Latino Catholic. Also missing are most—but not all—of the group of prominent Catholic and conservative leaders who earlier called Mr. Trump "manifestly unfit," a judgment reinforced by his statements that he will try to put his opponent in jail if he wins and will claim the election was "rigged" if he does not.

In his letter to Catholics, Mr. Trump promised to fight for core Catholic issues, but the poor, immigrants and refugees do not make the list. He pledged to "remain pro-life" but did not refer to defending traditional marriage. Even after the tapes and accusations related to sexual assault, some of his Catholic advisers insist that the candidate's conversion from supporting to opposing abortion outweighs questions of character. They urge a focus on possible Supreme Court nominees over Mr.

Trump's words, which have fanned racism, demonized immigrants, supported torture, disrespected women and targeted Muslim refugees.

Despite these uninspiring examples, we need committed Catholics working in campaigns, faithful Catholics running for office and outreach to Catholic voters. The question is: Does your faith shape your politics, or is it the other way around? Do Catholic

principles offer direction and criteria for political choices, or are they just ways to package ideological and partisan preferences? We do not need Catholic cheerleaders for candidates who do not reflect our values but rather Catholics in public life who work within their parties to advance our

Does your faith shape your politics or is it the other way around?

principles.

After this depressing election, Catholic Democrats will need to persuade the likely Clinton administration to fix a broken immigration system and attack poverty instead of spending political capital to repeal the Hyde Amendment or conscience exemptions for ministries that serve the poor. Catholic Republicans should try to convince their party leaders to stop blocking immigration reform and move from impressive words to effective action on poverty. After brutally negative campaigns, Catholics with differing partisan and ideological commitments should search for new ways to protect human life and dignity, heal divisions and seek the common good in a bitterly divided nation.

JOHN CARR

JOHN CARR is director of the *Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life* at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

CATHOLIC WOMEN & MOTHERS: Serve Common Good, Not Politics

As Catholic women and mothers, we follow the presidential election not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Catholics committed to our faith, our families and the common good.

Civil debate keeps democracy healthy. Neither party has a monopoly on wisdom or effective policies. At a time when nearly 1 in 5 children grows up poor, thousands of migrant children are torn from their parents, and when so many families are excluded from economic opportunity, the urgency of our collective task is bigger than our partisan preferences or personal ideologies.

Sadly, this campaign has too often been characterized by the toxic politics of fear. The demonization of Muslims, refugees and immigrants is antithetical to Christian discipleship. It offends the Gospel, betrays our nation's highest ideals and diminishes human dignity.

Elections should be a national examination of conscience.

The Hebrew prophets remind us that nations will be judged by how the least among us are treated. Jesus taught us that our neighbor is not defined by language, religion or geography but our common humanity. All children, born and unborn, are created in the image of God, whether they are from Aleppo, Syria or Birmingham, Alabama.

We urge both candidates for president — and all seeking office across the country — to recognize that “family values” isn't simply a buzzword on the campaign trail. Honoring the dignity of families requires rejecting a consumer culture

where sex is viewed as a commodity; a commitment to ensuring mothers and fathers have access to paid parental leave; quality, affordable child care; jobs that pay living wages; and a humane immigration system that keeps families together.

Catholic social teaching does not fit neatly into partisan boxes.

Our faith calls us to affirm the sacred dignity of all life. This is why our Church defends life in the womb, the undocumented immigrant and the inmate on death row. As Pope Francis reminds us, we must also say no to an “economy of exclusion and inequality” that “kills,” and act to address environmental devastation that is disproportionately hurting the poor.

A year ago, our Holy Father challenged and inspired us in a historic speech to Congress. “In a word, if we want security, let us give security,” he said. “If we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities. The yardstick we use for others will be the yardstick which time will use for us.”

We commit ourselves to pray and work toward this vision of human dignity and justice. May all who aspire to political office do the same.

Read the full list of signers at:
www.CatholicWomenCare.org

- **Sister Donna Markham, OP**, President, Catholic Charities USA

- **Sister Carol Keehan, DC**, President/CEO, Catholic Health Association

- **Patricia McGuire**, President, Trinity Washington University

- **Helen Alvarez**, Professor of Law, George Mason University

- **Dolores Leckey**, Founding Executive Director, Secretariat for Family, Women, Laity and Youth U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

- **Helen Osman**, Former Secretary of Communications, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; Incoming President of North American Region, World Catholic Association for Communication (SIGNIS)

- **Mary J. Meehan**, President Emerita, Alverno College

- **Jordan Denari Duffner**, The Bridge Initiative, Georgetown University

- **Karen Clifton**, Executive Director, Catholic Mobilizing Network

- **Kerry Alys Robinson**, Founding Executive Director, Leadership Roundtable

- **Sister Simone Campbell**, Executive Director, NETWORK

- **Sister Mary Scullion**, Executive Director, Project H.O.M.E.

- **Sister Sally Duffy**, President & Executive Director, SC Ministry Foundation

- **Institute Sisters of Mercy of the Americas**, Leadership Team

- **Sister Joan Marie Steadman, CSC**, Executive Director, Leadership Conference of Women Religious

- **Dr. Moya K. Dittmeier**, Executive Director, Conference for Mercy Higher Education

- **Erin Brigham**, Director, Lane Center for Catholic Studies & Social Thought, University of San Francisco

- **Jana Marguerite Bennett**, Associate Professor, Religious Studies, University of Dayton

- **Kathleen Maas Weigert, Ph.D.**, Professor, Department of Sociology, Loyola University Chicago

- **Shelly Heideman**, Executive Director, Faith Coalition for the Common Good

Remedies Beyond Reach

Making affordable medicine a human right

BY FRAN QUIGLEY

In the delivery room of a remote village clinic, on the operating table of a crowded city hospital and in myriad other venues, the ministry of Catholic health care takes place every day around the globe. Committed to carrying out the Gospel mandate to minister to the sick and poor, Catholic health care has emerged as the world's largest nongovernmental health provider, delivering a quarter of all health services worldwide. Yet despite such impressive commitment and scope, the church's health care ministry cannot fully embrace its good-Samaritan legacy as long as millions of sick people are trapped behind a deadly paywall, cut off from the life-saving medicines they need.

Last year the media reported that Turing Pharmaceuticals had raised the price of one of its anti-infection drugs by 5,000 percent. Overnight the price of a single tablet of Daraprim, useful in treating life-threatening parasitic infections, rose from \$13.50 to \$750. Turing is not alone in demanding startling increases in medicine prices. Gilead Sciences Inc., which makes Sovaldi, a drug to combat hepatitis C, has become notorious for charging \$84,000 for a 12-week regimen, which amounts to \$1,000 a pill. Such medicines do save lives. But when medicines are markedly overpriced, millions of people, especially the poorest, lose out. Governments in developing countries, sometimes offered discounts, still find vital drugs priced beyond their means.

Take vaccines. The most compassionate caregivers cannot stop children from dying of preventable diseases when vaccines now cost 68 times more than they cost 15 years ago. According to the Holy See, two billion people lack access to essential medicines, a category that includes vaccines.

Many health care providers, including those committed to healing the world's poorest, find themselves prescribing lifesaving medicines that only the world's wealthiest can now afford. In 2015 the average price tag for brand oncology medicine, for example, exceeded \$100,000 per year.

Inflated medicine prices are responsible for excessive human suffering. Last year the World Health Organization noted that an inability to obtain available drugs was causing

10 million deaths a year—a number larger than the population of New York City.

Patently Absurd

One cause of runaway prices is patent protections. The argument for medicine patents is that they protect innovative drug manufacturers from market competition until they can recover the capital they invested in research and development. When the patent-protection period ends, less expensive generic drugs can be marketed, lowering prices for the public and increasing availability.

But that argument does not account for the life-and-death character of many medicines, which makes them well suited for publicly funded research and development and ill-suited to monopoly protections. This was the reason medicines were historically considered off-limits for patenting. Nor does the argument hold up in practice. Some pharmaceutical companies relentlessly pursue, and are granted, extensions of patent periods, which increase their profits every day that generic competitors are blocked from the marketplace.

Today some pharmaceutical companies continue to set drug prices at hundreds of times their manufacturing costs after patent protections expire. Even companies with record-breaking profits routinely raise prices by double-digit margins. Profit, not health, has become the goal. Pope Francis has issued a warning about the inevitable end product of economic models built on a foundation of exclusion and inequality. "Such an economy kills," he wrote in "The Joy of the Gospel" (No. 53).

Human suffering due to overpriced medicines is tolerated in part because the victims tend to be the anonymous poor. Not treating these sick people is unavoidable, some rationalize, given the need to provide incentives to companies to keep innovating. It is as if the only way to spur innovation were to award lucrative monopoly patents to those corporations that make the discoveries. But that argument is false, as the historical evidence and the current medicines system show.

History shows that medicine researchers and the communities that support them have accomplished great feats with no patent-provided pot of gold at the end of their research rainbow. Jonas Salk famously declined to patent the polio vaccine, saying the patent belongs to the people.

The creator of the first synthetic malaria vaccine donated

FRAN QUIGLEY is clinical professor and director of the Health and Human Rights Clinic at Indiana University McKinney School of Law. He is the author of *A Prescription for Change: 22 Reasons Why and How Medicines Should be for Patients, Not Profits* (forthcoming from Cornell University Press).



FOR-PROFIT PHARMA.
Demonstrators protest
medicine prices outside
Pfizer headquarters
in New York City in
December 2015.

the patent to the World Health Organization. These are the selfless acts of individual inventors, not the acts of public corporations beholden to stockholders. Still, until recently most nations prohibited monopoly patents on necessary medicines, and in those nations innovation rates were higher than in countries that granted monopolies. As the open source software movement has shown us, follow-up innovation is enabled when monopoly protections are held in check.

Two years ago Bain & Company, a consulting firm, conducted a study showing that top pharmaceutical corporations earned more than 70 percent of their cumulative revenue over a 20-year period from medicines developed by others. Increasingly, the business model for large pharmaceutical companies is to acquire patent rights to drugs developed by smaller firms and nonprofits, who have often relied on government funding of their research.

In fact, studies show that government funds, not private investments, are the driving force behind research that leads to medicines with widespread impact. The cancer drug Paclitaxel, for example, was developed through research funded by the National Cancer Institute, a division of the National Institutes of Health, which devotes \$30 billion in taxpayer funds to research annually. Government funding

also played the critical role in such breakthrough medicines as: the antiretroviral H.I.V./AIDS medicine AZT, the highly effective leukemia drug Imatinib, the prostate cancer drug Enzalutamide and the hepatitis C medicine Sofosbuvir. The same is true for major mental health medicines and many vaccines.

In the 1970s, the pharmaceutical industry lobbied Congress to make a change in U.S. law. The resulting Bayh-Dole Act of 1980 allowed recipients of government grants to claim the patent rights to resulting inventions.

The change allowed the patents for these and other government-funded medicines to fall into the hands of private companies, which could reset prices as high as the market would bear.

After direct government support for research and generous tax breaks are added to the total cost, some analysts calculate that private industry pays for only a third of U.S. biomedical research. So why overcharge the public for research subsidized by taxpayers? The profit motive has also led to a change of focus toward developing drugs that promise the highest profits (from treating first-world ailments), rather than drugs that would improve the health of huge numbers of the world's poor. That explains, in part, why the industry

spends more on marketing than on research.

The church has not ignored the crisis caused by overpriced medicines. Last year in Geneva, Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Holy See's permanent representative to the United Nations and other international organizations, told the World Intellectual Property Organization that the status quo on medicines is unjust. "The fruits of scientific progress, rather than being placed at the service of the entire human community, are distributed in such a way that inequalities are actually increased," Archbishop Tomasi said. He then quoted St. John

Paul II's message to the Jubilee 2000 Debt Campaign: "The law of profit alone cannot be applied to that which is essential for the fight against hunger, disease, and poverty."

The Holy See has singled out for particular concern global trade agreements that "enhance the monopolies on life-saving medicines" and called for exemptions from medicine patent rules for the poorest countries. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has echoed these concerns. Catholic advo-

cacy groups like Network and care providers like Maryknoll have joined public protests against U.S. government efforts, for example, to block poor countries from full access to more affordable generic medicines. The Sisters of Mercy order, a major player in Catholic health in North America,

has worked with other faith-based organizations to persuade pharmaceutical companies to loosen their patent restrictions in poor countries.

It would help if everyday Catholics would become more fully engaged. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, currently awaiting an up-or-down vote in Congress, includes

among its many provisions one that could force low-income countries to delay access to generic medicines. That is why Doctors Without Borders has said that the T.P.P. "will go down in history as the worst trade agreement for medicine access in developing countries."

U.S. Catholics can also urge Congress to allow Medicare to negotiate prices for the drugs it buys. Since 2003, when Medicare was banned from negotiating prices, U.S. patients have paid the world's highest prices for medicine. We Catholics can also insist that our governmental health agencies fully use their rights to allow generic medicine alternatives.

Above all, Catholics can embrace essential medicines as a human right rather than as a commodity for exploitation and profit. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent treaties have recognized that human right, as has the Holy See (see "Pacem in Terris," No. 64). As the U.S. Catholic bishops have pointed out, church obligations go beyond simply providing care: "Catholic health care should distinguish itself by service to and advocacy for those people whose social condition puts them at the margins of our society" (Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Healthcare Services, 2009).

To follow Jesus, Catholics must tend to the poor and sick, including all who suffer from lack of access to essential medicines. We must address the injustice that causes their suffering in the first place.

'The church's health care ministry cannot fully embrace its good Samaritan legacy as long as millions of sick people are trapped behind a deadly paywall, cut off from the lifesaving medicines they need.'

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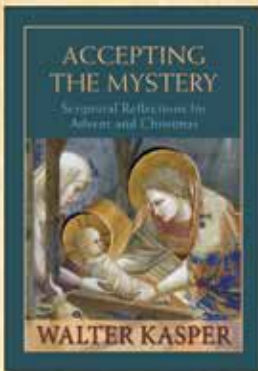
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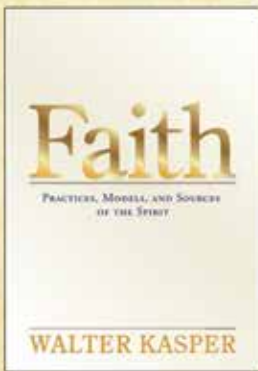


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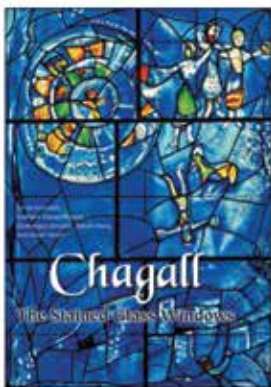
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Calm After the Storm

Looking for peace after destruction

BY DANIEL POLISH



Trees are shattered, thunder roars, lightning flames, but what is taking place remains unclear. At first it is difficult to recognize the subject of Psalm 29. We have to sit with it in order to recognize what it is describing.

Perhaps you have been in the mountains when a storm has struck. The power and ferocity of it can be terrifying and awesome. The sound of the thunder alone can leave an indelible impression. Such storms truly do, as the psalm states, cause animals to give premature birth (v. 9). Maybe you have seen the aftermath of such a violent storm. Mighty trees are felled. Fires rage. The landscape is transformed. But it is not just the landscape that is transformed; so too are the people who have experienced it.

DANIEL POLISH, *rabbi of Congregation Shir Chadash of the Hudson Valley in LaGrange, N.Y., is vice-chairman of the International Committee for Interreligious Consultations with international religious bodies and the author of Bringing the Psalms to Life. In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," America has invited Rabbi Polish to reflect on some of the psalms.*

The author of this psalm was very familiar with such a storm. We can imagine the author making his way on the mountain when suddenly a storm broke and he was alone, exposed to the elements. The experience is intense. After a time the psalmist seeks to put that moment into words. Aside from what psalms might teach us, they are also compelling as pieces of literature. The poetic description is wonderfully evocative here. While the psalm is worthy of our attention as literature alone, there is always something more than mere evocation of nature in a psalm.

After the storm passes the psalmist reflects on what has taken place. As they recall the experience they identify the sense of awe they felt at the display of power in the natural world. And then their thinking turns to the power and majesty of the G-d who created the mountain itself, the trees on it, the lightning and the thunder: G-d the creator, the one who is infinitely more powerful than this display of the most overwhelming forces of the natural world. The sound of the thunder becomes a dim echo of the voice of G-d. A mountain storm becomes a metaphor for the G-d who is both outside of nature and its source. The encounter with

a mountain storm gives the psalmist—and us—a chance to confront the awesome power of G-d.

The mountain storm reminds the psalmist of the history of the people of Israel. There was another moment when the earth shook and a mountain resonated with thunder and blazed with lightning. At that moment, the whole assembled household of Israel recognized the voice of G-d in nature. The psalmist's thoughts are carried back to "the wilderness of Kadesh" (v. 8) when the people as a whole had its profound encounter with G-d and received the Ten Commandments at Sinai. The thundering voice, the commanding presence: these are the very images evoked when we read Exodus 19. We stand at Sinai every moment. We are always at the doorway of the presence of G-d, always in a place to hear G-d's voice and called on to respond to it. The mountain storm in the life of the psalmist, the mountain storms we have experienced and the mountain aflame in the Sinai moment are connected. We do not live in the present alone. In the life of the spirit, past and present flow together. We live in all those moments at once. We are part of the great spiritual mountain

peaks no less than in the moment we call "our own."

To underscore this point, the focus shifts from the psalmist's storm experience and from Sinai to our own lives. Part of the power of the psalms is that they are, in the end, always about us. The G-d of the psalms is not a G-d of the distant past or of the great historical moments. The G-d of the psalms is the G-d whom we meet in our own lives.

The G-d who unleashes such overwhelming destruction is the very same G-d who can give us strength to endure it.

We end with yet another evocation of G-d. For the G-d who is at the core of psalms is no mere force of nature, nor mere power alone. Throughout the psalms, we are reminded that G-d is a caring presence. G-d looks after us and seeks our welfare. The conclusion of this graphic evocation of G-d's power

ends on a very different note. G-d is invoked in terms of our relationship. The last verse offers consolation and hope. After we have been thrown into the turmoil and terror of the mountain storm, the psalmist assures us that G-d will give us the strength to withstand such terrifying moments: not only the storms that break out in the mountains, but all the storms that can erupt in our lives. The storms will not prevail against us. G-d gives us strength to endure and to overcome.

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We do more than prevail. The psalmist holds out to us G-d's most precious gift. Whatever the challenges, whatever the obstacles and travails, in the end, the psalmist assures us, G-d will bless us with *shalom*. While we are accustomed to translating the word *shalom* as "peace," it conveys an even more resonant meaning than that. *Shalom* evokes a sense of wholeness, well-being, completeness. After experiencing all the shaking and the shattering, all the breaking of trees and the stripping bare of forests, all the disruption of the landscape, by the end of the psalm we find ourselves emerging intact.

We experience storms. No one can escape them. But we also experience our own resilience, our reservoirs of endurance. The G-d who unleashes such overwhelming destruction is the very same G-d who can give us strength to endure it; the G-d who, in the end, will bless us with *shalom*: wholeness, well being, peace around us and completeness within ourselves.

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On Board With Peter

Sometimes Pope Francis' actions are even more eloquent than his words. His decision to create three new American cardinals—Blase J. Cupich, Kevin J. Farrell and Joseph W. Tobin—is a case in point. It was a pondered decision, the fruit of months of prayerful reflection, consultation and discernment. It contained a clear message to the Catholic Church in the United States and, more specifically, to its bishops.

To grasp the full dimensions of that message, it is essential to read carefully Francis' address to the U.S. bishops in St. Matthew's Cathedral, Washington D.C., on Sept. 23, 2015, in which he identified specific characteristics that a pastor in the United States should have today.

It is also necessary to read his talks to the apostolic nuncios in June 2014 and June 2016, and especially his important talk to the Congregation for Bishops on Feb. 27, 2014, in which he spelled out the qualities that a candidate to be bishop should possess. These include being a man of deep prayer; humble, not ambitious; not attached to status, privilege or money; pastors "with the smell of the sheep" and a simple lifestyle, not princes; men who are close to the poor and those on the margins of life; pastors who are merciful, not judgmental; men of dialogue, not confrontation.

By naming three new cardinals from the United States, Francis is first of all expressing his high esteem, love and encouragement for the American

church. Not since Paul VI in 1967 has a pope named so many American cardinal electors at the same time. But there is something more in his message, a pressing invitation to the U.S. bishops to walk together with the one whom the Holy Spirit has chosen as the successor of Peter to lead the church.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that when a man is ordained bishop, he becomes a member of the college of bishops, with and under the successor of Peter ("cum Petro, sub Petro"). Henceforth he is called to work with Peter, not distancing oneself from him, much less working against him or hoping for a quick end to his pontificate.

The same is true when one becomes a member of the College of Cardinals. He is called to be the pope's adviser, not his opponent or critic. But as the past and recent history of the church shows, including in the United States, not every bishop or cardinal sees his role in this light.

This is the context in which Francis has given the U.S. church three new cardinal electors. In doing so he is inviting American bishops to row with him as these three are doing. He first issued that invitation last year in St. Matthew's Cathedral in Washington, D.C., when he spoke to them "as the bishop of Rome, called by God in old age and from a land which is also American, to watch over the unity of the universal church and to encourage in charity the journey of all the par-

ticular churches toward ever greater knowledge, faith and love of Christ."

On that occasion, he called the U.S. bishops to be "promoters of the culture of encounter" and told them "dialogue is our method, not as a shrewd strategy but out of fidelity to the One who never wearies of visiting the marketplace, even at the 11th hour, to propose his offer of love (Mt 20:16)."

Not since Paul VI has a pope named so many American cardinal electors.

He urged them to "dialogue among yourselves, dialogue in your presbyterates, dialogue with lay persons, dialogue with families, dialogue with society." He encouraged them "to dialogue fearlessly," to avoid using "sharp and divisive language" and to share the faith with others candidly but "with humility," because "otherwise, we fail to understand the thinking of others, or to realize deep down that the brother or sister we wish to reach and redeem, with the power and the closeness of love, counts more than their positions, distant as they may be from what we hold as true and certain." Earlier, in his speech to Congress, he showed how this can be done.

By choosing Archbishop Cupich, Bishop Farrell and Archbishop Tobin as cardinals, Pope Francis is telling the world that he considers them to be pastors with the qualities he listed in his talks to the nuncios and to the Congregation of Bishops, as well as those extra traits he highlighted in St. Matthew's Cathedral as essential for a bishop in the United States today.

GERARD O'CONNELL

GERARD O'CONNELL is *America's* Vatican correspondent. *America's* Vatican coverage is sponsored in part by the Jesuit communities of the United States. Twitter: @gergyorome.

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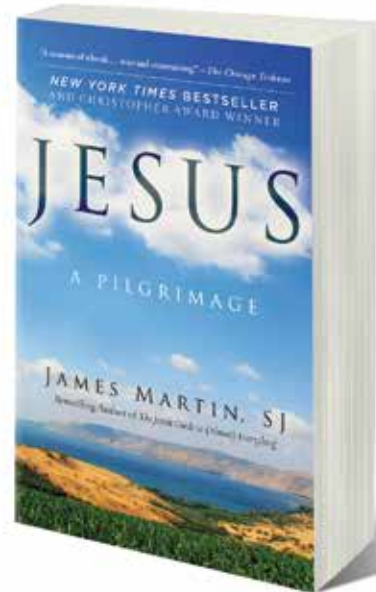
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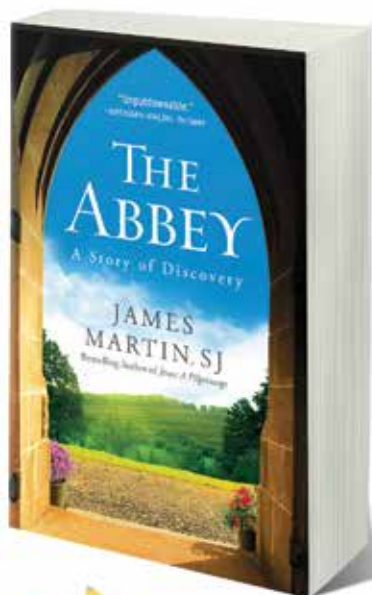
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The Women of Baylor

What I learned as a prison volunteer

BY KELLY DONNELLY

I never imagined that I would end up in prison. I was in Baylor Women's Correctional Institution as part of a year-long volunteer program with the Franciscan Volunteer Ministry. I tutored in adult basic education and taught creative writing.

Before working at Baylor, I was a little scared of inmates. I thought, *Will I meet a murderer? Teach a murderer?* It seemed so foreign, so far beyond my capacity for understanding. When I started volunteering, I discovered that while I knew which women were in higher or lower security wards, I did not know why they were incarcerated. And it didn't really matter. After all, I was helping these women with basic reading comprehension skills and elementary school level math, and helping them discover the power and freedom that can be found in the written word. My initial nagging questions about what they were in for were soon replaced by a desire to deepen my understanding of who they were.

The women of Baylor wanted to learn, move forward and create a positive life for themselves and their children. Some wanted to get their G.E.D. certificate, a better job, higher education, culinary certification or money management skills. Others sought a

more personally transformative goal: learning how to form a healthy romantic relationship or how to be confidently single. Nearly all wanted their chil-

to eat Cap'n Crunch for three meals a day? That's what my mom did for us, and we loved it. That's what I do for my kids, and they love it. You're telling me I shouldn't have done that?" How, I asked myself, could we as a society expect someone who didn't know how to make proper nutrition decisions to make productive life choices?

I learned that our supposedly multicultural 21st-century society has not progressed much beyond the white standard of beauty depicted in *The Bluest Eye*. When one woman kept questioning me about what hair products I used, another responded to her, saying: "It doesn't matter if you do what she does. Even if her hair is curly, she's white, so her hair is always going to be nicer. Feel it if you don't believe me."

I learned the meaning of the phrase "summer teeth": Some are there, some are missing. I discovered that it is a major faux pas to read a newspaper lying on a table—that newspaper belongs to someone, and only after you have asked her permission is it acceptable to read it. I found out that the fact that I didn't consider macaroni and cheese a Thanksgiving staple was undeniable proof that I was white, perhaps more proof than the color of my skin. This revelation prompted the frequent discussion of my diet, which usually ended with: "White girl, you don't know how to eat. Just wait 'til I get out and make you some soul food." I realized



dren to go to college; all hoped their own children would never be in prison.

I wanted to learn, too. The women also had difficult backgrounds that directly led to their incarceration. Many of the women or their siblings had been born in prison—they were known as "Baylor Babies." I learned that in many cases the education system had failed these women. During a nutrition lesson, one woman raised her hand to ask for clarification: "So. You're saying that it's not good for kids

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ART: BOB ECKSTEIN

that in a matter of days and without any tangible cause I had evolved from being someone “you should watch out for” to being that “sweet white girl with the curly hair who will help you.” I learned that the musical “Chicago” was more factual than I previously guessed: Women respond to unfaithful men in some violent and, at times, creative ways.

A Different World

At times I felt guilty for the disparity between our lives. It made me slightly uncomfortable to explain what it was like to go through airport security, the phenomenon of YouTube or what calamaris is. Their questions were based on a pure desire to learn and understand things they had heard about, but it was unnerving to be the authority on facets of life that I had considered commonplace.

When people, strangers and friends alike, asked where I was working, I continued to be surprised and a bit defen-

sive toward their reactions. “God bless you.” “Prisoners! What’s wrong with teaching kids?” “I hope you have a security guard with you at all times.” These well-intentioned responses made clear the chasm between our worlds. I could guarantee that the speakers weren’t imagining the women I knew, women who sang along to John Denver or got excited about marshmallow fluff. Yet, as much as it frustrated me that others would have such a negative view of “my women,” I had been in a similar place just weeks earlier. There was an inherent sense of fear of an unknown group. Ironically, my women left our final creative writing class in tears, saying, “You be careful next year, when you’re teaching teenagers.”


There is a legend that in the 13th century a wolf was terrorizing the small city of Gubbio in Italy. Townspeople were being killed; people were too terrified to leave their homes. The solution to this ordeal was found by St. Francis of Assisi. According to

tradition, Francis spoke with the wolf, and they arrived at an agreement: The wolf would stop attacking the locals, and in exchange, the citizens would provide him with food.

While some claim this is a historic account, most view it as an allegory for Francis’ mission. The misunderstood outsider is not tamed with swords or chains but instead is met with love and compassion. Francis’ model is one that resonates 800 years later in cultures across the globe. Service, humility, compassion—these are the foundations to reform society. Upon entering Franciscan Volunteer Ministry, it was a story we had learned, a story that helped focus our mission of humbly serving for the year.

During a group meeting for spiritual direction near the end of my volunteer year, I sat with my journal open, sipped hot chocolate and reflected on the story of the wolf of Gubbio. My spiritual director prompted this musing by asking my community members and me, “Who was your ‘wolf of Gubbio’ this year?”

It was a striking question, and the response to it was spoken deep within me before I could even understand my reasons. The names of three women who had each murdered someone immediately came to mind. These women were the “wolves.” I had entered Baylor fearing and not understanding these women. But, like Francis, I learned to love and appreciate them. I stepped outside my comfort zone and realized I had been mistaken. These women were not just the crimes they had committed. The women of Baylor were, like so many of us outside prison walls, misunderstood, lonely, abused people.

Seven years later, as I reflect on my time in Franciscan Volunteer Ministry, I pray that I consciously remember to be more open-minded. I pray that I open my heart to those we are inclined to label “wolves,” who are so often the world’s most vulnerable and marginalized. 

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FALL BOOKS 2 | JON M. SWEENEY

WHY READ FICTION?

CONCLAVE

**The Power of God,
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LAST PRIEST STANDING And Other Stories

By Richard Infante
Lambing Press. 346p \$13.95

I was in the archives at the University of Notre Dame looking through boxes of correspondence when I came across the following letter, dated Sept. 4, 1968, from a 40-year-old priest named Andrew Greeley to Philip Scharper, the editorial director at Sheed & Ward:

As to the mystery story, it is only in the form of a mystery because I thought this might be a good way to begin to learn the craft of writing novels.... If...it would appear that I don't have much talent for this kind of activity, I will gladly yield my image of a Renaissance man and go back to sociology.

A letter from Greeley to Scharper a few weeks earlier explained that Doubleday had shown no interest in this nascent fiction attempt from a priest. Then I found another letter from Greeley to Scharper, this one dated Sept. 30:

I...appreciate the...opinion on the novel. It's something of a load off my shoulders to know that I don't have at least a natural talent for writing novels, and hence can be excused for the present from

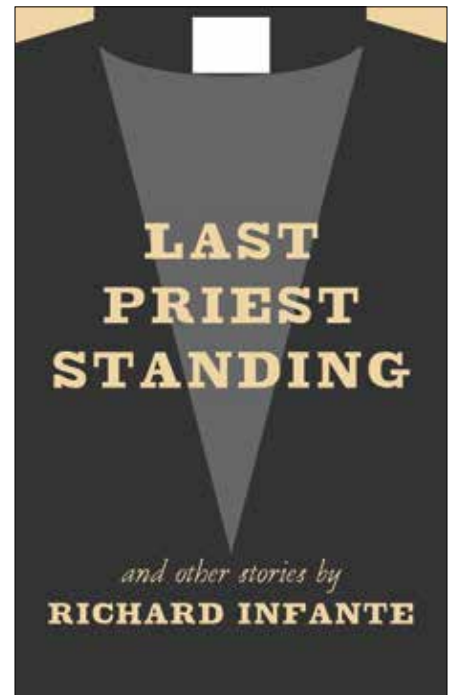
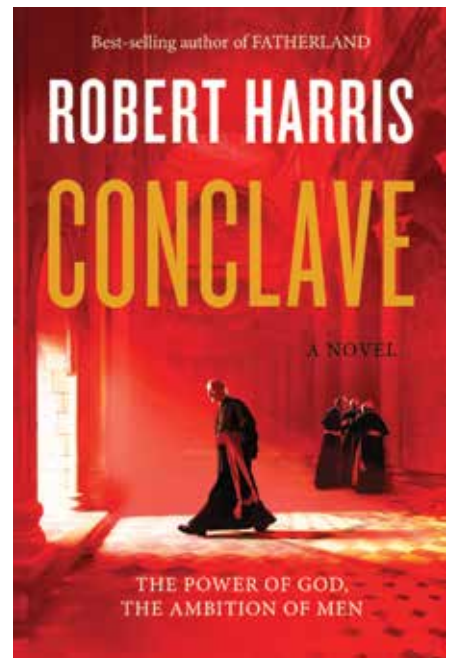
doing them. Maybe when I retire (which I plan now to do at the age of forty-five), I can set about learning the craft of fiction-writing and then see if it's possible for me to write it. I doubt it, though. Most things I do well, I do the first time around—or I don't do them.

All of this took place seven years before Father Greeley's first novel, not a mystery but a medieval Irish fantasy, was published in 1975: *The Magic Cup*. His second novel was his first mystery, *Death in April* (1980). After that flowed some 60 (!) more, often at a rate of three per year. Readers decided that he, in fact, wrote good novels, and Greeley made so much money from fiction that, as early as 1984, he was donating \$1 million to the University of Chicago for an endowed chair in Roman Catholic studies.

Full of sex, violence and intrigue, Greeley's novels were the subject of controversy throughout his lifetime. He had millions of readers, but also many detractors. One prominent Catholic newspaper, *The National Catholic Register*, even editorialized that Greeley had "the dirtiest mind ever ordained"—and this appeared in the obituary they ran after he died in 2013. Why would a Catholic, especially a priest, need to write this way, many people wondered.

Some people question why a Christian needs to read novels at all. Thoughts about the place, or misplace, of fiction in the Christian life have existed in every generation.

Before World War I, it was common to hear the Puritans of the time



say that novels are without merit and should be banished from public libraries. They were thought to be frivolous chaff, seducing people with plot and keeping them from more serious, purposeful reading. For this reason, precisely 100 years ago, **America** published "A Plea for Novel-Reading"

by Joseph Francis Wickham. In the May 20, 1916, issue, Wickham—who wrote often on culture for Catholic periodicals—began by agreeing with the prevailing attitude: “That there are good grounds for criticism of the novel from the moral standpoint it is needless to dispute. Everyone who does not take a thoroughly hedonistic view of life knows that many novels have done and are doing incalculable injury.” He offered Balzac, de Maupassant and Laurence Sterne as examples. Then he used the biblical metaphors of “glancing back toward the unholy cities” and “tast[ing] the fruit of the forbidden tree and call[ing] it good” to describe readers who had perhaps learned to appreciate improper things from novels written by the likes of these.

But although there were novels that Wickham believed “may injure the soul,” he went on to argue what was then a controversial notion: It is quite impossible to measure the gladness and

good cheer and general well-being that the novel has brought into the world. He cited Walter Scott’s novels of the Middle Ages, Dickens’s realism and humor, Thackeray’s “mellow wisdom,” George Eliot’s “fine, feminine analysis of character” and R. L. Stevenson’s sense of high adventure as fine examples—before throwing Thomas Hardy under the bus. (Hardy, he said, “has touched life’s sinister chord unhelpfully.”)

Wickham’s argument, which I assume was in step with the editors of *America* at that time, is a fascinating one. It focuses on the effect novels might have on their readers. The problem with this, of course, is that it assumes that all readers are the same and that we all read the same way. We aren’t, and we don’t, and yet I do think that there are ways to read and write that are Catholic and ways that are not. A Catholic tends to see the world with sin and evil, pain and doubt and hope-

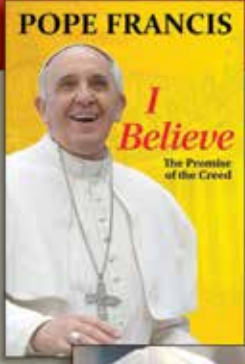
lessness, even forgiveness and grace. We run into trouble when we begin to think that a novelist with Christian commitments and faith must necessarily provide a certain sort of book for readers: happy endings, for instance, or righteous characters.

Robert Harris’s *Conclave* is a novel that Andrew Greeley could have written. A potboiler with Vatican intrigue, it is a tale that has more pacing than character. A pope has just died, and the College of Cardinals is locked inside the Sistine Chapel to elect a successor. Not exactly an original plot, and yet, like a Greeley novel, I enjoyed it. It didn’t exactly challenge me or lead me to explore any of life’s important questions, but it entertained. By the way, Robert Harris isn’t Catholic or even a believer. This cuts to the heart of the matter, in that perhaps the focus isn’t on *Why a Catholic would write this way* but rather *You don’t need to be Catholic to write this way*.

Greeley once told The Chicago Tribune that writing fiction is “just my way of being a priest.” He’s not the only one. There’s the Rev. Richard Infante of Pittsburgh, for instance, whose short stories have been collected into *Last Priest Standing and Other Stories*. I suspect, however, that Infante’s intentions for fiction are very different from Greeley’s. There is no fantasy or horror or science fiction in Infante’s work. There is only a quiet realism that begins with characters who happen to be Catholics and are often priests. It was Graham Greene who once said to an interviewer that if one out of 10 characters in a novel depicting contemporary Britons isn’t a Catholic, then you aren’t doing a satisfactory job of depicting the world as it is. Multiply that by at least two, here, today. As for the frequency of priests in these stories, perhaps Infante is trying to make up for what others have ignored.

In the title story, the “Last Priest Standing” lies unconscious in a Catholic hospital bed, attended by a

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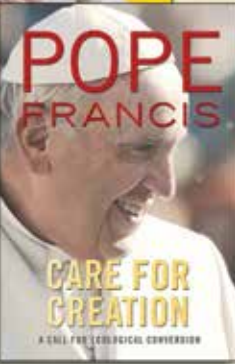
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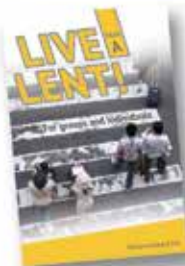
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DISPATCHES

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PODCAST

James Martin, S.J., discusses what we can expect from the new Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Arturo Sosa, S.J., on "America This Week."

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sister-nurse, about to be anointed by another priest, one of his former students in the seminary. A sympathetic narrator tells us about the dying father: "His one regret was that he would not recover the lost opportunities to do God's will, to celebrate the sacraments, to cooperate with that mysterious grace that always led him to do good and avoid evil." I can hear the criticism of some. Is that sort of description too sincere, too sentimental, for readers of fiction today? Perhaps it is, but it is probably more real than we know.

As the story progresses, we discover more of what is going through the mind of the unconscious priest while he is being anointed: He's deep-

ly pained by a memory from 25 years earlier, an indiscretion of sin and irresponsibility. But the sacrament brings rest and peace.

So what defines a Catholic novel? I am still struggling with that question. But I know that that which asks most of us is most worthy of us. Fiction that forces us to confront what dwells within us, doing battle with the one who saves us, is essential. And we need Catholics who tell stories in every possible way.

JON M. SWEENEY is the author of *The Saint vs. the Scholar: The Fight between Faith and Reason*, coming in April 2017. He lives in Vermont.

JEROME DONNELLY

BLOWBACK

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THE DIRTY WAR ON SYRIA

Washington, Regime Change And Resistance

By Tim Anderson
Global Research. 212p \$23.95

Nowhere has the law of unintended consequences been more in evidence than in what has followed the U.S. military attacks on Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and now, indirectly, Syria. The U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq caused a "blowback," with untold thousands of terrorists, many willing to blow themselves to pieces in a vengeful cause. Trying to impose the United States' will on Iraq (and now Syria) took a deadly toll, killing hundreds

of thousands of civilians, destroying much of modern and ancient Iraq, sending into exile millions of refugees—and created ISIS.

Blowback has a history. Osama bin Laden, in his "Letter to the Americans" in October 2002 attempting to justify Al Qaeda's violence, lists as the first reason the U.S. support for Israel: "You attack us in Palestine." Ongoing humiliation of the Arab Mideast dates to the secret Sykes-Picot agreement that drew artificial boundaries in Arab lands following the demise of the Ottoman empire. Meanwhile, U.S. attacks on Muslim countries resulted in the emergence of terrorist groups determined to throw off the vestiges of imperial (or "crusader") conquest.

In *ISIS: A History*, Fawaz A. Gerges, professor of contemporary Mideast studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science, has produced a remarkably clear and detailed taxonomy of ISIS. "ISIS [the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria] can be seen as an extension of AQI [Al Qaeda in Iraq], which was itself a creature of

the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and its aftermath." Both organizations emanated from "the global Salafi-jihadist movement," an Islamic fundamentalism "which aims to replace state sovereignty with God's rule." "Coming out of relative obscurity," he observes, "by the end of 2014, ISIS had captured approximately a third of Syrian and Iraqi territories and had edged closer to the Iraqi-Jordanian-Saudi Arabian frontiers...."

The principal leaders of ISIS have been Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was killed by U.S. bombs in 2006, and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who took control after a brief interval. Both men developed from unimpressive figures into the most powerful leaders of any terrorist group. Both had served time as political prisoners, where their fanaticism was aroused; and both contrived an ideology of savagery—videotaped executions of beheadings and burnings—as propaganda tools for terrorism.

By the time Zarqawi was killed, he had lost the support of many Iraqis because of his extreme cruelty. His ultimate successor, Baghdadi, succeeded in restoring ISIS and made large gains in Iraq and Syria. ISIS has shown an "unprecedented ability to recruit and radicalize followers through social media that stems from its display and exhibition of military prowess and success on the battlefield."

In assessing the future of ISIS, Gerges points to its loss of territory since its peak period. It has lost 40 percent of its Iraqi territory and is losing ground in Syria. He believes that ISIS will eventually collapse, even though it has "a seemingly endless stream of recruits," "nearly thirty thousand from more than one hundred countries since 2011." "The group can maintain itself...only in an environment of despair, communal polarization, state breakdown, and war," and its "strategic miscalculations and shortsightedness know no limits and do not bode well

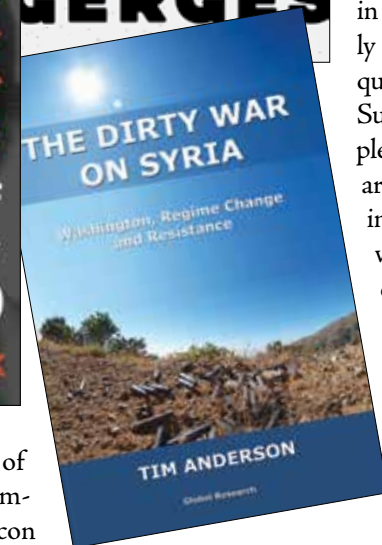
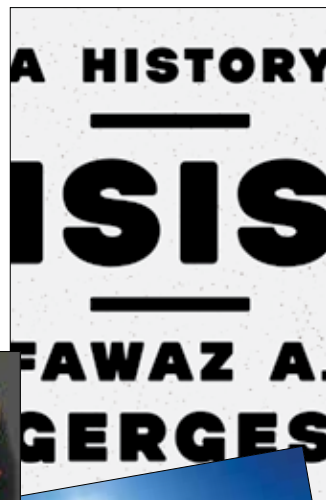
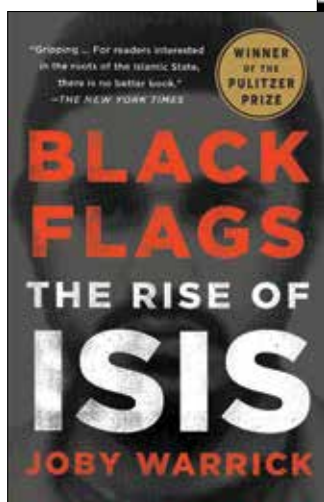
for the group in the long term.”

In *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS*, Joby Warrick, a prize-winning journalist for The Washington Post, presents a gripping account of the origins and development of the Islamic radical movement that became ISIS. In contrast to Gerges, he dramatizes his account with details of terrorist acts and personal portraits of the central figures. Much of the book details the exploits of Zarqawi and Baghdadi. Whereas Gerges devotes a chapter to Zarqawi, Warrick makes him a central character for half the book, interspersing his exploits with White House thinking. Alongside the picture of Zarqawi’s growing insurgency Warrick juxtaposes a meeting of President Bush and the visiting King of Jordan, telling Abdullah, “I don’t want people to think twenty years from now that I chickened out on confronting” Saddam.

After the U.S. invasion of Iraq, when President Bush assured reporters that “Iraq is more secure” and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld enthused about “extraordinary” progress there (“Baghdad is bustling with commerce”), Zarqawi was orchestrating assassinations, bombings and killings. Months passed before the White House would acknowledge that an “insurgency” was underway and “was not only real, it was winning.” Despite a report from a C.I.A. specialist and a warning from King Abdullah, Paul Bremer, Bush’s appointee in Iraq, had refused to stop looters and, more important, had outlawed the ruling Baath Party and dissolved Iraq’s military. “If Abu Musab al-Zarqawi could have dictated a strategy for Iraq that suited his own designs for building a terrorist network, he could hardly have come up with one that surpassed what the Americans themselves put in place over the spring and summer of 2003,” Warrick writes.

Warrick’s hawkish leaning emerges most clearly in dealing with Syria. His

subtle rhetoric gradually makes a lode-star of the seasoned Mideast diplomat Robert Ford, and pits him against the forces of ISIS and the person of Syria’s President Assad. Assad is invariably the “brutal Assad” and regularly named in conjunction with his father, about whose brutality there is no question. Warrick distinguishes him from his father, but that distinction pretty much evaporates in the narrative.



Warrick’s discussion of Syria expresses a view similar to Washington’s neocon foreign policy establishment. He cites incidents that have been repeatedly highlighted in the press as illustrations of Assad’s “brutality” and in the same misleading terms. He invariably presents the Syrian “protesters” as frustrated, but whose violence is limited to things like overturning cars, as in Daraa. When the “police” fire on a mob in Daraa in March 2011, he writes, they use “live ammunition, killing fifteen.” Like the mass media, he omits the relevant fact that seven of those killed were police. This additional information changes everything about the incident.

Warrick repeats the ongoing media claim that the Assad forces made a

“chemical-weapons attack on civilians in Ghouta,” supposedly crossing President Obama’s “red line” that would demand a military response. But that sarin gas claim has been debunked. A lead U.N.

investigator, Carla Del Ponte, countered that the evidence pointed toward the rebels as using gas, not Assad’s people. Obama failed to live up to his “red line” promise, Warrick insinuates. Yet it seems fairer to think that Obama was less worried about being called “chicken,” in contrast to Bush, than in refusing to act rashly and on the basis of questionable reports. Such repeated examples of misinformation are crucial to situating Warrick’s point of view. ISIS does not come into existence for nearly 250 pages, which retrospectively seem to make an implicit justification for a hawkish attitude toward Syria.

Warrick juxtaposes details of Baghdadi’s horrors with White House dithering in contrast to Ford’s resoluteness in support of so-called “moderates” and his impatience with Washington’s inaction. It is a rhetoric designed to align readers with Ford’s frustration and his call for more U.S. military assistance toward “regime change.” Warrick appears unmoved by the fact that Assad did not start this brutal civil war or that regime change in Syria could easily be followed by the same disasters now prevalent in Iraq and Libya.

Tim Anderson’s *The Dirty War on Syria* takes a contrary view. Entire chapters offer alternative views to what

has been widely reported about Daraa, barrel bombs, the Houla massacre and the use of poison gas. Anderson, who teaches political economy at the University of Sydney, challenges media distortions and bias in statements from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Anderson singles out Kenneth Roth, the director of Human Rights Watch, for purporting to show gruesome pictures of Syrian civilian deaths by “dishonestly using photos of Gaza and Kobane (after Israeli and US/ISIS bombing...)” Russia is hardly the only country disseminating inaccurate information. Both media and human rights organizations fail to point out that U.S. support of efforts to overthrow the legal government of Syria violates the U.N. Charter and the International Bill of Rights. Covert C.I.A. aid to Syrian rebels is flat-out illegal.

The United States has “demand-ed liberalization of Syria’s economic policy [i.e., more capitalism] and covertly supported discontent in Syria

years before the protests and war.” “In this dirty war,” Anderson writes, “the foreign powers have not been direct belligerents, mostly acting as funders, trainers, and arms suppliers to their proxy Islamist armies.” Israel profits from a weakened Mideast, and in a special way by continuing illegally to occupy Syria’s Golan, from which Israel now gets 30 percent of its water. The United States has insisted that Assad must go as a precondition for a negotiated settlement. But that is not a basis for negotiation; it is a demand for surrender.

Anderson expects that Assad’s government will prevail over “NATO and Gulf Monarchy-sponsored multinational terrorism,” and if so it will mean “an end to Washington’s bloody spree of ‘regime change’ across the region, from Afghanistan to Iraq to Libya to Syria.”

JEROME DONNELLY, since his retirement from the University of Central Florida, has taught occasionally in the university’s international studies program. He originated and co-authored *Human Rights: A User’s Guide*.

JAMES R. KELLY

AN URBAN DEFENDER

EYES ON THE STREET The Life of Jane Jacobs

By Robert Kanigel
Knopf, 512p \$35

If you have any interest in Jane Jacobs (1916-2006), author of the 1961 urban planning paradigm-shifting *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, you should read this comprehensive and accessible biography. If you’re not familiar with her, but are in the mood to read about an extraordinary pre-Betty Friedan independent woman with gifted eyes and rare judgment—a friend said “she was absolutely sure of herself and absolutely not full of herself”—read it and then get hooked on what makes and unmakes vital cities, and

indeed nations and civilizations.

As one reviewer observed, “She began by writing about sidewalks and finished with an account of Western civilization itself.” Her biographer, until recently a professor of science writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is a gifted writer, the author of the text for the acclaimed movie *The Man Who Knew Infinity*. Kanigel tells us that his *Eyes on the Street* is not about urban planning or urban design, but it is a biography. If this book aims to highlight any subject outside that of Jane Jacobs herself, he writes, it is that of the independent mind in conflict with received wisdom.

Although there are now “Jane Jacobs scholars” and she received a life

achievement award from the American Institute of Architects in 1998 and over 30 honorary degree offers and the Order of Ontario in 2000 (in 1968 she left the United States under Vietnam War protest disorderly conduct charges with her architect husband, daughter and two draft-eligible sons), she spent the first half of her life as an uncredentialed secretary showing no particular promise. She did not foresee the public intellectual acclaim she received almost immediately after the 1961 publication of *The Death and Life*. Indeed, she was expelled from the third grade, was frequently late for her high school classes, never made the honor roll, never got her college degree, but learned shorthand and typing at a secretarial school, held a succession of low-paying secretarial jobs, worked 10 years in the federal bureaucracy and then at mid-level professional magazines, where she was never singled out as an up-and-comer. What happened?

The year 1956 was a lucky one for her, when her boss asked her to stand in for him at a conference at which he did not want to speak. Though uncredentialed and not formally trained, she was ready. Her well-crafted address about cities, packed with jolts of verbal snapshots, was heavily applauded. She had always considered herself a writer. She had written for her high school newspaper and interned at a newspaper. As deftly as a playwright, Kanigel records the twists and turns of Jacobs’s evolution from stenographer to author in a way that makes her evolution seem more inevitable than incredible. And he is insightful, not iconic. He cites in detail the criticism that Jacobs’s focus on vitality tended to relegate race and poverty concerns to the peripheries.

The Vital City Is in the Eyes

When I was about a third of the way into the book I became aware of Kanigel’s steady use of “eyes” and sight metaphors to characterize Jacobs’s close-to-the-real and away from the

abstract approach to research and writing. I found at least 20 examples, as in “she was beginning to see a kind of order right behind the confusion of the East Harlem streets, an endlessly intricate one.” And always behind large rimmed glasses, as she was nearsighted, 20-200 in both eyes. In a variety of contexts Kanigel summarizes just what Jacobs’s eyes showed her that architects and urban planners, under the modernist glare of Le Corbusier and his “Radiant City” and Ebenezer Howard’s “Garden City,” with their bird’s-eye-vistas-eyes on blocked-out spaces filled with their starchitecture buildings and making for easy automobile travel, could not. The eyes of a woman with three children are far more likely to notice the little but life-giving details that the eyes of the starchitect do not. When asked how she found such wonderful examples to illustrate her points, Jacob replied: “It’s just the opposite. The examples come first. I think from the concrete. I can’t

think from the abstract.” Even in her later and denser works dealing with macroeconomics—*The Economy of Cities*, published in 1969 and her 1985 *Cities and The Wealth of Nations*—Jacobs advised, “Look to the small.”

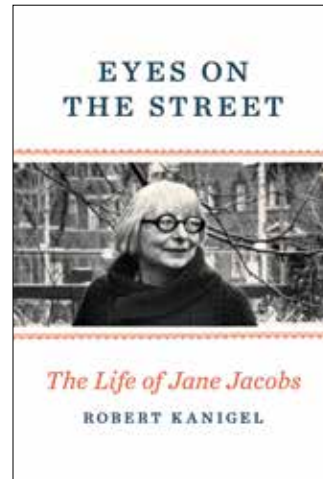
With her eyes on the street, Jacobs saw the importance of mixed primary uses; short blocks; buildings of various ages, including old ones; and dense concentrations of people. “Mixed primary uses” means an urban texture where warehouses and factories and residences and shops and bars and grocery stores are all mixed together, drawing people to the area at every hour of the day and night, thus helping to keep the area safe and lively; and its short blocks encouraged varied walking paths and

more corners for more shops and old buildings with low rents, which encouraged startups. But Kanigel calls this a “cartoonish summary” of the

book’s main ideas because it loses her aphoristic kick. Like this one: “New ideas must use old buildings.” Or this: “Why are there so often no people where the parks are and no parks where the people are?”

On Sept. 14, 2016, The New York Times’s Stephen Heyman asks, “Did the urban architecture of Syria help fuel the civil war that

has shattered that country and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives?” He writes that this was a question asked by Marwa al-Sabouni, an architect who spent two years confined to her apartment in Homs with her husband and




Dominican Friars Province of St. Martin de Porres

In celebration of the 800th Anniversary of the Founding of the Order of Preachers, the Dominican friars of the Province of St. Martin de Porres proudly presented the *St. Martin de Porres Award* to these outstanding individuals whose lives model and capture the spirit of our patron, St. Martin de Porres.

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Master of the Order
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Gustavo Gutiérrez, OP
Theologian & Author
University of Notre Dame



Dr. Paul Farmer
Humanitarian Physician &
Partners In Health Co-Founder



Sister Barbara Reid, OP
Catholic Theological Union
Vice-President & Academic Dean



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two children as the city was reduced to rubble. Homs, Syria's third largest city, had a centuries-old history of Sunni and Alawite and Christians living in a relative harmony that was reflected and encouraged by the mosques and churches and residential and commercial sites sharing the same intertwining streets. But this classic setting was upended by urban modernization imported as modern "progress," which involved the tearing down of small scale architecture and housing and replac-

ing it with bomb-able superblocks of massive apartments that isolated their occupants and with population growth led to ghettos on the urban fringe divided by religion and social class.

The Times report does not mention Jane Jacobs. Fittingly. As Paul Goldberger, the Times's architecture critic, wrote many years earlier, Jacobs was now "standard urban theory."

JAMES R. KELLY is an emeritus professor of sociology at Fordham University.

SIDNEY CALLAHAN

A NUANCED THINKER

SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS Explorations for Seekers

By Roger Haight
Orbis. 224p \$25

"Gird up the loins of your mind" (I Pt 1:13) and dig into this new book by Roger Haight, S.J. In 14 mind-stretching chapters, Haight continues his effort to create a "comprehensible, Christian vision in a secular scientific age." Seekers of spirituality and meaning exist everywhere, in and out of religion, and Haight wishes to reach them. He would proclaim God's "grace filled naturalism" to one and all. Jesus' spirituality is the essence of the good news.

By actively following Jesus' way of life, Christians can promote noncompetitive relations with other religions, as well as with secular spirituality and science. Haight sees religion and spirituality as separate but sometimes overlapping realities. Religion is "a set of beliefs, values and practices that together identify what ultimate reality is and help establish the relationship that obtains between this ultimate reality and the practitioners." He recognizes that the organized communal institutions, authorities, traditions and practices of religion are necessary and possess great value. But religions de-

pend upon the primary prior existence of spirituality. For Haight, spirituality is a "comprehensive and holistic category." A working definition includes "the logic, or character, or consistent quality of a person's or a group's pattern of living insofar as it is measured before some ultimate reality." More simply put, spirituality can be seen as "something like personal identity in action." Consequently, religious belief or membership is not necessary for spirituality; nor is some "esoteric" otherworldly practice.

The most crucial ingredient of spirituality, Haight argues, is in its active pattern of daily living. What counts is what one does and how one treats other people. Spirituality also can be spontaneous or deliberative, conscious or unconscious, individual or group, and religious or secular. Those who follow Jesus' spirituality will act in the loving, selfless way that Scripture shows Jesus living. Jesus represents, symbolizes and mediates God's grace and will. He is

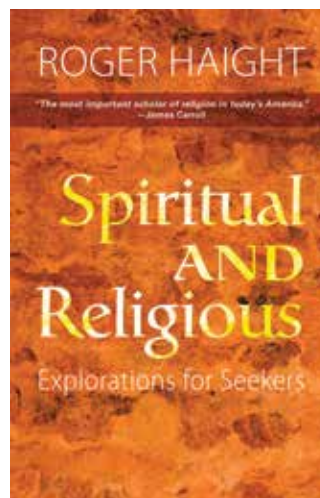
unique; his resurrection by God initiates Christianity.

Haight cites four Christian exemplars of Jesus spirituality: John Calvin, Martin Luther, Meister Eckhart and Ignatius Loyola. To a man these followers of Jesus act vigorously, strenuously, unselfishly and dominantly. But each brings his own unique gifts to ministry. Ignatius is further praised for creating the *Spiritual Exercises*, which lead others to follow Jesus. Participants who engage in these imaginative re-enactments of Gospel narratives are enabled to "fuse" their own concrete life narrative with that of Jesus. For Haight, the exercises can be an ecumenical resource, since no Catholic eucharistic or other church practice is required beyond the common Gospel narratives.

Narrative is central to Haight's analyses of questions taken up in these chapters. He places each topic within its historical and cultural background. He tells the story first, then follows

with its theological and spiritual interpretation. Here readers reap the benefit of Haight's broad fund of knowledge and intellectual insight. Along the way, the historical development of the Christian scriptures, creeds, churches and theologies are covered. Changing cultures, philosophies and social and scientific theories are analyzed as they play their part in the narratives.

He emphasizes change. The message seems to be that once you understand how and why something evolved over time and was accepted and adopted, then you too can affirm changes. For Christians, the church must be ever-reforming in response to God's Spirit and Jesus' spirituality. For Haight there is less concern for an eternal truth or for ensuring the evo-



lutionary continuity of doctrine à la Newman. His emphasis upon behavioral action, dynamic pluralism and individuality tips the balance of religion against abstract metaphysical thought. Readers can understand why Haight has drawn criticism from religious authorities.

Yet Haight is such a subtle and nuanced thinker, a veritable master of interpretive theory, that he holds his own. He defends pluralism, ambiguity, flexibility, individual difference and progressive change as God's gracious will. Divine mystery is recognized. Roger Haight's own Jesus spirituality appears evident in his writing. And with his championing of pluralism and individual spirituality, a reader who differs can feel free to dissent.

I, too, value the Second Vatican Council's *aggiornamento* but give equal weight to its *ressourcement*. I embrace reform and the social gospel but also treasure mysticism, metaphysics, theology and aesthetics. Gratefully, I recite the Nicene Creed as God's essential message of love and union with creation. Thus I wince when Haight calls the Trinity "a failed doctrine." Not for me it isn't. It's Haight's efforts to reinterpret the Trinity as "the central Christian doctrine" through a narrative analysis that miss the mark. In inclusive Catholicism, God can be embraced as tender Mother giving comfort and joy, playfulness and erotic delight. I can embrace St. Therese's "little way," and Paul Ricouer's "second naïveté." At the same time Haight's effort to reform and rethink religion and spirituality responds to the great promise, "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev 21:5).

Haight's chapter on the spirituality of the cross works admirably. It demonstrates the strengths and virtues of his method. An informed narrative of what is known of the historical crucifixion is followed by a convincing interpretive analysis. A suffering and crucified messiah presented a problem

for the early church. The overwhelming surprise of the resurrection added to the difficulty of understanding. In the ensuing efforts to comprehend the meaning of the cross, one can see the retrospective rewriting of the historical accounts to include prejudices against the Jews as well as elements of Jewish themes of sacrifice and the suffering servant. Other explanations developed in the Middle Ages, including substitution and satisfaction theories, were widely accepted until recently. Understanding these developments can be liberating, although, as Haight avers, they by no means solve the mystery of suffering. Haight emphasizes the importance of the resurrection but slights eschatology and new theological treatments of the ascension. Would Haight see these currents negatively because they appear too "distant from the current conception of the universe"? Haight is rightly concerned with the conception of the universe and provides an excellent chapter on "Following Jesus in a Scientific Age."

Haight embraces, as I do, the development of science as a great gift of God's Spirit. I too am grateful to the theological and scientific thinkers that Haight praises. Thank you, Teilhard;

thank you, John Haught; blessings to you, Elizabeth Johnson. Haight succinctly lays out the challenging problems of relating science and religion. One that he seems to miss is that of letting our allegiance to science trump other ways to knowledge. Reductive materialism rides high and regularly asserts that something "is not plausible" or "literally not to be believed" in the "present context." But with God and science, the present becomes transfigured in the blink of an eye. Believers must resist being captured by any status quo. At this moment scientific disputes are raging over the nature of time, space, matter, mathematics, quantum theory and consciousness. In the psychological sciences also, questions of the mind/brain/body relationship zero in on consciousness. What do religion and spirituality have to say? Oh, how I wish I could hear Haight's thoughts on quantum theory and consciousness. Even though I have not been able to do justice to the richness of this present book, I'm already eager to read the next.

SIDNEY CALLAHAN is an author, lecturer, college professor and licensed psychologist. Her most recent book is *Created for Joy: A Christian View of Suffering*.



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THE ENEMIES OF EMPATHY

It was a “day from hell,” the singer-actress Patti LuPone, starring in “Shows for Days” at the Mitzi E. Newhouse theater, told *The New York Times* (7/10/15). A woman at the end of the second row had been texting, texting, texting, and Ms. LuPone had had enough. She left the stage, approached the offending woman and took the phone right out of her hands. The audience clapped and gasped and the show went on.

In a midtown subway station four silent women in black, on a bench, bent over their smartphones, each in her own world, and texted or read while an unconscious ragged man sprawled helpless at their feet. I checked to see if he was dead.

In a *New Yorker* cartoon a wedding couple at the altar has just been asked, “Do you...?” And the minister stands there helpless as the couple, their backs to him, check their cell phones.

In 2014, an *America* editorial, “Our Digital Future” (2/17/14), acknowledges the problems that accompany progress: Online dialogue has “taken a horrific turn,” and the pope, who deemed the internet a “gift from God,” warned that digital connectivity can isolate us from those closest to us.

Since that time the skies have darkened. The intellectual journalists—*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *New York Magazine*, *The American Scholar*, *The New York Times Book Review* and *The Washington Post Style* section—suggest that phones have become enemies of empathy. They concentrate on three problems: laptops and smartphones in the classroom, the impact on family life and the development of the young person’s

character. David Brooks, in *The Times* on Oct. 7, points to the “decline in the number of high quality friendships.”

According to *The Chronicle* (9/16/16), students retain more from a printed text than from a digital one, and students who write in notebooks perform better than those who type on laptops. Sherry Turkle, author of *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*, tells of a neuroscientist who had observed students’ fractured attention spans but didn’t think it applied to her until she found it impossible to focus on a Herman Hesse classic. She learned that the “skimming, scanning, and scrolling of the web” had damaged her ability to “read deeply.” *The New York Times* health columnist Jane M. Brody reports a Pew Research finding that teenagers send an average of 34 texts each night after they get into bed, leading to common and harmful sleep deprivation, loneliness and depression (7/17/15).

Sherry Turkle (*New York Times*, 9/27/15) recounts the story of a 15-year-old girl who was crushed when her father took her out to dinner and pulled out his cell phone to “add facts” to the conversation. “Daddy,” she said, “stop Googling. I want to talk with you.” Studies show that the mere presence of the phone on a table changes both what people talk about and the degree of connection they feel.

In a restaurant recently, a family

of 12 gathered around the table, leaving two young boys to themselves at the far end, where, through most of the evening, they amused themselves by sharing pictures on their cellphones. The event taught them nothing about how to interact with other people. According to Caitlin Dewey (*The Washington Post*, 7/19/14), a “mountain of studies,” indicates that “cellphone use makes us more selfish, more easily distracted, and more stressed.” Pope Francis (reported in *Zenit*, 11/11/15) said, “A family that almost never eats together, or is not at the table but watching TV or on their smartphones, is hardly a family.”

The blogger Andrew Sullivan discovered that the internet was killing him.

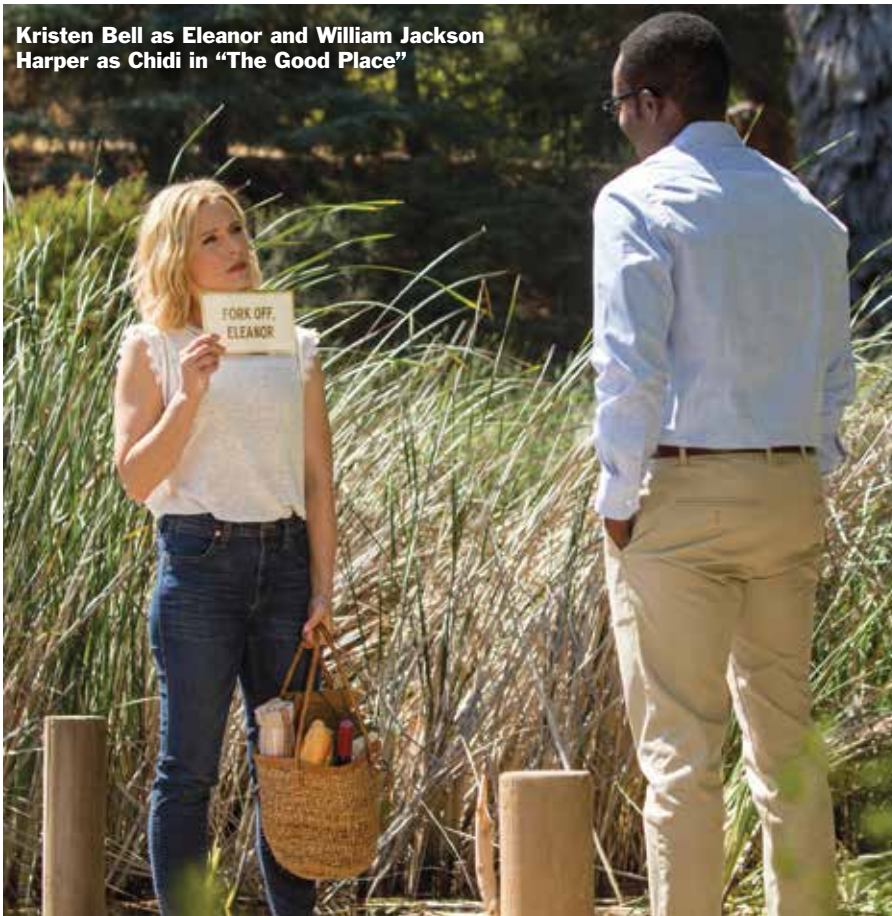
Every hour spent on the internet, he sensed on retreat, was not in the real world but in a “wind tunnel of deafening, deadening noise...a sea of craned necks and dead eyes...constantly looking down.” He had forgotten that being with a person means being “experientially with them, picking up countless tiny signals from the eyes and voice” (*New York magazine*, 9/19).

Meanwhile, friendships demand hard work, a willingness to listen, leave doors and minds open, ready to travel as well as share a dinner of pasta and wine plus favorite books, films and songs. Can a smartphone nurse this experience? Of course it can, if we keep it, for the most part, out of sight.

Digital connectivity can isolate us from those closest to us.



Kristen Bell as Eleanor and William Jackson Harper as Chidi in “The Good Place”



TELEVISION | JIM McDERMOTT

HEAVEN HELP US

Life lessons from ‘The Good Place’

I recently asked Ally, my 9-year-old niece, and Patrick, my 7-year-old nephew, what they thought heaven might be like. Ally had some very specific (and strangely board game-centric) views: “It’s a candy land, and I’ll have a gingerbread house and I’ll have a pet gingerbread dog and I’ll be in a world of fantasy and I’ll be an angel and I can fly everywhere and I can see everyone that I love there.” (God, just to be clear, this is not a request.) Patrick was more concise, but on much the same page: “Jumpy houses. Ice cream. Rainbows. Musicals.”

The afterlife. For as long as we have been around, we have fashioned stories about how you get there, who lives there and what happens when you

arrive. Some tales, like Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, are among our world’s best-known works of literature; others have taken on an accepted wisdom: there is a white light; you are welcomed by all the people you have ever loved; and you all go eat gingerbread cats and sing show tunes in jumpy houses that stay inflated forever.

Onto this overflowing stage of ideas has come an unexpectedly wonderful new addition, NBC’s **The Good Place**. Starring Kristen Bell (“Veronica Mars,” “Frozen”) and Ted Danson (“Cheers,” “ Fargo”), “The Good Place” tells the story of Eleanor Shellstrop (Bell), a recently deceased woman who finds herself rewarded for her full life of good deeds with en-

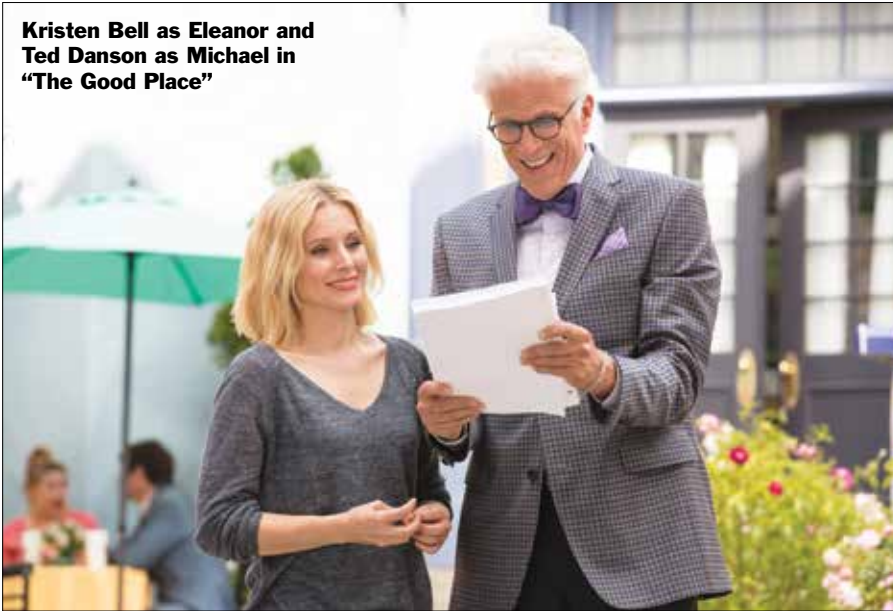
trance into the Good Place, an endless land of neighborhoods perfectly crafted to suit their inhabitants, right down to including each person’s soulmate. Built by an earnest novice architect, Michael (Danson), Eleanor’s Good Place includes a multitude of frozen yogurt shops and stores where all the clothes fit. It also includes Janet, a humanesque Siri who pops up upon request to answer questions, and Chidi Anagonye (William Jackson Harper), a Nigerian ethics professor who is Eleanor’s soulmate.

The problem is, Eleanor did not live a full life of good deeds. In fact, she was generally awful. But having been mistakenly allowed into the Good Place, and hearing just how high the bar was to avoid the unseen Bad Place—no artist has ever been invited here; even Florence Nightingale didn’t make the cut—Eleanor desperately wants to avoid being found out. So with the help of Chidi, she tries to learn how to be a better person.

“Bad person learns to be good” is hardly a new story idea. And usually the more the protagonist is converted to the cause of goodness, the worse the series gets. (Remember how much more compelling “NYPD Blue” was when Andy Sipowicz was a furious, inarticulate bigot than after he became the show’s tender grandpa.)

“The Good Place,” though, has some great assets. First, it is created by Michael Schur, who has a history of using the sitcom format to quietly talk about big things. “The Office,” for which he wrote, transformed the brilliant, two-season British series about the painful emptiness of office life into a wacky and big-hearted meditation on the inextinguishable meaningfulness of life, even in the midst of a ridiculous corporate world. “Parks and Recreation,” which Schur co-created, likewise took the concept of a small-town, Indiana, city parks and recreation department and fashioned an idealistic series about progressives and

Kristen Bell as Eleanor and Ted Danson as Michael in "The Good Place"



conservatives being friends and working together to serve their community.

"The Good Place" already has a number of fun, interesting ideas at work. For instance, because each Good Place is crafted to fit its inhabitants perfectly, Eleanor's non-perfectly good presence is causing the place to come apart at the seams. Strange storms erupt, as well as sinkholes and Texas-sized ladybugs.

More intriguingly, for as much as this is supposedly heaven, many of the people within it seem pretty flawed. The philanthropist Tahani Al-Jamil, for instance, makes a constant show of her generosity and seems to be putting on a British accent; her mute, Buddhist

monk soulmate, Jianyu Li, shows her no affection.

In some ways it is reminiscent of C. S. Lewis's idea in "The Great Divorce": When you get to heaven, the first thing you have to face is being welcomed by someone you would never want to see. (Take a moment for reflection on this; it will haunt you.) But it also raises the question: Is this place all that it seems? Could it be that "The Good Place" is actually a pretty effective "Bad Place"?

The show's other secret weapon is its cast. Though today Kristen Bell is best known for her sweet performance as Princess Anna in the animated Disney film "Frozen," her real forte is wacky humor mixed with a deep, dark,

heartbroken fury. Sitcom or not, a show about a woman who wasted her life and may end up in hell is going to profit from the broad range of colors that Bell can paint.

Likewise, Ted Danson as the innocent, optimistic Michael delivers yet another fantastic performance. I am not sure anyone would have predicted that 30 years after "Cheers" Danson would have become the greatest male television star of his generation. And yet, in the last 10 years alone he has had critically acclaimed—and remarkably varied—roles: in "Fargo," "C.S.I." and its spinoffs, "Bored to Death," "Curb Your Enthusiasm" and "Damages." Again, it is hard to say where "Place" is headed, but Danson is clearly capable of anything.

The older I get, the more my ideas about the afterlife tend toward a slightly less clear resolution than the classic "white light, gingerbread family" scenario. No matter when I might die, I find it hard to believe that I will be "done" or that my life will be wrapped up in a bow with some culminating statement or deed. (Based on my history so far, it seems much more likely to end with a burp and a lot of unfinished business.)

I am also not sure it is in the human DNA to ever be done growing or being curious or trying to do better or just wondering. No matter what the specific details might be, I tend to think that in some sense the journey goes on. In the words of the prophet Nancy Sinatra, "These boots are made for walkin', and that's just what they'll do."

"The Good Place" imagines the landscape of eternity in primary colors and endless fro-yo, but underneath there is quite a road. Anyone who wonders about his or her own place in the big scheme of things will find in it a welcome, thoughtful traveling companion.

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J., a screenwriter, is *America's* Los Angeles correspondent. Twitter: @PopCulturPriest.

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Get to Work

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), NOV. 13, 2016

Readings: Mal 3:19-20; Ps 98:5-9; 2 Thes 3:7-12; Lk 21:5-19

“For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us” (2 Thes 3:7)

There is probably nothing more attractive for some people about the Bible than the apocalyptic narratives. Some of them are found in the Old Testament, but many more are woven into the fabric of the New Testament. The mythic language of great conflagrations, nature in chaos, the division between the righteous and the wicked, and the final judgment speak deeply to some about God’s justice and the final end of evil. There is a reason why movie makers and video game designers populate their worlds with storylines based on ancient Jewish and Christian apocalyptic narratives. People are drawn to these accounts.

For others, however, there is also something menacing about these epic accounts. They find the blood-soaked imagery distressing, but also the fact that some Christians draw from these accounts to predict the coming end of the world. Mixed up in this is a concern that some people who await the apocalyptic end are not simply waiting but are acting to create chaos in our time.

Whatever our immediate response to the drama of apocalyptic passages, we cannot escape the imagery, because it is central to our beliefs about Jesus and the coming kingdom of God. The Nicene Creed tells us, “He will come again in glory to judge the living

and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.” These are apocalyptic promises grounded in the teaching of Jesus. Jesus said of the end in general, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.” But in many ways, these signs and portents are not and ought not to be our concern.

Apocalyptic passages, as Christians understand them, are about God acting to bring about God’s kingdom through the defeat of evil. As Psalm 98 says, God “is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.” The coming judgment is a promise of hope, not destruction, a hope for humanity to turn to righteousness, to walk away from evil. The work of the church is to act in ordinary ways that create hope and not despair over evil.

This is why Paul at the end of 2 Thessalonians, after describing the mysterious apocalyptic events that he says must occur before the end, turns to what might seem like mundane concerns. He reminds the Thessalonians that he and Timothy and Silvanus worked hard when they were with them and “were not idle.” Paul asks the church in Thessalonica to “imitate us.” Paul is not thinking here only of extraordinary spiritual works of mercy, or evangelization, or other worthy religious activities. He

has in mind ordinary work.

Paul says, “We did not eat anyone’s bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you.” Some Thessalonians, believing that the end had already come or was about to come, decided that their spiritual response would be to give up their day-to-day lives. Paul’s teaching here that “anyone unwilling to work should not eat” is not about a rejection of the modern welfare state, but a rejection of the belief that waiting for the end of the world should take precedence over an engaged daily life for Christians.

Our response to the coming end is simple, Paul suggests, and does not consist of “living in idleness,” being “mere busybodies, not do-



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on the apocalyptic imagery of the Bible. Do you find yourself attracted to it or indifferent to it? How does it orient your life? Do you see how your own life might be a sign of God’s goodness?

ART: TAD DUNNIE

ing any work.” Paul commands and exhorts “in the Lord Jesus Christ” for the Christians in Thessalonica “to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.” Perhaps working at being a faithful Christian is less fascinating than idly calculating when the end will come, but part of our vocation as Christians is modelling the good life for others by taking joy in our daily work, engaging in relationships with others and demonstrating our love of God. We should prepare for the end by doing all things in goodness now, by offering people a true sign of the end, when the goodness of God will be all in all. When will that be? God knows. **JOHN W. MARTENS**

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