

# America

A close-up photograph of a man's face, looking upwards and to the left. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of his skin and the intensity of his expression. He is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt. In the foreground, a hand in a red and white striped shirt is visible, reaching towards the man's face.

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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## Duterte's Tough Talk

CAN THE CHURCH  
WORK WITH  
THE PHILIPPINES'  
NEW PRESIDENT?

DAVID T. BUCKLEY

KEVIN CLARKE ON  
A REFUGEE CRISIS  
IN SOMALIA

# OF MANY THINGS

If you are familiar with the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, then you will likely know his famous “Rules for Discernment” or, to put it simply, his method of decision-making. James Martin, S.J., once described this method in our pages: “Discernment for St. Ignatius means being aware that God wants us to make good decisions, that God will help us make good decisions—but that we are often moved by competing forces: ones that pull us toward God and ones that push us away.”

Discernment, then, involves entering into a spirit of prayerful questioning, using the imagination to envision the various alternatives and to weigh them with both our heads and hearts. What feels more like an act of faith? What feels more like an act of fear? What opens my heart to the world in generosity? What closes me in on myself and narrows my field of vision? What feels more like an act of love? What feels more like a cry for love?

Sometimes this method of questioning is called weighing the lights and shadows in our lives. It is true, of course, that no human life is all light or all shadow. It is also true that discernment never leads to certainty precisely because certainty is the opposite of faith. If we are certain, then we have no need for faith. Discernment is rather a process for choosing acts of faith that are as well-informed and truthful as possible.

It will come as no surprise to readers of this magazine that America Media is experiencing a major transformation, evolving from a single print magazine to a multiplatform media ministry. In print, on the web, through radio, events and film, America Media is working to realize anew in the 21st century the vision of our founders. I am pleased to say that this process is not a matter of our mere survival, but

of our prospering. America Media, unlike many traditional magazines, is financially sound. This autumn we will move to a new state-of-the-art headquarters and will add additional talent to our mostly lay staff. The Society of Jesus in the United States and Canada has also made America Media a top priority and generously placed several young Jesuits at the service of this apostolate.

All of this growth and change is at your service. America Media is more than a media organization: We are a diverse community of leaders, scholars, politicians, businessmen and women, clergy, teachers, volunteers and community members who are committed to pursuing the truth in love; committed to a civic and ecclesial conversation that is intelligent, balanced and above all charitable. It is in that spirit of community that I invite you into this discernment about our future. What are the best ways that we can continue to serve you? As a reader, audience member, friend or benefactor, what do you see as the lights and shadows in our work? What would you encourage us to do more of? What might you discourage us from ever doing again?

Many of you have been a part of this community for decades. As we enter into this discernment about how to adapt our tradition and charism to a new century, we need your experience and prayerful insight. So I encourage you to let us know what you think. You can send us an email at [newamerica@americamedia.org](mailto:newamerica@americamedia.org). I assure you that we will prayerfully consider what you have to say.

These are exciting days for this century-old ministry. A new **America** is coming. I invite you to be a part of it. And, as always, I am deeply grateful for your continued support.

**MATT MALONE, S.J.**

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*Cover:* Rodrigo Duterte throws souvenir shirts to his supporters while campaigning in Malabon, Metro Manila, in the Philippines on April 27, 2016. Reuters/Erik De Castro/File Photo

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## ON THE WEB

**Archbishop Blase Cupich** talks about his outreach to the **LGBT community** after the Orlando shooting, and **Kevin Clarke** writes on "**Standing Up to Gun Violence, Again.**" Full digital highlights on page 20 and at [americamagazine.org/webfeatures](http://americamagazine.org/webfeatures).



### Via Dolorosa

This well-trod path—how maddening, how wrenching to follow along it once again. Forty-nine young lives cut down in Orlando in minutes. How even to fathom that; how to fix it?

To our sorrow, there is nothing we can do to alter this most recent tally sheet of victims, just as there is nothing any of us can do to bring back the children and teachers and administrators killed at the Sandy Hook school and so many others before them. They have been killed, and we have been complicit, in what we have collectively done or failed to do, in their killing. That admission, of course, does not excuse the men who pulled the triggers or the poisonous ideologies or mindless wrath that propelled them. But the overarching obligation of each member of society to the common good also cannot be denied. Despite years of such mass shootings, despite the daily toll of gun violence in our nation's communities, we have not secured this most basic right to life and safety.

It is a Christian duty, but abiding in hope can seem foolish at times. How many of us on June 12, hearing the reports from Orlando and checking in throughout the day as the death toll rose, were tempted simply to check out, to surrender to a numbing hopelessness before a problem that has come to seem intractable?

Some have urged not more prayer but action in response to the massacre in Orlando, and surely prayer devoid of acts would be regrettable. But prayer helps bring us to that still place where we can prepare for action; it is through prayer that we restore hope. The Resurrection reminds us nothing is impossible with God.

Yes, there are petitions to be circulated and political works to be organized if we wish to end the national plague of gun violence. But we can also look across our own communities and reach out to someone suffering because of these events or begin a dialogue with neighbors and friends who believe freedom is guaranteed by the gun, not imperiled by it. We can propose an examination of conscience within the church and our society that demands that we consider the source of such homicidal rage against our L.G.B.T. brothers and sisters.

And we can keep faith with the one who will wipe away every tear and bring life out of death, who assures us that though afflicted in every way, we are not crushed; though perplexed, we are not enthralled to despair.

### Boycotts Get Out of Hand

On June 5, Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York announced an executive order banning state agencies from doing business

with firms associated with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, which boycotts Israel's companies and products because of its policies toward Palestinians. "If you boycott Israel," said Mr. Cuomo, "New York will boycott you." With so many campaigns to financially punish nations, companies and even individuals with controversial views, counter-boycotts seem inevitable. Will there now be a triple boycott by the B.D.S. movement against New York over Mr. Cuomo's boycott against boycotters?

The confusion over who is shunning whom is almost comical, but as the American Civil Liberties Union says, "creating a government blacklist that imposes state sanctions based on political beliefs raises serious First Amendment concerns." The executive order targets firms that "promote others to engage in any activity" that the government of the State of New York characterizes as economic pressure against Israel. This seems to open up the possibility that a firm could lose a state contract just for appearing sympathetic to the B.D.S. movement, even if it does not actually participate in that boycott. This is dangerously close to imposing a gag rule on anyone who wishes to do business with New York. If the state wishes to show its support for Israel, it should do so in ways that do not threaten free speech.

### Poverty and Puerto Rico

This year the Catholic Theological Society of America's annual meeting took place for the first time in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The setting provoked serious discussion among the assembled theologians about the suffering prompted by the current Puerto Rican debt crisis. A day after the meeting ended, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Puerto Rico did not have the authority to allow public utilities in the commonwealth to restructure \$20 billion in debt. The only way forward now is a bill, recently passed by the House of Representatives and supported by President Obama, that would allow all U.S. territories to pursue a form of bankruptcy. The bipartisan bill is now before the Senate, where supporters hope it will be passed before a debt payment deadline on July 1.

The House bill includes an amendment, passed by a voice vote, to address poverty among children on the island, which stands at over 50 percent. Child poverty has long been a problem in Puerto Rico, an early symptom of the island's economic struggles. It is hard to imagine the U.S. government would ignore such persistent poverty levels on the mainland. It is tragic that it required an economic crisis of devastating magnitude to draw attention to the suffering of our fellow citizens.

# Means, Ends and Embryos

When Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si'" was published one year ago on June 18, the document was cheered by Catholics and non-Catholics alike for its bold call to preserve "our common home" for future generations. But what was dubbed the "climate change" encyclical by many in the press is about more than reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The pope's "integral ecology" includes another inconvenient truth: "It is troubling that, when some ecological movements defend the integrity of the environment, rightly demanding that certain limits be imposed on scientific research, they sometimes fail to apply those same principles to human life" (No. 136).

In light of recent advancements in embryonic research and genetic engineering, it is worth revisiting this principle. In May, two groups of scientists revealed they were able to keep embryos alive in vitro for 13 days, breaking the previous record of nine days and bringing the researchers close to the 14-day legal limit on experimentation, after which the embryo must be implanted or destroyed. At two weeks, embryos can no longer fuse or split in two, a clear sign of biological individuation.

Now that this restriction has become practically relevant, some within the scientific community want to revisit the red line to allow for research into a critical but at this point mysterious stage of human development. Researchers arguing for extending the limit in the journal *Nature* argue that the 14-day rule was never meant to be a moral "bright line" but rather a tool "designed to strike a balance between enabling research and maintaining public trust." Moving the experimental limit to 21 or 28 days, some scientists say, could help our understanding of a wide range of medical problems. This tactical repositioning confirms what the Catholic Church, which opposes all research that results in the destruction of embryos, has long recognized: that an arbitrary line in the sand does nothing to achieve real moral balance between scientific advancement and the value of human life.

The urgency of the debate over where to draw the line is heightened by another recent breakthrough. A powerful new gene-editing technique called Crispr-Cas9 allows scientists to precisely target and replace specific strings of DNA. The technique shows great promise for patients living with conditions like muscular dystrophy (see "Celebrating Crispr," *Am.*, 2/8). More controversial is its potential use to modify human embryos. Such manipulations would not only have unknowable and potentially dangerous effects in the resulting child but would permanently alter the human

germline. Last year, Chinese scientists became the first to use the technique on nonviable human embryos, and in February researchers in Great Britain received permission from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to use Crispr-Cas9 on human embryos to study the causes of miscarriage. This came just two months after a global summit at the National Academies of Science in Washington, D.C., called for a temporary moratorium on inheritable germline editing until "there is broad societal consensus about the appropriateness of the proposed application."

Such consensus cannot be found unless the debate moves beyond the tactical questions of how old embryos have to be before their own inherent value outweighs the usefulness of their destruction. These ethical dilemmas need to be engaged at their root, at the question of what ends we should aim at, rather than what means can be justified. How can the church best engage in this vital dialogue?

"Laudato Si'" provides an integrated approach to these issues: "When we fail to acknowledge as part of reality the worth of a poor person, a human embryo, a person with disabilities...it becomes difficult to hear the cry of nature itself; everything is connected" (No. 117). We might ask environmentalists who strongly protest the production of genetically modified plants and animals: Is the modification of human embryos any less problematic? Or human rights activists who celebrated this year the first time a model with Down syndrome participated in Fashion Week: If her unique gifts can be recognized on the runway, why are we so quick to discard or edit such "defects" in embryos? And those concerned about the growing chasm between the rich and the poor: Should the wealthiest individuals be able to pass on to their children not only wealth but also genetically engineered intellectual and physical advantages?

In discussions of cutting-edge genetics and "designer babies," scientists are often accused of "playing God." But such a deity is surely unrecognizable to the Christian. Ours is a God who pours out love especially on the poor, the weak, the disfigured and the imperfect. There are many scientists dedicating their lives to the same, "using their God-given talents for the service of others" (No. 131). Together we can work toward a common home that, while not perfect, is all the more precious for the diversity and frailty of every life.



## REPLY ALL

### Obama's Missed Opportunity

Re "Steering the Ship of State," by Robert David Sullivan (6/6): This is not an objective look at our president's legacy. President Obama has represented this country with grace, style and, for the most part, magnanimity. I have been grateful for his presence at all international events and for his contribution to race relations.

His Keynesian economics, however, have left much to be desired. He scared the market and fettered it with constraints and reduced the growth needed to lift incomes. He left us with a staggering debt. The stimulus did not support workers; it was a slush fund for bureaucrats. Obamacare is too complicated, too expensive and too much stick and not enough carrot. His bailout of the auto and green industries interfered with the working of a market that is much smarter and less biased. I suspect we would have been better off in the long run going through the natural business cycle and letting the market clean itself.

All in all, he is a good man who could have been a great president, if he had been a president for all and not just for progressives.

JOHN BAUER  
*Biloxi, Miss.*

### Policy Fantasy

I was prepared to criticize "The Other Campaigns," by John Carr (5/23), for what I thought early in the piece was the author's lionization of House Speaker Paul Ryan. I was glad to read further on that he takes a dim view of Mr. Ryan's ideas for addressing poverty, so-called entitlement reform and the social safety net.

I do disagree with what I consider Mr. Carr's fantasy of President Obama and Paul Ryan intellectually wrestling and coming to some kind of policy agreement on the issues of immigration and poverty. Mr. Obama unfortunately

can't wrestle policy with anyone whose leadership position is intimately bound to his party's policy. And the Republican policy was once notoriously expressed by Senator Mitch McConnell: to make Mr. Obama a one-term president. That didn't happen, but Republican Party policy never deviated from that attitude, even after Mr. Obama's re-election. That was the tragedy of the last eight years in American politics, one that, ironically, may have birthed the Trump candidacy.

VINCENT GAGLIONE  
*Online Comment*

### Horrors of History

In "Blaming the Stranger" (5/16), Brett C. Hoover cites a Pew Research Center report that found that 55 percent of white (i.e., non-Hispanic) Catholics see immigrants as a "burden" on our society, and "more than a third of white Catholics do not think undocumented immigrants should be permitted to stay." Donald J. Trump has emphasized right up to the present that he intends to forcibly round up and transport 11 to 12 million men, women and children who are in the United States illegally.

After the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact during World War II, Germans deported Poles and Jews from Nazi territories, and the Soviets deported Poles from areas of Eastern Poland to Siberia and Central Asia. Needless to say, many did not survive. The Khmer Rouge, when it took control of Cambodia, moved most of the urban population into the countryside. At least two million people were involved. Most did not survive. There were about two million Armenians in the Ottoman Empire before World War I. After Turkey finally ended mass expulsions, some estimates are that approximately 1.5 million of Turkey's Armenians were dead.

These are just some of the historical occurrences of forced mass expulsions. One does not have to be a historian or even a college graduate to be able to follow the reasoning of the solemn

promises of Mr. Trump to their logical conclusion. Nor does one, in view of the Pew statistics cited, have any reason to think it impossible that a determinedly willing participant in one of these horrors might be next to me in church.

CHARLES ERLINGER  
*Online Comment*

### Obstacles Remain

Re "Colombia's Long Road to Peace" (Editorial, 5/16): Events in Colombia are hopeful, but much work lies ahead. An important breakthrough and perhaps the biggest obstacle to peace and reconciliation is the task of transitional justice. The agreement struck last year affirmed that crimes by all armed actors against humanity, genocide and serious war crimes cannot be legally pardoned and will be prosecuted. In addition, the 7.6 million victims must receive justice, and guerrillas must surrender weapons and be reincorporated into society within 60 days after the termination of the conflict. FARC rebels must accept the authority of the Colombian state and the concept of alternative sentences that will restrict the movement of ex-guerrillas.

This is a creative peace process that recognizes the realities in Colombia. The concern is about the future: Will the various elements of the peace be implemented effectively, given the weakness of Colombia's institutions and the hard feelings that have accumulated for generations?

GABRIEL MARCELLA  
*Online Comment*

### He Lived the Gospel

Re "Daniel Berrigan (1921-2016)" (Current Comment, 5/16): Thanks to **America** for its solid coverage of the death and life of Daniel Berrigan, S.J., a true American hero. Today many U.S. citizens are searching for a revolution by looking to Donald Trump or Bernie Sanders. Father Berrigan participated in a revolution that started 2,000 years ago.

Many Americans continue the chant

“God Bless America”; they pass currency with “In God We Trust”; and they go to church to hear the Gospel. Dan Berrigan, S.J., lived the Gospel and went to prison for doing so. Thank you, Father Berrigan, for making our country better and keeping open a place in the Catholic faith for many like me.

JOE HOVEL  
Conover, Wis.

## The One-State Solution

Re “The Two Israels” (Editorial, 5/9): The “two-state solution” is now utterly unfeasible, and the only “solution” is a pluralist, democratic and nonsectarian Israel-Palestine, with equal rights, including a modified “right of return” for all citizens. No Israeli government, whether of the left or the right, is going to countenance the uprooting of the settlements, which by themselves make a unified, geographically contiguous Palestine a hopelessly unmanageable and economically unfeasible project.

In the course of the last decade, I have had many conversations with recently demobilized young Israeli soldiers. They are almost unanimously dispirited young men and women with very clouded consciences regarding what they have been forced to do by Israeli politicians, and they are very clear about the harassment, the evictions and the brutal “irregularities” that they have been ordered to perpetrate. When I have discussed with them the hopeless qualities of Palestinian leadership and its failures to pursue the only potentially successful campaign of liberation from oppression of the Palestinian people—namely, nonviolent disobedience and law-breaking—they have been utterly candid in stating that popular sentiment in Israel now would support “shooting the nonviolent resisters” down in the streets.

Are defenders of Israel unaware that for a large segment of the Israeli public the soldiers who

do this kind of thing, or the settlers who torment Palestinian kids on the way to school, are actually treated as heroes, whether or not the Israeli justice system administers tepid punishments?

ROBERT LEWIS  
Online Comment

## Jesuit Values

Edward W. Schmidt, S.J., offers a thoughtful column on Jesuit education and values (Of Many Things, 5/9). This spring, however, Cecile Richards, the president of Planned Parenthood, was invited to speak at a student-run, university-funded lecture series at Georgetown University. I understand that the university took the Pontius Pilate approach, arguing that the invitation was a matter of student autonomy and free speech.

Cardinal Donald Wuerl, archbishop of Washington, rebuked the university: “It is neither authentically Catholic nor within the Catholic tradition for a university to provide a special platform to those voices that promote or support” actions clearly condemned by the church. “Students, faculty, and the community at large are all impoverished, not enriched, when the institution’s Catholic identity is diluted or called

into question by seemingly approving of ideas that are contrary to moral truth.”

Are Jesuit values Catholic values?  
LAURENCE BURNS  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

## Religious Interference?

Re “Canada’s Liberal Orthodoxy” (Current Comment, 5/9): In response to a new bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide in Canada, the editors write, “Catholic Charities and other religious groups should be allowed to continue their life-affirming ministry to the dying without any government interference.”

Frankly, I oppose assisted suicide laws because I foresee a grave risk of people being pressured or encouraged, subtly or overtly, to die for financial reasons. That being said, authorization for doctors to prescribe life-ending treatments in no way interferes with any religious group’s ability to provide life-affirming ministry to the dying and their families.

MICHAEL DONNELLY  
Online Comment

## Memorializing Slavery

Re “Acts of Penance,” by Margot Patterson (6/6): Margot Patterson’s warm tribute to the Georgetown Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation is itself a tribute to the value of an Ignatian outlook, which leads to a real willingness to engage our personal and communal sins, without being paralyzed by them. In the spirit of collaboration, one correction to her text: There is one museum in the United States devoted completely to the enslavement of African-Americans. The Whitney Plantation in Wallace, La., is well researched, deeply felt and worth an afternoon’s visit for anyone who would like to reflect more deeply on the experience of slavery.

MAGGIE WRIGHT  
Denver, Colo.



CARTOON WRITTEN BY JAKE MARTIN, S.J.; ART BY MICHAEL KRAGER

## GUN VIOLENCE

### After Orlando, Chicago Archbishop Urges Outreach, Gun Control

**A**cts of public mourning and solidarity were observed across the nation and around the world in the aftermath of the attack by a lone gunman in Orlando that claimed 49 lives and left 53 others wounded. Family members identified and began to bury their lost loved ones this week as expressions of regret and sorrow continued to be issued by faith leaders around the country.

One of the first to express his shock and solidarity immediately after the attack was Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago. In his brief initial statement on June 12, he made a direct appeal to the nation's L.G.B.T. community. In an interview on America Media's SiriusXM Radio program, "America This Week," the archbishop spoke with *America* magazine's editor in chief, Matt Malone, S.J., and its managing editor, Kerry Weber. "I wanted to focus my attention on a number of things, first of all the victims, especially members in the gay and lesbian community who obviously were targets here, and I think we had to say that," he told them.

"You know," he continued, "30 years ago the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a letter describing as deplorable the fact that some homosexual persons, as they put it, have been and are the object of violent malice in speech or in action, and at that time...they said that such treatment deserves condemnation from the church's pastors whenever it occurs, so I believe it was important to raise my voice in this moment because this is what the church is asking us to do and has asked to do for over 30 years now."

Archbishop Cupich also suggested that the church can no longer stand on the sidelines in the debate over gun control but had "to address the causes of such tragedy, including easy access to deadly weapons."

The bloodshed in Orlando, he explained during his interview, "has to provoke a more fulsome discussion on that issue in our country."

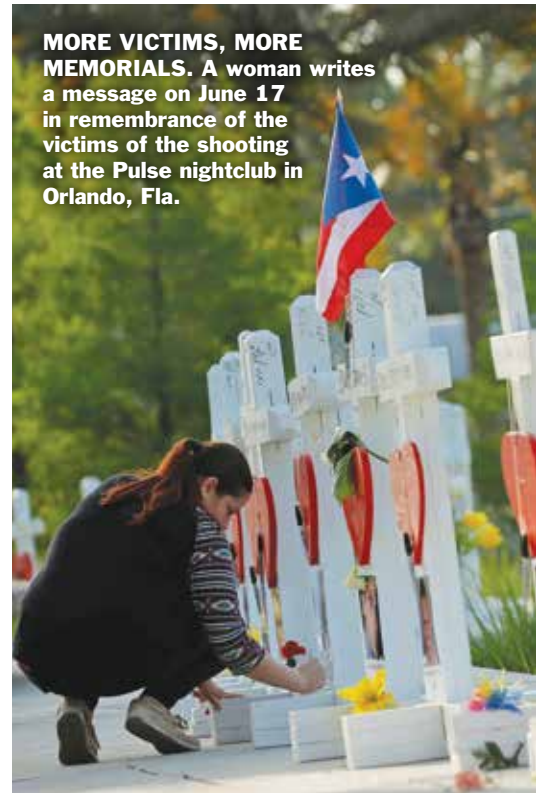
"We have to look at the root causes of all of this," Archbishop Cupich said. In the gunman, Omar Mateen, the archbishop sees "a very lethal combination of an unstable personality," psychic conflict and homophobia, the incitement to violence offered by ISIS internet propaganda and "finally, the idealization of guns as the best means to take out one's rage on others." But it was "easy access to guns" that made

possible the horrific attack," he said. "It's the spark that allows that explosion to happen."

Archbishop Cupich quickly followed up his initial statement with a letter that was read in Chicago on June 12 before a Sunday night Mass for the lay organization Archdiocesan Gay and Lesbian Outreach. "Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ," Archbishop Cupich wrote: "For you here today and throughout the whole lesbian and gay community, who are particularly touched by the heinous crimes committed in Orlando, motivated by hate, driven perhaps by mental instability and certainly empowered by a culture of violence, know this: the Archdiocese of Chicago stands with you. I stand with you."

The archbishop explained that he has made a point of meeting with members of AGLO to hear directly of the concerns and experiences of

**MORE VICTIMS, MORE MEMORIALS.** A woman writes a message on June 17 in remembrance of the victims of the shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Fla.



L.G.B.T. Catholics in the archdiocese and "just to get to know who they are as persons."

"I don't think sometimes people in positions of leadership in the church really engage gay and lesbian people and talk to them and get to know about their lives." He worried that church leaders have not successfully reached out to alienated gay and lesbian Catholics and explained his personal outreach is an attempt to emulate the example set by Pope Francis.

"The pope constantly talks about those three words: encounter, accompany and integrate. That's the template for us in our approach to people who feel excluded, whether gay and lesbian or other populations out there. That's the demand that is before us in this moment, and the Holy Father is taking the lead, and I feel the way he is operating is very encouraging, but also very insightful." **KEVIN CLARKE**





MIDDLE EAST

## Two Years of 'Ethno-Religious Genocide'

**S**yriac patriarchs, marking the two-year anniversary since Islamic State militants expelled Christians from a large part of Iraq, denounced "the ethno-religious genocide" of their people and called for the liberation of those areas. Syriac Catholic Patriarch Ignace Joseph III Younan and Patriarch Ignatius Aphrem II of the Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch stressed in a joint statement that "the wound of forced emigration is still bleeding."

"Two years passed since the uprooting of our Syriac people from the land of our ancestors in Mosul and the Nineveh Plain, following the criminal

act which amounts to an ethno-religious genocide, committed by Daesh [the Islamic State] and other terrorist groups," the patriarchs said.

"On June 10, 2014, our people were forced to leave Mosul. On the eve of Aug. 7 of the same year, the uprooting continued and our people were forced to leave...other villages and towns of the Nineveh Plain," the prelates said.

In all, about 150,000 people were uprooted and fled to the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region of Iraq and neighboring Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Even as the patriarchs observed this grim anniversary of Christian displacement, Iraqi forces were closing in on ISIS forces in the Iraqi cities of Fallujah and Mosul.

And in Kurdish-controlled areas, Christian militias have been forming to join efforts to retake and defend territory lost to ISIS. One of three such militia groups, the Nineveh Plain Protection Units, hopes for American support after the U.S. House of Representatives called for the delivery of direct assistance to local security forces in the north of Iraq.

American assistance "will give equality to all the ethnic groups here," said Col. Jawat Habib Abboush, the deputy commander of the group.

"This is our country, we had a civilization here for a thousand years and we are still citizens of this country," he added. "We cannot be marginalized."

Noting that the Islamic State forces consider as infidels "all those who do not share their religion or believe in their confessional doctrines," the two leaders denounced the atrocities against non-Muslims in

the region. They also welcomed the declaration in March of the Islamic State group's actions as genocide by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and representatives of other countries. The religious leaders called on other nations, including Iraq, to concur with that finding and to act against the invading forces.

"Today, two years after the calamity that was brought upon our people, the decision-making countries and the international community remain silent and inactive towards the ethnic cleansing of a historical people who founded the civilizations of the area," the patriarchs insisted.

The religious leaders recounted the anguish they have experienced during their visits to the uprooted Christians.

"As spiritual fathers of this people, our hearts were pierced with pain and our eyes were filled with tears every time we visited, together and separately, our displaced children who settled in the cities and towns of the Kurdistan Region in Iraq," the patriarchs said.

"We observed their suffering and the lack of the most basic elements needed for a dignified life, namely housing, work, health care or education for the children," they continued.

In closing, the Syriac shepherds offered a message of hope to the people



**A PERSECUTED CHURCH.** An Iraqi man inspects the damage in 2011 at a Catholic church after attacks in Kirkuk.

displaced by the violence, urging them to “remain the shining lamp in the darkness of this tribulation, for your return to your homes will be soon.”

## Holy Sepulcher Restoration

For the first time in 200 years, experts have begun a restoration of the Edicule of the Tomb in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where, according to Christian tradition, Jesus was laid to rest after his crucifixion. The project, which began in early June, is expected to take up to a year and will include sorely needed damage repair and reinforcement of the structure. The work is being carried out by experts from the National Technical University of Athens. The project came together when the three principal churches that oversee the tomb under the 19th-century Status Quo Agreement overcame enduring differences in a place where rights over every section of the church have been jealously guarded for centuries. “There wasn’t any friction on this issue,” said Athanasius Macora, the Franciscan priest who is responsible for supervising the agreement on the part of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. “There was good chemistry between the three heads of the churches, and they agreed to it right away.”

## Reconciliation Efforts In South Sudan

Ten months after an agreement ended armed conflict between forces loyal to South Sudan’s top political rivals, South Sudan’s bishops called for the nation to “rise above negativity” and pull together to achieve lasting peace in the world’s youngest nation. The prelates urged in a statement on June 16, as they concluded a three-day meeting in the capital, that personal and tribal

## NEWS BRIEFS

UNICEF reported on June 17 that 92 percent of some 7,600 children who made the dangerous **crossing of the Mediterranean Sea** from Libya so far this year have been unaccompanied by adults, up from 68 percent last year. + The Rev. Hermann Scheipers, the last surviving priest to have been imprisoned in the **Dachau concentration camp**, died on June 2 in Ochtrup, Germany, at age 102. + Pope Francis named Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-Fai, S.D.B., special administrator on the Pacific island of Guam on June 6 after **Archbishop Anthony Apuron** faced allegations of sexual abuse. + More than a year after the conclusion of its apostolic visitation of U.S. communities of women religious, the Vatican asked in June that the superiors of more than a dozen **orders return to Rome** for further discussions. + After the brutal **slaying of Jo Cox**, a member of Parliament of the United Kingdom, on June 16, police in Britain were looking into her alleged attacker’s links with white-supremacist groups. + Members of St. Patrick Parish in Elkhorn, Neb., prayed on June 16 for Lane Graves, a 2-year-old **boy killed in an alligator attack** in Florida, and for his family, during a morning Mass and special rosary service.



YUI MOK/PA VIA AP FILE

Jo Cox

interests be set aside and for all South Sudanese to “compromise for peace and the common good.” The church leaders also welcomed the work since August to form a transitional government under the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The settlement ended a 30-month civil war between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and rebels allied with his former deputy, Riek Machar. Fighting erupted barely three years after the South Sudanese voted overwhelmingly for independence in January 2011. More than 10,000 people were killed and more than one million were displaced by the fighting.

## Marriage Prep

Because most people today do not understand that sacramental mar-

riage really is a bond that binds them to each other for life, many marriages today can be considered invalid, Pope Francis said on June 16. “We are living in a culture of the provisional,” he told participants in the Diocese of Rome’s annual pastoral conference. The idea of commitments being temporary “occurs everywhere, even in priestly and religious life,” he said. Pope Francis told the story of a bishop who said a university graduate came to him saying he wanted to be a priest, but only for 10 years. That lack of true commitment is part of the reason, he said, that “many sacramental marriages are null. They say ‘Yes, for my whole life,’ but they do not know what they are saying because they have a different culture.”

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

## Chavismo's End

Many critics of Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro say he is such a disastrous head of state because he is a former bus driver with no college education.

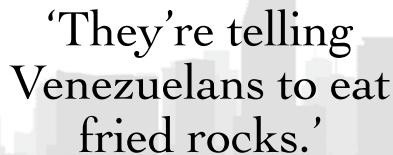
That is bunk. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was a metal worker who never reached high school before he was elected president of Brazil in 2002, and he turned out to be one of the best leaders the country ever had. Granted, Brazil has its own big messes right now; but it is not the apocalyptic moonscape of food and medicine shortages, daily blackouts and rampant homicide that Venezuela has become.

Venezuela is crashing not because of President Maduro's lack of schooling but because of his overload of ideology. His delusional, left-wing dogma has brought the most oil-rich nation in the Western Hemisphere to the brink of social and economic collapse. Venezuela's gross domestic product is forecast to shrink another 8 percent this year after last year's 10-percent contraction. Not that a leader espousing right-wing dogma would be any better. Venezuela proves the suicidal perils of following any dogma to the extreme.

Consider Maduro's latest Marxist madness: his campaign against Venezuela's largest food and beer producer, Empresas Polar. At the end of the 20th century, Polar and its owners, the Mendoza family, were admittedly symbols of the elite's unbridled wealth and privilege in Venezuela, a nation where half the population lived in

poverty despite its petro-prosperity. Popular anger toward that epic inequality brought the late Hugo Chávez and his socialist Bolivarian Revolution (a.k.a. Chavismo) to power in 1999.

Since then, under Chavismo, Venezuelan officials have confiscated and nationalized hundreds of private companies and driven most of them into the ground. The enterprises they



'They're telling Venezuelans to eat fried rocks.'

have not seized have been driven into the ground anyway because of an absurd regime of government price and currency controls.

Those policies give businesses scant incentive to produce and just as scant access to hard currency for importing what they need in order to produce.

This year those hurdles finally hamstrung Polar, which cannot mill enough corn flour used to make Venezuelan staples like *arepas*, a flat, round, unleavened patty often used to make sandwiches. It has even had to halt brewing its internationally known Polar beer.

Maduro's response? Accuse the company of taking part in an "economic war" against him and threaten to seize its plants. That would certainly mean the death of a corporation whose importance to Venezuela's economy is second only to the state-run oil monopoly, *Petróleos de Venezuela*, which itself has been largely driven into the ground by Chavista mismanagement

and collapsed crude prices.

Worse, a government takeover of Polar would exacerbate the suffering of Venezuela's poor. And that is perhaps the most unforgivable result of this wrecked revolution.

I was once a volunteer teacher in one of Caracas's largest slums, Catia, and as a journalist I have spent a lot of time in Venezuelan barrios like it. So I applauded Chávez's early efforts to steer the oil revenue their way for a change—producing the first clinics, schools, *bodegas* and potable water many of them had ever seen.

That was then. Chávez died three years ago, but even before his demise, Chavismo had begun to ruin what it once achieved for Venezuela's underdogs. Its failures were obvious last December when even Catia—Chavismo's cradle—voted against the socialists and handed the National Assembly to the opposition.

"At the end of the day," said Marialbert Barrios, an opposition candidate who won an assembly seat from Catia, "the Chavistas care more about their politics than about the poor. They're telling Venezuelans to eat fried rocks."

The poor do not trust the opposition all that much, either. Still, polls show three-fourths of Venezuelans want a presidential recall referendum this year. But despite more than a million signatures gathered for a recall petition, the Chavista-packed election commission, under Maduro's control, is blocking the effort.

Meanwhile, street protests intensify as Maduro rolls out a new food distribution system that blatantly favors Chavista loyalists. That is the real economic war being waged in Venezuela. And you do not need a college education to figure that out.

TIM PADGETT



# Feminism's Lost Soul

In the 1970s, when feminism got loud and national and had something approaching traction in the United States, it claimed that it would “do politics” and “do business” with a new focus. The focus would be people, not processes or power. It would be the vulnerable, not the usual recipients of government or corporate largesse.

Today, confusion reigns where feminism is concerned. There are living witnesses to its earlier promises, but these are to be found, ironically, among grass-roots women who go about their business while ignoring or eschewing the feminist label. Among feminism's self-proclaimed leaders, there is not much talk of serving the vulnerable. There is even a fair amount of the opposite.

There is additional confusion about whether there is anything specifically “feminine” to be feminist about. The most celebrated feminist theorist, Judith Butler, has even gone beyond Simone de Beauvoir's famous social construction theory—“one is not born a woman but becomes one”—to the notion that sex, biological and otherwise, is strictly a matter of performance.

Furthermore, at the same time that the avant-garde denies that the categories of masculine and feminine have any content, they affirm that Bruce Jenner is definitely a woman on the grounds of his subjective certainty about a basket of female traits and his stereotypically feminine clothes and makeup.

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HELEN ALVARÉ is a professor of law at George Mason University, where she teaches law and religion and family law. She is also a consultant to the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

And the nation's first-ever female presidential candidate on a major party ticket, immediately after clinching the nomination, ran to pay her dues to the left's version of the right's National Rifle Association: the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Both require homage before a candidate of a major party may proceed to the general election.

At Planned Parenthood, in a speech highlighting abortion 16 times, women's freedom was essentially defined as the right to sex without children, by any means necessary. There could hardly have been a more fitting locus for such a speech, given that Planned Parenthood last year destroyed over 300,000 unborn human lives.

Enough. I officially miss the '70s.

Still, I never despair, because feminism's promise to empower the vulnerable is alive and well among grass-roots women who are serving women and men and children across the United States, reminding everyone that the best of feminism is still alive and has not lost its soul. Its truest purveyors, however, are neither elite nor even much noticed.

They are the women who welcome immigrants into the United States despite increasingly fierce opposition, who found and staff the thousands of centers that care for impoverished pregnant women and single mothers, including the Sisters of Life. They are the women who head the largest Catholic charitable associations in the United States and in the world. One woman, Helen

Prejean, C.S.J., has nearly single-handedly put the question of abolishing capital punishment back on the national agenda. And women, including me and tens of thousands of other women at the grass-roots level, are working to reduce the disadvantages that especially poor and working-class women face in a relationship and marriage market in which casual sex and cohabitation are the price of entry. Women dislike both far more than men do. But men still set the terms, especially in a world where men still “do the asking” for marriage; and sex is at least “plastic,” or even nearly meaningless, thanks to its divorce from even the idea of children.

It is rare but not impossible that movements for justice attract elite money and spokespersons while staying true to their best impulses. Grass-roots efforts are proceeding apace here and there, but something bigger and more powerful is required to move the ball. Political party dynamics today hurt, not help. They are too blunt and too much about “sending signals” to donors and interest groups, thanks to our mess of a campaign finance system. (Love him or hate him, Bernie Sanders got that issue right.) There is nothing substantial whatsoever in any political or corporate pipeline I can see today that is poised to ameliorate the suffering of American women, minorities or the poor. I don't much care who leads the charge, but I would love to see a retooled women's movement retake this mantle and run with it.

Feminism's  
truest  
purveyors  
are neither  
elite nor  
even much  
noticed.

Sculpted angels float among the branches.



(shown smaller than actual size of 3.5")

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# The Joy of Science

Discovering beauty and truth in the universe

BY ADAM D. HINCKS

**M**arco Drago, a young physicist in Hanover, Germany, got the news by an automatic email on Sept. 14, 2015. For about half a second, the perpendicular, four-kilometer-long arms at the LIGO experiment's twin detectors in Livingston, La., and Hanford, Wash., had jiggled back and forth the distance of about one-thousandth the width of a proton. That may not sound exciting to most people, but the scientist knew that the graphs in his inbox suggested a historic discovery. The signal could be due only to gravitational waves—the shrinking and stretching of space—and that was a phenomenon no experiment had ever detected before.

At first Dr. Drago thought his colleagues in the United States must have been testing the instruments, creating an artificial signal. But after giving them a call and finding that the experiment had been operating in its normal mode, he notified everyone on the project and set a thousand hearts racing with the possibility that human beings had, for the very first time, seen a wave in the fabric of space passing through our planet. The next few months were spent painstakingly analyzing the data to make absolutely sure that the event was authentic and that they were interpreting it correctly.

Finally, in February of this year, the LIGO team published the results and announced their discovery to the world. They were able to state conclusively that they had detected the collision of two black holes over a billion light-years away. The amount of energy released from the impact was greater than all the starlight in the observable universe, most of it in the form of gravitational waves. Such ripples in space are generated all the time as massive bodies (including our own planet) accelerate through space, but they are normally so tiny that only the most spectacular cosmic events, like the one captured by the LIGO detectors, can produce anything detectable by current technology.

The discovery of gravitational waves did not happen overnight. The Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) experiment was conceived in the 1980s, construction began in 1994, and science-grade oper-

ations began in 2002. At that time I was an undergraduate just beginning my physics career, and over the next 13 years I attended several talks and seminars by LIGO scientists. In every presentation there was nothing to show except diagrams of their improving instrumentation and graphs demonstrating that their sensitivity was getting steadily better. It was only last year that they finally achieved the level of sensitivity they needed to see the black hole merger now known as GW150914.

LIGO has thrown open a whole new field of astronomy and will continue to make important discoveries. But it is worth taking a step back to think about what has just been achieved. Hundreds of scientists thought it was worth spending over 20 years and more than half a billion dollars to record a tiny vibration that lasted less than half a second. If any parallel to the parable of the pearl of great price is to be found in the world of science, this is it. For here we have a group of men and women who have, in a certain sense, sold everything they possessed to obtain a precious piece of information about our universe. It is a remarkable example of how the most fundamental motivation of science is the human desire for contemplation.

## Scientists as Contemplatives

It is not conventional to call scientists contemplatives, but this is probably because we tend to associate contemplation with lofty mystical practices. In fact, contemplation is nothing other than taking delight in what is beautiful and good and true and lovable and having one's whole attention absorbed by it. This is a simple definition, but contemplation in practice can be profound and life-changing. It is enjoyable, and though in the moment it is quite effortless, contemplation is far from passive because the whole self is engaged. It feels effortless because it is what our minds were ultimately made to do.

Human beings contemplate many things, and one of them is the world we live in. Scientists do this in a particular way, delighting in the world insofar as it is mathematical, ordered and theoretically intelligible. This may sound abstract or even dull, but the actual experience of scientists is not so esoteric. For example, a colleague once told me about the time he thought his research group had made a Nobel-worthy discovery about the shape of the universe. For the rest of the day—until they realized they had unfortunately

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A simulated image of the black hole merger known as GW150914.

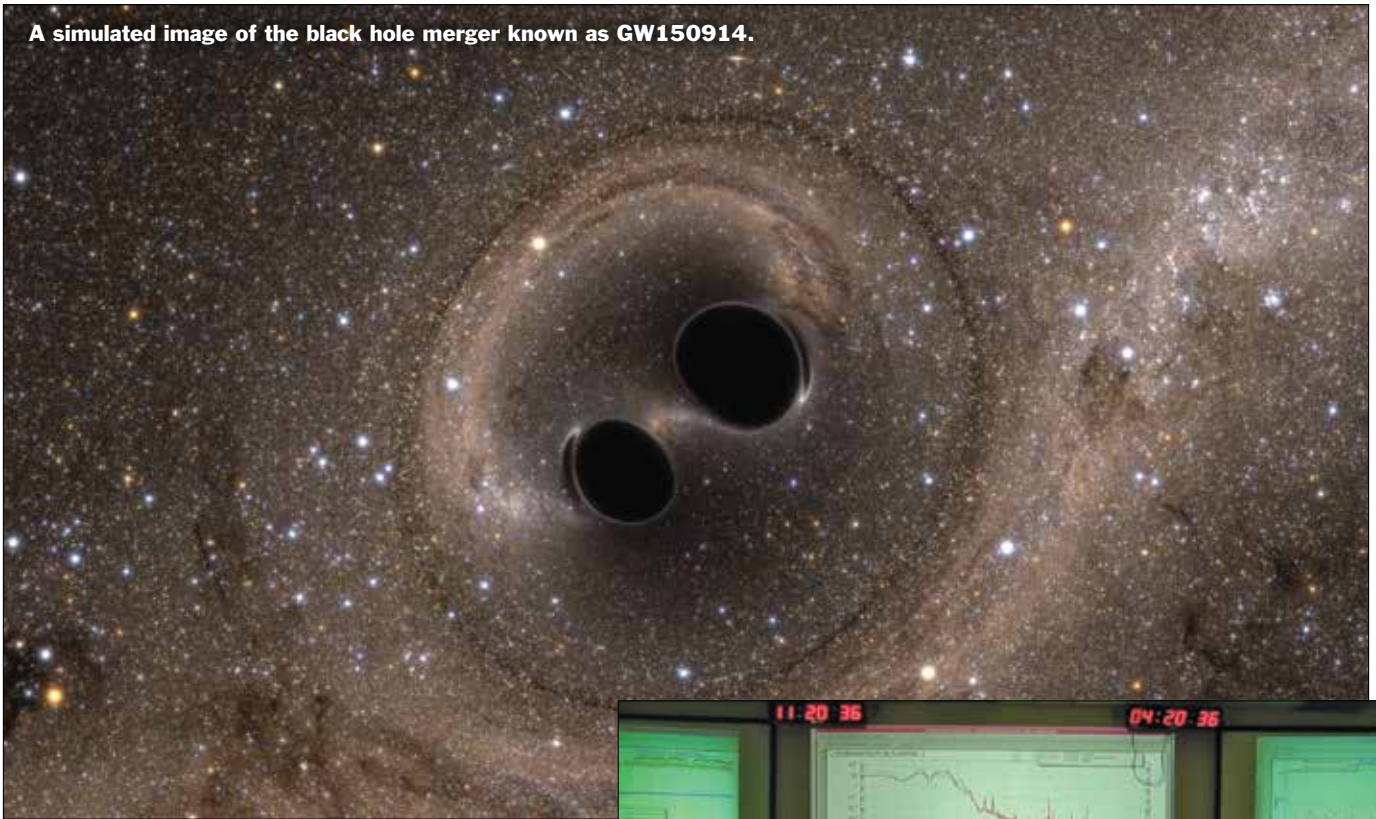


IMAGE: LIGO/ SIMULATING EXTREME SPACETIMES

mixed up a simulation with their real data—he was so excited that his heart was thumping uncontrollably in his chest, almost like a cartoon character. This visceral response to something wonderfully new was a far cry from the Spock-like emotional detachment that is often popularly attributed to scientists. I have seen similar reactions among fellow scientists facing new discoveries: exuberance, the irrepressible urge to share the result with others, even giddiness.

But scientific contemplation can also be more serene. Another colleague of mine simply says “Wow!” when you show him an interesting new result, then absently smiles and sits in silent pleasure before the plot or the equation. In my own experience, this kind of moment is the fruit of all one’s hard work. There is a real reward in being able to take a step back and enjoy what has been uncovered and understood. Whether it be an elegant theory learned in the classroom or the final, confirmed result of a long research program, there is nothing like pausing and simply being present at the newly discovered reality before you. Like standing in front of a magnificent piece of art, it is at the same time mentally effortless and full of intellectual energy.

It is significant that all the states I have mentioned above—the exuberance, the racing of the mind, the pounding of the heart and finally the sheer pleasure of delightedly fixing your mind on the object of interest—are all experienced by a person in love. C. S. Lewis once rightly described

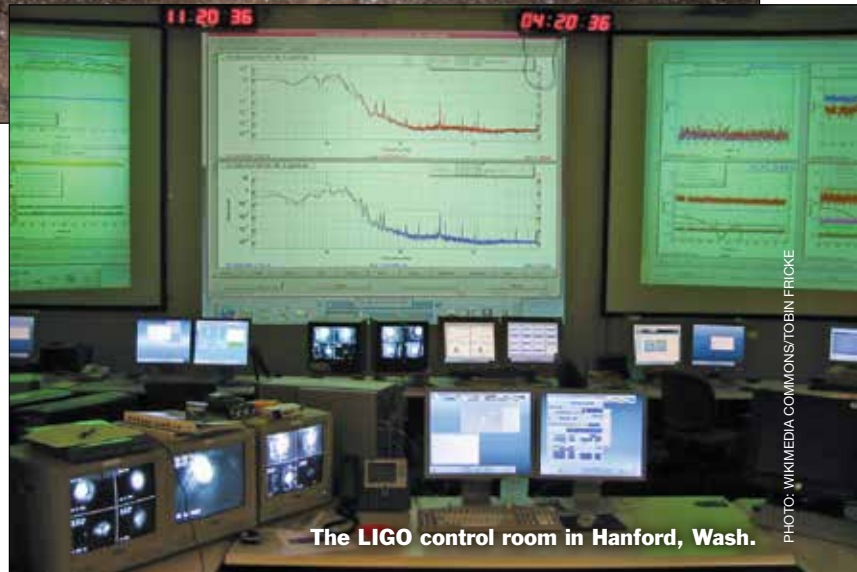


PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/TOBIN FRICKE

being in love as contemplative. A lover experiences “a delighted preoccupation with the Beloved—a general, unspecified, preoccupation with her in her totality.... If you asked him what he wanted, the true reply would often be, ‘To go on thinking of her.’ He is Love’s contemplative.” Obviously, no scientist loves an equation or an experimental result in the same way that a man loves a woman. But the analogy is strong, nevertheless. Like a lover, a scientist before a new insight or discovery often simply wants to “go on thinking” of it. Like a lover, a scientist at the peak of his power is a contemplative.

Of course, the day-to-day work of science is not a continuous rapture of contemplation, no more than real love consists in the perpetual giddiness of being “in love.” Most

of science is simply hard work: patiently sifting through data, retrying things a slightly different way, even sitting in front of a blank piece of paper waiting for inspiration. Of my many months working on the Atacama Cosmology Telescope in northern Chile, a goodly fraction has consisted of shoveling snow out of our generator shed, spending long, cold evenings measuring the shape of our mirrors and trying to track down electrical problems in our hundreds of cables.

Naturally, the actual work of science must have its own pleasures if one is to stick to it, but all meaningful work has a goal. The fact that the moments of real contemplation are rare only makes their worth that much more apparent. Even a little taste of contemplation is enough to draw a person into years of study and toil, and to sustain him in it. It is astonishing but true that being absorbed by a single article in *Scientific American* can be enough to convince a teenager to study physics in college, or that a freshman struck by the elegance of an equation will be inspired to continue on to a graduate school and beyond.

One might question whether this is an overly romantic account of why scientists do what they do. After all, there is plenty of careerism, rivalry and one-upmanship in the corridors of science departments and research labs. Research programs are often driven more by funding considerations than by the pure desire to know the truth. All of this is true, but it does not explain why people become interested in science in the first place, nor does it fully account for why scientists persevere in their research. Despite human flaws and counterproductive social structures, the desire scientists have for basic research cannot be explained away. And it is just a simple fact that they are excited by the work they do.

## Science and Beauty

The existence of gravitational waves was predicted by Albert Einstein 100 years ago as a natural consequence of his new theory of gravity, or general relativity. The technology LIGO uses did not exist at that time, but general relativity made another prediction that prompted Arthur Eddington to organize an expedition to the island of Principe for the solar eclipse of 1919. When the sun was blacked out, the team carefully measured the positions of some stars near to the solar disc that would have otherwise been overwhelmed by sunlight. They found that the stars' positions had been slightly altered because of the bending of their light in the gravity of the sun, and that the amount they shifted was just as Einstein's theory predicted. Eddington's result made

headlines worldwide and propelled Einstein into popular fame.

Einstein's fellow physicist Max Planck soon wrote to congratulate him, remarking, "The intimate union between the beautiful, the true and the real has again been proved." Planck was referring to the elegance of Einstein's theory, something that almost everyone who has studied general relativity agrees about. As complex as the mathematics quickly become, its basic ideas and core principles are beautiful simplicity itself.

The idea that the transcendentals—the beautiful and the true and the real—run through all of being and are present in everything that exists is not a relic of medieval philosophy

or an idiosyncratic notion of Planck's. Einstein himself shared his intuition. According to a well-known anecdote, when he received the news of the eclipse measurements, he confided to a graduate student, "I knew the theory was correct." She asked him how

he would have reacted if Eddington's experiment had disagreed. "Then I would have been sorry for the dear Lord," he responded. "The theory is correct."

In other words, he thought it would be somehow perverse for God (though Einstein was always insistent that he did not believe in a personal God) to allow such a beautiful theory to be otiose. Of course, if we follow the trajectory of this logic too far, there is the danger of relapsing into the premodern notion that physical science can be deduced from elegant metaphysical principles without recourse to experiments and observation. But if we remember that beauty and truth are found together—are two aspects of reality—we cannot go far astray.

Today, scientists continue to describe their discoveries as "beautiful." Rainer Weiss, one of the project leaders of LIGO, said with enthusiasm that their observations are "beautifully described in the Einstein theory of general relativity." His colleague Kip Thorne spoke of the results as "our first beautiful examples" of a new way of studying the universe. They did not speak in terms of utility or profit or innovation because, at the end of the day, beauty is what captivates the scientist, what motivates him to spend his life searching for the true and the real.

## The Good and God

In his letter to Einstein, Planck neglected to mention the good, another of the traditional transcendentals. But it, too, is highly relevant, for nobody who can help it works for something that is not good. If you think this is a banal

**As complex as the mathematics of Einstein's theory quickly become, its basic ideas and core principles are beautiful simplicity itself.**



point, take a step back and consider the fact that grown men and women devote all their working hours to the pursuit of knowledge that in and of itself will not make them rich or give them political power or win them a spouse. Neither will their work contribute much to ends that we normally associate with goodness. Pure science does not directly reduce poverty or broker peace or restore justice. The simple, startling fact is that we consider scientific knowledge as a good in itself. The goal of science is not only the real, the true and the beautiful, but also the good.

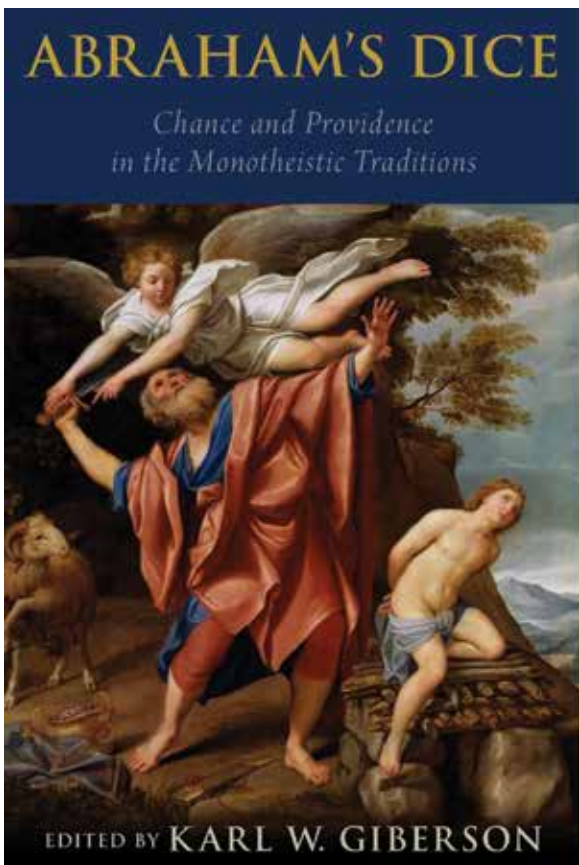
It is therefore no mere coincidence that modern science should have emerged in a Christian civilization. A prerequisite for a society that cultivates science is that it values contemplation as a good in itself and is not beholden to practical utility. A culture in which contemplation is considered the highest vocation—in which Mary chooses the better part and in which all men and women are invited to the eternal contemplation of God face-to-face—is the perfect environment for science. This is not to argue that modern science could not have emerged in another civilization with another religion, nor is it to gloss over any of the friction between religion, philosophy and science that arose in modern times. Rather, it is to point out that the scientific worldview that we take so much for granted relies on a definite vision of the human vocation and a robust metaphysical underpinning.

This can help us put the practice of science in perspec-

tive. Catholic tradition at its best has always valued secular intellectual pursuits, recognizing that God can be found in all things, but at the same time it has proclaimed that the Gospel is the most perfect way—and ultimately the only way. Insofar as the truth, beauty and goodness discovered by science lead us to know and love our Creator more fully, they are to be embraced, but at the end of the day the happiest contemplatives are not scientists on earth but saints in heaven. Scientific contemplation may be good practice, but it is not the end goal. Scientists who put all their energy into their work, leaving none over for family or society or God, do not make for happy people.

But science becomes this false idol only when we insist that it alone tells us the truth about the world. If we avoid this pitfall, science can take its place alongside art and philosophy and all the other cultural pursuits that inspire us to raise our minds above the routines of everyday life. Especially in our age, when scientific research attracts widespread public interest and enjoys academic prestige, it can be a powerful cultural signpost pointing to contemplation.

The scientific desire to understand the beauty, truth and goodness of the physical world goes beyond the here and the now, beyond the life of getting and spending, beyond all the distractions that loudly compete for our attention but never satisfy the human heart. If science can open the door a crack to this world beyond, the heavens are the limit. **A**



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# Out of Kenya

The Somali refugee crisis reaches a crescendo in East Africa.

BY KEVIN CLARKE

It has been one of the terrible paradoxes of the modern global refugee crisis: Often those countries least capable of responding to the complex needs of refugees are the ones forced to shoulder the greatest burden in caring for them. Money may come in from more affluent donor states to assist in these humanitarian crises, but proximity is often the main driver of humanitarian obligations. It is the local host nations that face the greatest struggles and social tensions when former regional neighbors become refugees.

That is true in Lebanon, where 1.5 million Syrians have fled over five years of civil war—even as authorities in the United Kingdom and the United States agonize over accepting a few thousand resettlement applicants—and it is true in Kenya, which has absorbed more than 600,000 people driven across its borders by drought, famine and regional conflict.

For more than 25 years a vast refugee camp has been thrown together on the brush desert near the northeastern Kenyan city of Dadaab. With more than 330,000 mostly Somali refugees now living at this sprawling tent city, Dadaab has become the largest single refugee camp in the world. The camp has been maintained so long an entire generation of “Somalis” has been raised within its confines who have never set foot in Somalia.

Living conditions in Kenya’s dusty and arid refugee camps are difficult; most people still reside in tent shelters that were intended to be temporary. A minority of children receive a haphazard education; most receive none at all. Their parents cannot work or plan for a future. Camp residents are prohibited from leaving to begin new lives by migrating into Kenya’s cities.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, which administers the camps at Dadaab, seems perpetually resource-starved. U.N. officials regularly receive donor commitments that represent barely half of the camps’ basic needs. Life for camp dwellers is grim; gnawed by uncertainty and hunger, they have little hope to somehow escape to a better future. It is indeed hard to imagine that things could get much worse at Dadaab, but by this November, they may.

In May, Kenyan authorities confirmed their intention

to close Dadaab and Kakuma, another camp that has been home to almost 200,000 refugees from throughout the region, and repatriate their inhabitants in Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, and other nearby East African and Horn of Africa states from which these refugees escaped: Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Eritrea and Uganda. Kenyan officials say the camps have been a drain on Kenya’s resources and its environment, but they justify the closing of the camps primarily by growing security concerns.

With encouragement and support from the United States, Kenya has been confronting the Shabab Islamic extremist movement in Somalia. The terrorist group in turn has been responsible for a number of spectacular and deadly attacks on Kenyan soil, including the assault on Nairobi’s Wellsgate Mall in 2013, in which 67 people were killed, and the massacre of 148 students at Garissa University College in April 2015. Officials charge that Shabab militants



planned these attacks from within the Dadaab camp; the camps themselves, they say, have become vast recruitment sites for terrorists.

These allegations have been disputed by human rights advocates. “Officials have not provided credible evidence linking Somali refugees to any terrorist attacks in Kenya,” Human Rights Watch officials said in a recent statement.

## Refugee Brinkmanship?

Some diplomats believe this latest threat to close down the

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**A FLIGHT FROM FAMINE.** Refugees who fled the famine in Somalia wait in a reception area in 2011 at a camp in Dadaab, Kenya. Kenya's Catholic bishops urged their government to reverse its decision to repatriate all refugees in the country and close all the refugee camps.

camps—the government first raised the prospect of clearing out its refugee sites in 2015—is part of a desperate ploy to squeeze more cash out of donor states. If so, Kenyan officials have begun an elaborate bluff this time. They have already shut down the government's Department of Refugee Affairs; now new refugees, who continue to enter Kenya each day from neighboring states, are not being officially registered. Their status and prospects have thus become even more perilous than that of official refugees.

Kenyan officials insist they can carry out November's vast repatriation in a humane manner and are urging U.N. officials to assist them to that end, but few humanitarian and human rights advocates believe such large numbers of people can be repatriated without the creation of vast regional and personal chaos. Only a few thousand refugees, anticipating the end of Kenyan patience with the camps, have so far voluntarily returned to their home countries.

Kenya's bishops have strongly urged the government to reconsider the closure of the refugee camps. In a letter to the government from the bishops' conference, they wrote: "Individuals seeking asylum in Kenya have a right to be protected and enjoy basic services until lasting solutions are found in their home countries or within the country of asylum, as well as through third country resettlement. We reiterate that any form of involuntary repatriation may expose the returnees to dangers of persecution."

The Kenyan bishops' concerns are shared by officials of Jesuit Refugee Service-Eastern Africa in Nairobi. The JRS communications officer Angela Wells has said JRS officials view the decision as "destructive, counterproductive and potentially catastrophic for hundreds of thousands of people with an international and national right to seek asylum and live in protected spaces.

"We condemn any violation of the [U.N.] Refugee Convention, which stipulates that refugees cannot be forcibly returned back to countries where they can face further persecution," she added by email from Nairobi.

In their appeal to Kenyan authorities, the bishops reiterated their commitment to assist the government in handling the nation's refugee burden but urged government officials to "reconsider this decision and pursue opportunities for dialogue and work with relevant actors to ensure the smooth and voluntary repatriation of refugees as well as prioritization of a long-term dignified refugee response."

The bishops also urged the reactivation of the Department of Refugee Affairs in Kenya and "immediate security enhancement mechanisms within the camp by all security organs." They added, "To all Kenyans of good-will, we urge you to respect the obligation to love your neighbors including refugees and uphold dignity of their creation in God's image."

The appeal of the bishops has so far not moved Kenyan officials to suspend their closure plans. Indeed, Kenya's decision to repatriate Somali refugees is not reversible, President Uhuru Kenyatta told a U.N. representative on May 27.

Mr. Kenyatta called on the global community to partner with Kenya to ensure that the transition to repatriation would be successful. "The train has already left the station. It's now up to those who are interested in seeing the success of the journey to come on board," he said.

The president argues that Kenya's action should not be interpreted as a move to abandon its international obligations under U.N. human rights conventions for the protection of refugees, pointing out that Kenya has hosted Somali refugees for decades. The decision has been criticized around the world; U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has appealed

for Kenyan officials to reconsider.

But Mr. Kenyatta counters that caring for the world's refugees is a shared international responsibility. "We have made a non-permanent situation to look as permanent," he complained.

Ms. Wells said JRS officials have little reason to doubt that the government intends to follow through on its plan by November despite the international uproar that has been generated. "However, we are not convinced this can realistically be done humanely given the sheer numbers of people with genuine reason not to want to go back home," she said.

So far only 10,000 people have voluntarily returned since last year, "yet there are hundreds of thousands of people still in the camp, many who do not intend to ever return to a place where they or their loved ones were killed, forcibly recruited into terror groups or have undergone sexual violence." Ms. Wells said that moving such a vast and unwilling population "safely, voluntarily and with dignity [will] be impossible without employing human rights abuses.... We assume that force would be the only way to implement such a strategy."

## Sharing the Burden

David Hollenbach, S.J., director of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College, acts as a consultant for Jesuit Refugee Service. He has been a visiting professor and lecturer at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa and Hekima College in Nairobi and has visited JRS

programs at the Kakuma camp. He acknowledges that Kenyans "have reason for concern with the Somali situation in general." But "the question then becomes what can be done to deal with this?"

"The fix is not to send these people back," he said. "Somalia hasn't had a functional government for 25 years. There is a reason so many have fled from it. They want to live; they've fled for their lives." Father Hollenbach suggests that more regional violence and instability may be the ultimate result of a campaign to force Somali refugees back home.

He points out that whatever the outcome of the diplomatic brinkmanship initiated by Kenya, the status of refugees both in East Africa and other hotspots around the world needs to be more vigorously addressed by the international community.

## Under the best of circumstances, life in crowded camps like Dadaab and Kakuma already represents a giant humanitarian crisis.

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Under the best of circumstances, life in crowded camps like Dadaab and Kakuma already represents a “giant humanitarian crisis” for their unfortunate residents, he said. “You can’t put 400,000 people into a camp and just let them sit there.” Disease, poverty and hunger are already part of the refugees’ plight. “What we ought to be doing is trying to figure out how to get them integrated into an adequate life.”

Assuming Kenya is able to move forward on its repatriation plans in November, what can returning Somalis expect to confront in their home country? Nothing good, Ms. Wells fears. “They will be added to 1 million [internally displaced persons] already within Somalia who do not have nearly the same level of educational, health or lifesaving support that the refugees in Dadaab have,” she said.

“There are very few humanitarian agencies operating in the country and it’s nearly impossible to monitor what parts are ‘safe enough,’” she added. “Somalia is also one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman, and we fear that many will be subject to sexual violence. In addition, every refugee has the individual right to seek asylum for individual reasons, so while there may be a handful of people able to go home and live peaceful lives, there are many more—ethnic minorities, defectors from armed groups or political asylees—for whom going back is a death sentence.”

### Climate of Fear

According to Ms. Wells, JRS officials maintain some hope that “there is still room for negotiation and that the government will backtrack as they did last year.” She added, “This would be the only way to avoid major abuse and chaos.”

She reported that the uncertainty created by the government’s policy shift on refugees has already heightened existing tensions between Kenyans and Somalis. “I spoke to a Somali refugee community leader today working in the Somali neighborhood of Eastleigh [a suburb of Nairobi known as ‘Little Mogadishu’], and he said there is a climate of fear in the neighborhood, that police harassment and arbitrary arrests are on the rise and that he is afraid every time he answers his phone that it will be a policeman asking for bribes to get Somali refugees out of jail.

“The situation is particularly dangerous,” she said, “for new arrivals, who haven’t been able to register for refugee documents since the closure of the Department of Refugee Affairs.”

However this recent crisis is resolved, Ms. Wells agreed with Father Hollenbach that long-term solutions “need to be looked at through a global lens.” More than 60 million people worldwide are fleeing persecution, she said, adding that the average time a refugee spends in displacement now is 17 years. “We need policies which not only accept, but empower refugees in any country where they flee to.”

JRS officials argue that integrating and educating refu-

gees can benefit both refugees and host communities. Wells cited a recent Oxford University study that reports that 40 percent of refugees in Uganda who own businesses are creating jobs for Ugandan citizens. Many refugees may ultimately want to go home, “but until those homes are peaceful, inclusive and dignified places to live, they should be able to actively engage in their host societies,” she argued.

While Father Hollenbach similarly urges Kenyan officials to reconsider longstanding policies that prevent the movement of refugees and their meaningful integration into Kenyan society, he is not without sympathy for the challenges Kenya and other host nations find themselves left to confront on their own. He thinks more effective international burden sharing, both for the cost of hosting refugees and for assuming the responsibility of resettling and integrating refugees in third-party states, has to be meaningfully addressed. With 86 percent of the world’s refugees concentrated in the global South, states with better resources and the capacity to absorb resettlement candidates need to step up.

“There’s nowhere near enough being done” in terms of third-party resettlement, according to Father Hollenbach. “The United States has resettled more refugees than any other country, but we’re not even scratching the surface of the numbers that are needed today,” he said. “We’re still far from where we should be.”

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# Duterte's Tough Talk

Can the church work with the Philippines' new president?

BY DAVID T. BUCKLEY

**C**ursing Pope Francis is an unorthodox campaign tactic. This might seem especially obvious if your electorate is over 80 percent Catholic. But Rodrigo "Rody" Duterte, no orthodox candidate, did just that en route to a convincing win in the Philippine presidential election on May 9. Mr. Duterte eventually apologized for his comments, but concerns over his election rest on deeper differences than on an admittedly foul mouth. Duterte's resounding win is troubling to many who are concerned over his strongman approach to governing. This includes leading voices among the Catholic bishops of the Philippines. His election, in spite of the clergy's opposition, raises questions about the future role of the Catholic Church in Philippine public life.

To readers in the United States, mention of the Catholic Church in Philippine politics likely conjures righteous images of the so-called People Power Revolution of 1986. Stirring scenes of women and men religious standing before security forces of the Marcos dictatorship are rightly remembered as a high-water mark in the democratization in the Philippines. The partnership between Manila's Cardinal Jaime Sin and the opposition leader Cory Aquino was central in restoring democracy after dark years of martial law. Elite and grassroots Catholics worked closely with members of other faith communities, as well as with more secular portions of civil society, in these efforts.

While this history is worth memorializing, it can obscure the more complex place of religion in the post-People Power Philippines. Today, while Manila's Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle remains a central figure in the Philippines (and Pope Francis' Vatican), the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines faces a diverse religious landscape. Major Protestant associations like the National Council of Churches of the Philippines and the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches are active public voices, while leaders of the Iglesia ni Cristo regularly endorse political candidates. Muslim leaders speak out on issues far beyond the Bangsamoro peace process in Mindanao. Mr. Duterte may have few friends at the C.B.C.P., but high profile Protestant

and Muslim leaders have been enthusiastic supporters.

Thus, while clerical and lay Catholics are prominent throughout Philippine public life, the consolidation of democracy has forced the church to jockey with various religious and secular actors. Church advocacy has a mixed record in the past quarter century in areas as diverse as fighting corruption, advancing agrarian reform to alleviate rural poverty and advocating environmental protection and disaster relief. Progress has at times been real. But the images are less riveting than those from the People Power protests of 1986.

Nowhere was this clearer than in the sharp controversy over reproductive health legislation in 2012-13. With Cory Aquino's son, the outgoing President Benigno Aquino, known as Noynoy, in office, leaders from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines found themselves in disagreement with the government about the "RH Law," which expanded government provision of contraceptives, among other public health policies. The C.B.C.P. and prominent lay Catholic associations had long opposed such legislation, but President Aquino pushed it through over their objections in the closing days of 2012. Mediation efforts softened some edges of the legislation, especially related to religious liberty, but this was a consolation prize. If the inheritor of the Aquino mantel would push such an issue, some wondered what would remain of Catholic influence in public life.

The Duterte campaign arose against this religious backdrop. The president-elect has long been a polarizing figure in Philippine politics. While a relative newcomer to national office, he is a long-time mayor of Davao City, the largest city on the island of Mindanao. His advocates credit him with improving the quality of life in Davao, especially relative to the crime, traffic and poor infrastructure in other cities. Much of the skepticism about him stems from his way with words, which extends beyond his profane reference to Pope Francis. He has cracked wise about the 1989 rape and murder of an Australian missionary in Davao, threatened to fatten the fish of Manila Bay with the corpses of criminals and boasted about his Viagra-fueled personal life. Mr. Duterte rejects comparisons with Donald Trump, but there is at least a rhetorical resemblance.

But unease with the president elect's agenda is about more than rhetoric. These fears are particularly rooted in his ambiguous relationship with groups known as the Davao

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**“THE PUNISHER.”** Rodrigo Duterte at a news conference in his hometown in Davao city in the southern Philippines on May 9, 2016.

Death Squads during his two decades as the city’s mayor. As the Rev. Amado Picardal, leader of the bishops’ Committee on Basic Ecclesial Communities, has documented in conjunction with human rights organizations, from 1998 to 2015 the squads were responsible for the extrajudicial execution of 1,424 individuals, most of whom were young, poor and involved in the drug trade at low levels. In the words of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, “The Mayor of Davao City has done nothing to prevent these killings, and his public comments suggest that he is, in fact, supportive.” He has boasted that with him as president, those 1,000 killings could become 100,000.

As the Duterte campaign gained obvious momentum in opinion polls, rhetoric from Catholic elites hardened. The Bishops-Businessmen’s Conference for Human Development, a prominent network of Catholic clerics and laypeople, wrote, “[We cannot] vote for anyone who has done nothing to apprehend the perpetrators of more than 1,400 extrajudicial killings under his city administration.” Archbishop Antonio Ledesma of Cagayan de Oro wrote that “summary killings...are illegal, immoral and sinful,” while Cardinal Orlando Quevedo of Cotabato urged voters to support only candidates who protected the right to life, “even of suspected or convicted criminals.”

This growing opposition culminated in a statement a week before the election from Archbishop Socrates Villegas,

president of the bishops’ conference. Writing on behalf of the bishops, Archbishop Villegas sympathized with the popular “desire for change” espoused by the electorate. But, he continued, “this cannot take the form of supporting a candidate whose speech and actions, whose plans and projects show scant regard for the rights of all, who has openly declared indifference if not dislike and disregard for the Church especially in her moral teachings.” The message was clear even though no candidates were named.

And yet, in spite of church opposition, Mr. Duterte romped to victory in the polls. In part this is because of a fragmented field of candidates and the plurality-based Philippine electoral system. He faced four alternative candidates and won with only 38 percent of the popular vote. Still, the win was decisive.

What does this result mean for the future of religion, and Catholicism in particular, in Philippine public life? The initial response from Archbishop Villegas and the C.B.C.P. was to offer prayers and promise “vigilant collaboration” with the incoming administration. This seems to echo Cardinal Sin’s posture of “critical collaboration” in the early years of the Marcos regime. The bishops pledge “to teach and to prophesy, to admonish and to correct” in pursuit of the common good. In more recent comments, Archbishop Villegas declined to confront Mr. Duterte further, instead pointing to “the silence of respect for those who consider us their enemies but whose good we truly pray for.”

When the bishops find their voice again, likely after the conference's plenary meeting in July, what will their stance be in Philippine public life in light of the election results? As president-elect, Mr. Duterte has continued his rhetorical excesses, slamming the Catholic Church as "the most hypocritical institution" and inviting people to join the "Church of Duterte." It seems fair to presume that relations between the C.B.C.P. and the new executive will remain strained.

It would be a loss to both the church's mission and Philippine society, however, if Catholic leaders decided to withdraw from public life after the twin disappointments of this election and the R.H. law controversy. Indeed, "vigilant collaboration" presents several opportunities to renew Catholicism's place as a moral voice of the Philippine people.

First, such collaboration is likely to center on preserving the institutions of democracy in the Philippines that the People Power revolution restored three decades ago. This will involve continued election monitoring through groups like the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting, as well as work combatting corruption with allies through the Coalition Against Corruption. Mr. Duterte has promised broad constitutional change, which could empower provinces through forms of federalism, but could also further weaken checks on presidential authority. Catholic elites have played an active role in constitutional debates since the 1987 Constitutional Commission and are likely to be called again to this role.

Second, vigilant collaboration presents opportunities for renewed dedication to the protection of the sanctity of life at all stages in the Philippines. As Eleanor Dionisio, a sociologist with the John J. Carroll Institute on Church and Social Issues, wrote recently in the *Philippine Inquirer*, the greatest Catholic concern is not Mr. Duterte's words but his "troubling lack of respect for human life." Will vigilante justice be tolerated (or encouraged) at a national level? Will the death penalty, suspended since 2006, be reinstated? Will the lives and dignity of the poor be protected, especially in the face of mounting threats from environmental degradation and uneven economic growth? The crisis of the R.H. law divided some in the pro-life community from former allies in civil society. Renewed collaboration could help restore these ties, which historically have been central to advancing human dignity in the Philippines.

Finally, collaboration is likely to involve furthering peace and integral development on the island of Mindanao. This is an area where a Duterte administration could provide unique opportunities. Davao City, where the president-elect built his career, is not a Muslim-majority area of Mindanao, but he has strong relationships with many Moro leaders and performed well on election day in Muslim-majority parts of the island. While the Aquino administration secured a landmark comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro in 2014, the Bangsamoro Basic Law needed to implement the agreement has stalled in Congress. Catholic voices, both in Mindanao and Manila, have a role in promoting a peace process that not only ends violence but, in the words of Cardinal Quevedo, "addresses the root causes" of Moro grievances.

While "vigilant collaboration" is an appropriate initial response to this watershed election, why is it that so many found the Duterte campaign so attractive? Exit poll data from Social Weather Stations, a leading survey firm, indicate a sweeping victory across class lines.

Mr. Duterte's support rests in large part on broad frustration with the perceived failure of entrenched Filipino political, economic and religious elites to improve the daily lives of average Filipinos. The troubling fact is that his brand of populism, which blends fear over crime, anger over corruption and disappointment that high economic growth has failed to reduce endemic levels of poverty, resonated widely. Even his famous slur about Pope Francis was aimed at the miserable traffic caused by the papal visit.

How to respond to this brand of populism is a question that faces Catholic elites everywhere, not only in the Philippines but also the United States. It is reasonable to be skeptical of Rodrigo Duterte's rhetoric and strongman approach to governance. But there is also little doubt that he is seen as a leader who understands the frustration of the average Filipino, one who, to borrow from another man popular with Filipinos, knows the smell of his sheep. **A**



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# The Abolitionist



**P**ope Francis' position on the death penalty is abolitionist. He believes there is no moral ground in Catholic teaching that would justify any state using capital punishment today, and he has set up a commission to review the question and the relevant section of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to amend this.

Right now the catechism does not exclude the use of the death penalty in extreme situations. It says in No. 2267:

Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor.

If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity to the dignity of the human person.

Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm—without definitely taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself—the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity “are very rare,

if not practically nonexistent.”

Over the past half century, a development has taken place in the church's position regarding capital punishment. Some consider it a development in church teaching. This has come about in parallel to growing opposition to it in civil society, particularly in Europe, but also in the United States and elsewhere.

Ever since John XXIII, popes, whenever requested, have appealed to state authorities on behalf of individuals about to be executed. It became common practice for the Holy See to do so under St. John Paul II. Bishops' conferences in many lands, including the United States, have done likewise and pushed for abolition.

As for church teaching, the historical record shows there was considerable discussion around this issue during the drafting of the new catechism. Some wanted the abolitionist stance recognized, but that did not happen. Many were unhappy with the first published text (1992), but this was amended following St. John Paul II's encyclical “The Gospel of Life” in 1995.

As a growing movement in the Catholic world continued to push the church to take an abolitionist stance, St. John Paul II took another step in January 1999 without changing Catholic teaching. He appealed for a global consensus to end the death penalty because it is “both cruel and unnecessary.” Benedict XVI made a similar appeal in November 2011.

Francis, however, has moved beyond his predecessors' positions and advocates abolition from convictions of faith.

He stated this clearly on Sept. 14, 2014, when, addressing a joint session of the U.S. Congress, he cited the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (Mt 7:12). He told Congress, “this rule points us in a clear direction” and “reminds us of our responsibility to protect and defend human life at every stage of its development.”

He confided that “this conviction has led me, from the beginning of my ministry, to advocate at different levels for the global abolition of the death penalty. I am convinced that this way is the best, since every life is sacred, every human person is endowed with an inalienable dignity, and society can only benefit from the rehabilitation of those convicted of crimes.”

The pope recalled that his brother bishops in the United States had “renewed their call for the abolition of the death penalty,” and stated, “Not only do I support them, but I also offer encouragement to all those who are convinced that a just and necessary punishment must never exclude the dimension of hope and the goal of rehabilitation.”

He sent the same message to the United Nations and reiterated it several times this year. On Feb. 21, 2016, for example, he not only followed his predecessors by appealing “to the consciences of those who govern to reach an international consensus to abolish the death penalty”; he went further by stating clearly that “the commandment ‘You shall not kill’ has absolute value and applies to both the innocent and the guilty.” **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: @gerryorome.

# My Life, Unstuffed

BY CHRISTOPHER MARI

I can't stand the stuff in my home. I don't seem to be alone in this evaluation. Most people think that too much stuff is no good for us as a species. We all know the reasons. Stuff prevents us from doing the things we should be doing. Stuff is bad for the environment. And the more stuff we make, use, own and bury, the worse things get. Having too much stuff is that rare thing all of us—faithful, secular and agnostic—appear to agree on, which in and of itself makes it a worthy subject of discussion.

As for myself, I have had a change of heart about stuff. The change has happened in the months since my mother's death, as my brother and I have begun packing up her little house in Brooklyn. At the beginning it felt impossible. The grief was bad enough. Now I had to handle my own stuff and deal with my mother's. Adding the hours together, I've lost full years of my life figuring out whether to keep, trash or donate various pieces of my collection. The problem has only gotten worse since my three kids were born.

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**CHRISTOPHER MARI** is a freelance writer born and raised in Brooklyn, N.Y., and educated at Fordham University.



I'd like to think I keep as little as possible and send most things to another home or the scrapheap. If that is true, it is due in no small way to living with Ma, who could always imbue the smallest object with meaning. Initial a shell found on Brighton Beach or date a matchbook from a Manhattan restaurant, and the object became a keepsake rather than just stuff. This is not to say my mother was materialistic; we never had enough money growing up for that. Nor was she a hoarder, which to my mind suggests the random accumulation of meaningless junk, without reason.

No. As we found it, Ma's stuff was all internally coherent in its boxes and crates. In another life, in which she

went to college, this former bookkeeper and secretary might have been an archeologist or historian; in this life, she was the self-appointed record keeper of her own life and the lives of her family.

I should say that Ma's house was not originally her house. She had inherited it from her parents, who had inherited it from her mother's parents. (According to family legend, our great-grandparents, both poor and illiterate Italian immigrants, bought the house for \$2,000 around World

War I after having worked in the United States for 20 years.) So, counting us, fully four generations of our family have lived in that house—and four generations of stuff resides there now.

To say sorting through it is overwhelming is an understatement. But it also feels like a duty that I must execute with honor. This stuff feels a whole lot different from the stuff I battle with in my own home. It is pregnant with history and meaning, thanks to Ma. She organized it and passed it on. Now it is our job to figure out what to do with the relay baton in our hands.

## Recovering Family Memories

What we have found might not seem

ART: MICHAEL KRAIGER

very important: decades of photos, old toys and diplomas, naturally, but also lots of extraordinary surprises. The steamer trunk my great-grandmother brought with her from Italy. My great-grandfather's naturalization papers. A letter from my tough-guy, Teamster grandpa to my grandma, sent to the hospital on the day my mother was born. (Seems he liked to call Grandma "Chick.") Cards from my mother's Sweet Sixteen. Maps to campgrounds we visited. Programs from Radio City Music Hall and pins from the Bronx Zoo. Brochures featuring model summer homes our parents dreamed of buying but never did. Then there are the things she kept of ours: samples of our schoolbooks, clippings from local newspapers we were mentioned in, our baptismal gowns, our super-hero T-shirts, cards we wrote her. We even found two little boxes of notes she wrote years earlier, one for each of us, which she intended us to find after she had died. This wasn't just stuff, but

the physical representation of love and commitment.

It's amazing the memories you recover when holding an object you haven't seen in decades. I have come to believe in total recall—that every experience of your waking life still exists fully realized in your mind. All you need is a tactile trigger to open each up again. Holding these things, I relive my own life as if I had gone back in time, with all the accompanying heartrending emotions.


As for the stuff we have found that originates in the lives of others, I can only say that it helps me understand not only my own family but also mankind's necessary reverence for the past. There is a reason religions and cultures curate their histories, why the Vatican Library and the Smithsonian exist. Yet a piece of pottery or a saint's relic should not be preserved for itself. Rather, each serves as a palpable reminder of a life lived by a fellow human being, who loved as we love and cried as we cry, long ago. They are us and we are


them, separated by time but connected by our common flawed humanity.

So I have learned some things during this months-long exercise in my mother's house. Not all stuff is created equal. And even the most disposable of things can become extraordinary if preserved by someone with love—because love endures. And while we shouldn't store up our treasures on Earth, there is a need to pass on the things that meant something to us. They mark our progress as individuals, as families, as a people.

Ma understood this instinctively. She has given us so much to pass on—and given me a real reason to pause a moment before I consign my kids' latest pile of drawings to the recycling bin. We can't keep everything, nor should we. But we owe those who have gone before us that moment's pause as we flip through a photo album or pass by a glass case in a museum or a church.

We owe them that much for perhaps no other reason than this: What they are now is what we will be. ▲






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FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

## BACK IN THE WATER?

*In 'Nemo' sequel, it's up to Dory to find herself.*

Summer at the movies? Sequels, sequels, remakes and more sequels. Already on hand this season are “The Conjuring 2,” the spine-tingling follow-up to director James Wan’s fright-fest of 2013, and “X-Men: Apocalypse,” a mutant movie far less urgent than its title might suggest. A fresh new “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles” has just hatched at the multiplex, which will also be hosting another “Captain America,” another “Ice Age,” another “Star Trek,” another Bourne film, an all-women “Ghostbusters,” a remake of “The Magnificent Seven” and a newly revised “Ben-Hur,” directed by Timur Bekmambetov, the Russian-Kazakh director of the gleefully violent “Day Watch,” “Night Watch” and “Wanted.” Will “Ben” still be “A Tale of the Christ”? Maybe not. Will the sequels ever cease? Maybe not.

But there are two films this summer that are defying the reasons why we have so many sequels to begin with—namely, branding and momentum. The idea is to produce a Part II and get it to fans of the original before their ardor cools. In the case of “Independence Day: Resurgence”—which arrives in theaters not on Independence Day but on June 24—it has been a good 20 years since the original film appeared. While it seems that the world of film has barely recovered from the alien onslaught that caused such destruction and death circa 1996, fans of the first movie may have in fact dealt with their

grief and moved on. Had children. Grandchildren. Retired. Maybe they will have time to see the sequel after all.

The other film riding a slow wave ashore is **Finding Dory**, the 13-years-in-the-making follow-up to “Finding Nemo,” one of the more successful G-rated movies ever. “Nemo” was actually re-released in 3D back in 2012 and has also become the best-selling DVD of all time. So it hasn’t exactly been in hiding since its initial opening in 2003. One could assume, quite reasonably, that Pixar wanted to squeeze as much out of it as possible before doing an encore.

So how is it, this encore? It’s O.K. It might sound persnickety, but “Finding Dory” might be a more interesting movie than “Nemo” without being any better, or having a message that will

resonate quite so resoundingly with young viewers (viewers who might, in fact, be scared out of their wits by a couple of scenes). The story of “Nemo,” after all, was archetypically fairy tale: A boy—or in this case a boy fish—has disappeared. His overprotective father, Marlin (voice of Albert Brooks), has already lost the rest of his family to a barracuda attack, an event that left Nemo with an underdeveloped fin. Marlin is not just the father of a missing child; he is the father of a missing child with special needs. His inconsolable, heedless, headlong pursuit of his son was quite inspiring to parents. For small kids of the time, it was probably the most reassuring thing they had ever experienced out of the video library of modern childhood.

Dory, the blue hippo tang with short-term memory loss, was Marlin’s comedy sidekick, the Art Carney to his Jackie Gleason, the Patrick Star to his SpongeBob SquarePants. “Dory”—more spinoff than sequel, really—takes a character who was delightful in small doses and builds an entire movie around her, tossing the animated dice that the chemistry is going to work, that more of a good thing won’t actually be less.

Voiced once again by Ellen DeGeneres, who has lobbied Pixar for years to make this movie (and why not?), Dory is mentally challenged; there is no way around it. As a baby, with her heavily lidded eyes, distinctive speech pattern and sweetness, she seems meant to represent a child with Down syndrome. Whether or not that is the intention, her disability is not from the trauma of being swept away from her parents by the violent current that separates them, years before the events of “Nemo.”



**BEHIND THE SCENES.** Andrew Stanton, the director of “Finding Dory,” and Ellen DeGeneres

PHOTO BY ALBERTO E. RODRIGUEZ/GETTY IMAGES FOR DISNEY

It is portrayed as a birth defect—albeit a birth defect that can be overcome. This shouldn't be so irritating; but the movies in general have an embarrassing history of portraying any mental incapacity as something that can be cured by the appropriate amounts of love, and Pixar should know better. (Overcome, yes—but cured? Not usually without divine intervention, which is not something “Dory” entertains.)

If this review seems to be demanding too much of Pixar, or providing too cerebral a reading of what is ostensibly a kid's movie, it is not. Pixar has a history of running a dark narrative thread through the pastel fabric of its fairy tales, from the elegiac opening of “Up” to the unspoken domestic dysfunction behind the “Toy Story” films (and the hellish visions of “Toy Story 3”), the post-eco-apocalypse of “WALL-E” and even the psychological unease underlying the otherwise mirthful “Inside Out.” Pixar is out to provoke the older mind and perhaps stimulate the younger. Good for them. And, usually, good for us.

So what are those audiences meant to take away from “Dory”? That the world is full of people with problems (O.K., fish with problems) and that some of those problems can be fixed. Marlin has always been neurotic; it is his nature. Others are more intriguingly damaged, especially the ones we meet after Dory is led by her improving memory to the Morro Bay Marine Life Institute—whence, it turns out, she sprang. Hank, for instance, the seven-tentacled octopus voiced by Ed O'Neill of “Modern Family,” has been institutionalized for so long he has become something of an agoraphobe—

**AT SEA.** Dory, voiced by Ellen DeGeneres, and Hank, voiced by Ed O'Neill, in “Finding Dory”



the idea of re-entering the sea, or any place without comfortable routines, terrifies him. Bailey (Ty Burrell), a beluga whale who is in the institute's infirmary, suffers from crippling hypochondria. Destiny (Kaitlin Olsen), a whale shark and Bailey's next-door cellmate, struggles with the fact that she is so myopic she basically has to function as a blind person. Everybody feels guilty about his or her flaws, not the least Dory, who blames herself for getting lost, and for staying lost. (“I suffer from short-term memory loss,” she tells everyone. “It runs in my family.... At least I think it does.... Where are they?”)

Who exactly is “finding” Dory? Well, Dory herself, one supposes. She scours her mind for clues to her history, a flash of her parents (Eugene Levy, Diane Keaton) and a P.T.S.D.-inspired image of a disorienting journey out of the institute and into the sea. The film's director, Andrew Stanton (“WALL-E,” “Nemo”), has explained that flashbacks were purposefully left out of “Nemo” in order to generate sympathy for Marlin—the viewer needed to know

immediately why the guy was such an overbearing noodle. “Dory,” conversely, is built on flashbacks, with Dory's memory coming back in tantalizing increments and her lifelong handicap in turn slowly dissolved by fond memories and love of family.

The more cynical among us would point out that such a tactic also creates tension, conflict and drama, but any fan of Pixar already knows what they are going to get at “Finding Dory”: a mix of charm, wit and intelligence, combined with animation so routinely spectacular that a reviewer might not even think to mention it until the end of his review.

(By the way, “Dory” is preceded by a short titled “Piper,” which is too cute by half, but seems, with its abundance of waves and fluffy seabirds, intended to showcase Pixar's progress in overcoming what were long the twin bugaboos of modern animation: hair and water. As they say on “Peg + Cat,” our current favorite cartoon, “Problem solved.”)

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

# THERE GROWS THE NEIGHBORHOOD

A light dusting of snow has temporarily frozen the inevitable. Splintered wood and blasted bricks are piled dam-like, and an orange crane looms in the corner at the ready. The framing is off and the faded Instagram filter is a bit overwrought (hey, it was 2013), but my partially ironic caption captures well enough how I felt about this recent development: “There goes the neighborhood.”

The neighborhood had actually been going for years, the postwar colonials and ramblers succumbing one by one to every shade of McMansion—those pastel, paneled monstrosities that should exist only on beachfronts for family reunions and college spring breakers. But the dreaded “For Sale” sign had at last reached the lot next to my childhood home, and soon the spacious backyard where Ms. Lilian raised koi and goldfish, where my best friend and I had spent hours playing with Mr. Paul’s dog, would be swallowed up by an eight-bedroom, 6.5 bath.

This was all on my mind as I listened to a podcast released this spring by WNYC, New York’s public radio station, and *The Nation* magazine, “There Goes the Neighborhood,” about the steady march of gentrification across Brooklyn, N.Y., my adopted home for the past three years. Of course, my suburban Virginia block has not experienced the same massive demographic and socioeconomic disruption currently underway in New York City. But recalling my own bitter resistance to newcomers was a useful corrective to the instinctive defensiveness I imagine many young city transplants feel when talking about this loaded topic. We move to neigh-

borhoods we can afford with our entry-level and nonprofit salaries. Short of leaving New York, it’s not clear what other options we have. And yet, as Emily Wilson, a white, 20-something resident of Bed-Stuy, puts it in Episode 7, “By my very existence here, I provoke changes even if I am not intending to.”

My presence is not exactly going to tip the scales in my historically middle-class Irish- and Italian-American neighborhood (though the recent opening of an organic juice bar is a troubling development). But I’ve also gone to thrift shops in Williamsburg, restaurants in Crown Heights and concerts in Bushwick. Over the past 20 years in each of these neighborhoods, as amenities catering to people like me have come in, longtime residents—mostly low-income African-Americans and recent immigrants—have been pushed out by rising rents.

Each of the podcast’s eight exhaustively researched episodes explores the forces driving this displacement. In some cases, there are clear villains and victims. Tranquilina Alvillar had lived in a rent-stabilized apartment in Williamsburg for 25 years when the developer Reno Capital L.L.C. bought the building with plans to gut-reno and rent the apartments at market rate. She refused to leave. The landlord made the building unlivable, provoking a vacate order from the city—an illegal but increasingly common tactic. Ms. Alvillar spent the next three years in housing court be-

fore she was able to return home. Even then, it hardly felt like a victory. “There are no memories,” she says, choking back tears. “How many things I lose, pictures of my children...for me, memories are more important.”

But often it is harder to pinpoint where individual culpability or agency lies. Race and racism undoubtedly play a role. From the fear-induced white flight of the 1960s to the financial crisis of 2008 that wiped out half the black wealth of this country, “It is not like black people have ever been able to live anywhere we want and feel at home,” says the host, Kai Wright. When a historically black community becomes out of reach for those who fought for decades to put down roots, it is only natural that longtime residents are wary of the new hipster on the block, the laws of supply and demand be damned.

Which leaves us with the vexing question at the heart of “There Goes the Neighborhood”: How do you love your neighbor when your neighbor might have been better off if you never moved in? Listening is a good place to start. A great strength of the series is that no point of view is excluded, from the cutthroat Brooklyn real estate developer to the African-American broker in Bed-Stuy torn about his dealings with an almost exclusively white clientele to tenants of every race, age and background. The podcast is over, but that does not mean the hard conversations about the communities we build should be.

It is only natural that longtime residents are wary of the new hipster on the block.



ASHLEY MCKINLESS is an associate editor of *America*.



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# IN SEARCH OF THE CATHOLIC NOVEL

## THE RELIC MASTER

By Christopher Buckley  
Simon & Schuster. 380p \$26.95

## THE MAN WHO LOVED BIRDS

By Fenton Johnson  
University Press of Kentucky. 316p  
\$24.95.

## THE THING ABOUT DECEMBER

By Donal Ryan  
Steerforth Press. 208p \$15.95.

I sometimes think that the most meaningful difference between Catholic novelists today and half a century ago (when Greene, Percy and O'Connor ruled the literary roost) is, well, very little. Those writers were not interested in being labeled with their religious tradition (except for Flannery O'Connor, who even called herself a "thoroughly Christianized novelist" in a late essay); neither are Alice McDermott and Christopher Beha today.

At other times I think there are simply Catholic novelists who accept invitations to speak at conferences about being one, and there are those who don't. No one is ever going to find Cormac McCarthy behind a podium at a Catholic university. Nor, I suppose, Dean Koontz, who is surely the best-selling writer of fiction in the world today who happens to be Catholic. Both men occasionally write about fallen souls and the struggle for redemption. See, for example, McCarthy's post-apocalyptic *The Road*, and Koontz's *Brother Odd*, in which a monk makes decisions based on unseen influences.

To ask a novelist if he is Catholic is often to provoke him and force a deni-

al. What artist would want to be tagged with an agenda? Witness William Giraldi. He's one of the few novelists today taught in Catholic universities as "Catholic," but he disavowed the label last year in *The New Republic*. In "Confessions of a Catholic Novelist" Giraldi revealed that he hasn't been a believer since he was 18. He wrote: "Here's what I know with an almost religious surety: to be tagged a Catholic novelist is to be tagged a failed novelist." Seven years earlier, Giraldi wrote for *Believer* magazine "A Devil-obsessed Conglomeration of Christian Misfits." He spoke of his parents:

My mother was five months pregnant with me when...The Exorcist opened, in 1973. By most accounts the scariest film ever made, [it] terrorized my mother so thoroughly that she thought she would go into labor and spontaneously expel me onto the theater floor. Two lukewarm Catholics of modest education, recently married and poised to begin a family, my parents were the perfect targets of a film about demonic possession.

The film is no longer scary, he goes on to say. "We're a soberer people now." However:

I was, after all, a child of Roman Catholicism, weaned on drama, ritual, hocus-pocus.... My hard-won reason almost always has a difficult time fending off an easeful inclination toward the sensational and improbable.... That's me: wanting to believe.

Giraldi quotes St. Augustine's *City of God*, compares early Protestantism

to Renaissance Catholicism on evil, refers to the Salem witch trials and Jonathan Edwards, defines biblical terms like Sheol and quotes from the Book of Daniel. A Catholic imagination is at work despite the denials, and with or without the cooperation of belief.

We still have Catholic novelists and Catholic novels, but, curiously, mainstream publishers are hesitant to use the label. That's odd, given the size of the potential readership, but I assume they know what they're doing. Then again, perhaps not. Fifty years ago, publishers would market to Catholics a novelist who writes about Catholics. At least one blurb on the jacket, for instance, would quote praise from *Commonweal* or *America*. Novels by Mary Gordon and Ron Hansen have not done this for decades. Their sales have likely suffered as a result.

We will never agree on what it means precisely to be Catholic or to write a Catholic novel. And another essay might be written on what it means to read, not so much write, as a Catholic. But in the spirit of the Rev. Andrew Greeley, let me suggest that Donal Ryan is overflowing with Catholic imagination. Ryan is one of the most powerful young novelists today. He has written two since *The Thing About December*, under review here. The next and latest, *All We Shall Know*, will be published in Ireland and England this September.

*The Thing About December* might restore faith in Catholic fiction, even though its author is known more as Irish than as Catholic. Born in 1976 in Tipperary, Ryan now lives near Limerick City. There is nothing confessional about his life or this work. He writes of Catholics and non-Catholics, and their faith is never what most de-



finest them. This makes sense to most of the people in the pews I know today; Ash Wednesday is the only day they seem to wear their faith confessionally, and even then, most uneasily. Still, the persistent themes of Ryan's work are the desire for love and forgiveness after tragedy and loneliness. His novels are filled with sin, penitence and a yearning for grace.

*The Thing About December* tells a year in the life of Johnsey Cunliffe, a chubby and self-doubting 24-year-old, "a lonesome gom," who recalls often how adored he was by his heroic father, dead two years from cancer. Daddy's fondness for Johnsey is getting the lad nowhere, especially as it lives only in memories. "Words could make an awful fool of you.... What was ever achieved with words?" explains the unreliable narrator, who seems to be about Johnsey's age and knows him well.

Johnsey dreads bullies left over from his school days and remembers the dances where he never actually met girls about whom he still fantasizes, even at Mass. Johnsey lives among the dead, chiefly the memories of his father; but then, theologically too, since his priest, Father Cotter, explained, "The dead are all around us." The night that Johnsey finds his mother dead on the floor at home, wearing "her green dress that she often wore to Mass," Father Cotter praises him for his calm.

The natural world mocks Johnsey's grief: "The world doesn't change, nor any thing in it, when someone dies. The mountains keep their still strength, the sun its heat, the rain its wetness." Soon, he is plotting suicide by rope and crossbeam in the barn. In the power of its simple language and the way death never leaves the living, *December* reminded me of the Irish-American William Kennedy and his classic novel, *Ironweed*.

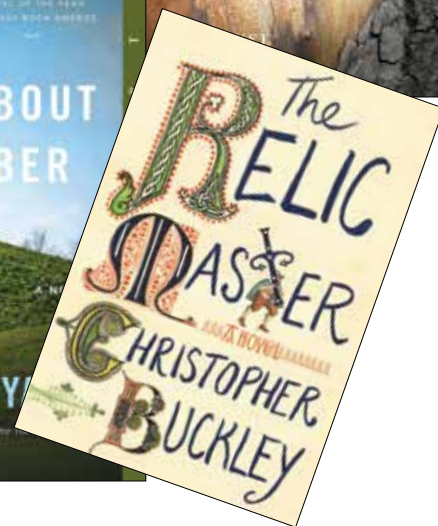
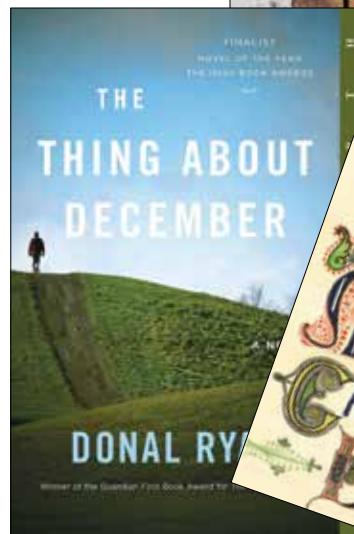
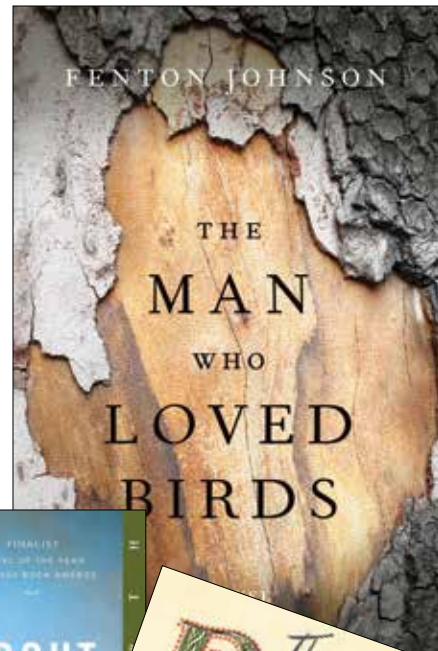
There's a rawness to Ryan's descriptive powers that sometimes resembles a chain-link by the repeated use of

three-to-five letter words. Witness this description of a minor character:

Bonesy had always frightened children, not on purpose, but just by being humped and crooked and having arms that were longer than was natural and hands that had thick hair on the backs of them and a kind of a mad smile that made his kindness seem more like a desire to eat you without salt.

He also uses rich, often local vocabulary, and Irish-English words like *pisceogs* and *craic* occur frequently. The uselessness of words is also a persistent theme, as when Johnsey's widowed mother is described as "a woman who had hardly any words left for the world, only lonesome thoughts and muttered prayers." The word "muttering" recurs often, in fact. Some people have trouble speaking, while others simply don't want to.

Johnsey's Daddy grew up with uncles who fought the British in the streets in the War of Independence. English soldiers are remembered for their acts of desecration in Catholic homes, as when "they'd try to flush the Blessed Virgin down the toilet and they'd take the holy picture out to the yard and fling it on the ground and piss all over Our Lord." At times, Johnsey ponders the confessional, purgatory, limbo, eternal judgment, Jesus being tempted in the desert and the sight of God. He goes to Mass every Sunday. At one point, after being beaten unconscious and waking up half-blind in a hospital bed, Johnsey fantasizes



about switching sides and aligning with the devil.

Then it becomes known in town that Johnsey has inherited land that has great worth. *December* is set in the years of the Celtic Tiger. Will Johnsey sell? He can't. Everyone he's ever cared about is still knocking about the place. But being a landowner marks him as one of the privileged. "Even Our Lord Himself had only the carpentry business and no land."

Fenton Johnson is another writer with a Catholic imagination that he can't kick. He has been writing fiction for three decades, and yet *The Man Who Loved Birds* is only his third novel. There have been memoirs in between, including *Keeping Faith*, about the

anger that led him to abandon his Catholicism. Johnson grew up in the Diocese of Louisville, Ky., which is not only home to the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani, made famous by Thomas Merton, but as Bardstown was one of the original five Catholic dioceses in the United States (with Baltimore, Boston, New York and Philadelphia). It is old Catholic country nestled in the Kentucky woods, surrounded by Protestant America. Fenton grew up familiar with every sort of sacramental, ritual and piety and knew several of the monks of Gethsemani. That same monastery, although unnamed, is the setting for this new novel, and *The Man Who Loved Birds* may just be the book that reconciles Fenton Johnson with his Catholic heart.

Two of my favorite fictional characters this year are in this novel. One, Bengali-born Meena Chatterjee, is a medical doctor who finds herself with a small practice in a modified gas station in rural Kentucky. She is wise and cunning, generous and sometimes painfully honest. Then there's Brother Flavian, a monk at the aforementioned monastery, who lives just across the woods from Meena and from the Vietnam vet, Kentucky native and il-

legal pot grower Johnny Faye, whom both the physician and monk end up aiding.

The most powerful scene in *Birds* involves these two—Dr. Chatterjee and Brother Flavian—when a neighborhood boy who's been abused by his police officer father requires an emergency, homegrown procedure to repair his breathing. As Chatterjee takes up a scalpel, the boy's mother and Flavian hold him down with all their strength. They speak softly in the boy's ear to keep him still. The boy's mother begins, "Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope," and Flavian responds, "To thee we cry poor banished children of Eve...."

With hopefully not too sudden a turn, this leads me to Christopher Buckley, the son of William F. Buckley Jr., the former editor of *National Review*. Christopher Buckley called himself a "lapsed Catholic" and "post-Catholic" in an interview for *The New York Times Magazine* in 2008. That sort of self-appliqué is different from Graham Greene's "agnostic Catholic" and "atheist Catholic," as told to *The Tablet* half a century ago. We know from another

interview, in 2009, that Buckley exchanged more than 3,000 emails and letters with his famous father, debating the beliefs, practices and history of the Catholic Church. There is often homage in irreverence and critique, and now I wonder if Christopher Buckley is still wrestling with the faith in the way he knows best: satire.

*The Relic Master* is masterful, smart, feisty and fun. Buckley has taken as his subject the most corrupt era of the church. The novel opens at a relic fair in Basel, as Dismas, an ex-monk and the title character, is selling and buying wares of hair, bone and Virgin's blood. The year is 1517, and a constipated monk named Martin Luther is lurking in the background, about to blow the Reformation wide open. Dismas's friend and drinking partner is the famous artist and capitalist Albrecht Dürer. If you read only one novel this year and want to think and laugh a lot while doing it, choose this one. We are coming up on the 500th anniversary of Luther's great revolt, making *Master* timely. And if you need to know that Christopher Buckley is a "Catholic novelist," know that you can't, but I suggest considering what he told an interviewer earlier this year: "I'm a fallen Christian, but I have an open mind and an open heart."

Good Catholic novels are still all around, but beware of using the label. There are dozens of others worth mentioning, too, and I will, at a later date. Consider Brigid Pasulka, in Poland, for instance, published beautifully in the United States in translation (*A Long, Long Time Ago* and *Essentially True*), and Jonathan Ryan, a young American Catholic who writes horror fiction (*3 Gates of the Dead*). Yes, horror with a Catholic imagination. Go figure. These will have to wait for another day.

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**JON M. SWEENEY** is the author, most recently, of *The Enthusiast: How the Best Friend of Francis of Assisi Almost Destroyed What He Started*, and *The Pope Who Quit*, optioned by HBO. He lives in Vermont.

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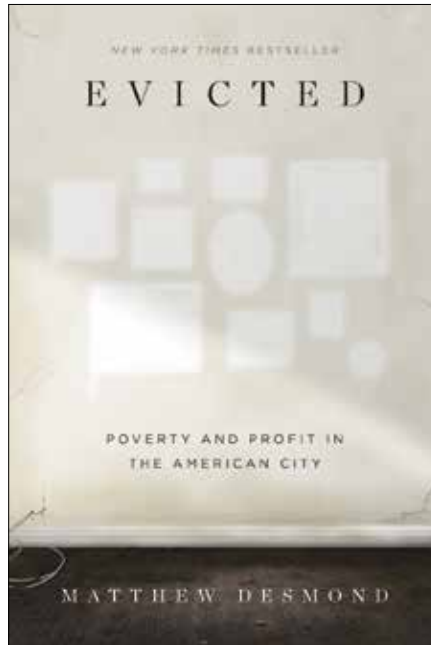
By Matthew Desmond  
Crown Publishers. 432p \$28

Ever since President Bill Clinton implemented his plan to “end welfare as we know it” in the 1990s, low-income households have found it increasingly difficult to pay their rent. Welfare payments have barely budged in the last 25 years, while housing costs have soared. As successive administrations have adopted “tough on crime” laws and skimmed on cash payments to the poor, incarceration has come to define the lives of black men, and eviction has shaped the lives of black women. Matthew Desmond, a Harvard sociologist, explains: “Poor black men were locked up. Poor black women were locked out.”

Prominent liberal and conservative politicians have recently agreed that mass incarceration is bad public policy but have largely ignored the eviction crisis. Experts believe that families should pay no more than 30 percent of their income on housing, but every year millions of households are evicted because they spend half their money on housing, and a quarter spend 70 percent. *Evicted* shows the enormity of the social costs of forced moves. Families go without food and shelter, suffer illness, depression and cold and become victims of crime in dangerous neighborhoods. Desmond finds no excuse for this state of affairs. “No moral code or ethical principle...can be summoned to defend what we have allowed our country to become.”

To understand the dynamics of the private housing market—a subject ignored by academic research—Desmond lived in a white trailer park in Milwaukee and in a rooming

house in a black neighborhood, interviewed hundreds of landlords and tenants, and surveyed eviction practices. *Eviction* explores the lives of eight families—black and white, with and without children—who represent different aspects of the eviction problem. Their stories are riveting and bring to mind characters from Dickens and



Steinbeck. Sherenna, a black landlord who sometimes buys her tenants groceries, finds “the ‘hood is good” for making money. She sympathizes with Lamar, a double-amputee tenant responsible for two boys, but “love don’t pay the bills.” She evicts him when his rent money comes up short. Arleen, a single mother, finally finds a place after 89 rejections, only to be evicted when her young son kicks his teacher and is followed home by the police. Scott, a recovering heroin addict who hopes to regain his nursing license, can’t afford both methadone and rent, so he checks into a homeless shelter. For Desmond, recording their stories “was heartbreaking and left me depressed,”

but his profound understanding of their situations suggests the crisis can be solved.

Just as the market has crushed the poor, it has made others rich. Homeownership in poor, black neighborhoods, with depressed property values, is a bad investment, but being a landlord is a lucrative one. Mortgage payments are low; Sherenna’s worst properties yielded the biggest returns. Cheap housing in high demand means a low vacancy rate, and landlords have little incentive to lower rents or make repairs. Although landlords are in the theory required to maintain their rental property, that duty is excused when the tenant falls behind in the rent. Once the tenant withholds rent to force repairs or in order to save to find a new place, the landlord can initiate eviction proceedings. Landlords usually find it cheaper to evict tenants than to make repairs. When the court authorizes an eviction, companies providing eviction and moving crew, and storage and debt collection services profit at the tenant’s expense.

Evicted tenants have a tough time finding a new home because landlords may refuse to rent to them and to those with criminal records. Although property management companies hold all applicants to the same criteria, denying housing to applicants with a criminal or eviction history has a disproportionate impact on African-Americans. Families with children also face barriers to decent housing. In 1976 Congress prohibited landlords from discriminating against families with children, but Desmond found that discrimination remains widespread. When combined with the trauma of a sudden and forced move, these screening practices inevitably push evicted renters into the most depressed and dangerous areas of the city.

Landlords also use nuisance ordinances to get rid of tenants they consider a problem. These ordinances allow police departments to penalize

landlords for the behavior of their tenants. A property that generates an excessive number of 911 calls is designated a “nuisance.” Desmond’s survey found that landlords who received a nuisance citation for domestic violence frequently evicted the tenant. Thus, battered women can either keep quiet and face abuse or call the police and face eviction.

Desmond believes that a universal housing voucher program would minimize evictions and eliminate most homelessness. A family would spend no more than 30 percent of its income on housing cost, and the voucher would pay the balance. A voucher

would give Arleen more money to keep her children clothed, fed and off the streets. Desmond’s proposal would require landlords to accept vouchers and make repairs. Congress currently spends \$40.2 billion for direct housing assistance; a voucher program would raise the bill to around \$60 billion, much less than the \$171 billion in tax benefits homeowners receive. While Desmond’s proposal seems reasonable, it is questionable whether Congress is willing to confront the moral choice he presents.

**MARK J. DAVIS**, a retired attorney who lives in Santa Fe, N.M., worked as an attorney representing low-income clients for six years.

he mentions a European solidarity activist newly arrived in Palestine and “still sparkling with outrage; it would mellow, I knew, into a sustained, wounded simmer.” Ehrenreich opts for calm instead of outrage, the simmer instead of the boil. And that makes his writing all the more powerful. He doesn’t indulge in his own righteousness—or in anyone else’s, for that matter. “My concern is with what keeps people going when everything appears to be lost,” he says in the preface, “what it means to hold on, to decline to consent to one’s own eradication, to fight actively or through deceptively simple acts of refusal against powers far stronger than oneself.”

What he is not doing, he emphasizes, is trying to “explain” Palestinians or to speak for them. Instead, living in Ramallah and Hebron from 2011 to 2014—from just after the Arab Spring through to the devastating bombardment of Gaza—he allows people and events to speak for themselves, and the Palestinians he lives with are striking not for their anger but for their determination, not for their despair but for their resilience.

“People in Hebron use the word ‘normal’ a lot,” he reports. What counts as normal there? Being shot at; the screaming of someone being beaten by soldiers; having settlers throw Molotov cocktails at your house; schoolchildren being tear-gassed; “administrative deten-

tion” (no charge, no trial); having your ID taken by a soldier at a checkpoint who keeps it for hours just because he can; having urine and feces thrown at you by settlers. Day in, day out—indeed hour in, hour out—a ceaseless barrage of harassment at best, outright violence at worst.

The details are all here. It’s worth knowing, for instance, that “rubber bul-

LESLEY HAZELTON

## THE UGLY DETAILS

### THE WAY TO THE SPRING Life and Death in Palestine

By Ben Ehrenreich  
Penguin. 448p \$28

A few years back, I was returning to Jerusalem from Ramallah by way of the Qalandia checkpoint. “Checkpoint” is a euphemism. This isn’t merely a couple of Israeli soldiers checking your ID. Instead, you pass through a series of turnstiles, concrete barriers, barbed-wire tunnels that act as elongated cages, two-way mirrors and of course X-ray machines. You are surveilled, re-surveilled and surveilled again. No words are used. You are waved on not by hand, but by gun—a semi-automatic at groin level, indicating this way or that.

Halfway along the barbed-wire tunnel, I heard a gun being cocked close by, to my right. Startled, I looked over.

The gun was in the arms of a female soldier, flushed and giggling as a male soldier embraced her suggestively from behind, his arms around both her and the gun. She caught my glance and held it. “Look all you like,” she seemed to be saying. “We could strip down and have

sex right here in front of you, and there’s not a damn thing you could do about it.”

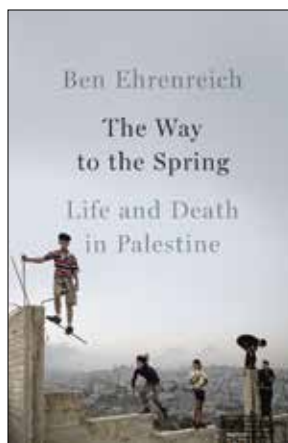
And she was right.

This was, I knew, the most trivial of events. It was nothing compared to what I’d already seen, and not even worth noting to Palestinians, who have to put up with far worse. Yet it stays with me because I cannot forget that look. I might as well have been a dog.

“The humiliation machine,” Ben Ehrenreich calls it, and it indeed works with machinelike effectiveness. “How do Palestinians stand it?” I kept asking later. “How do you stay human in the face of those who see you as inhuman?”

These are the very questions Ehrenreich answers in this rare and superb book of reportage from inside the Palestinian experience of occupation. And he answers them with truly amazing grace and control.

There is a hint of how he does it when



lets” are in fact rubber-coated steel bullets, each one the size of a marble, capable of breaking bones and gouging flesh (and increasingly replaced by live bullets anyway). Or that a tear-gas canister fired in your face will kill you. But these are only part of “the almost infinitely complex system of control” exercised by Israel over the West Bank—“the entire vast mechanism of uncertainty, dispossession, and humiliation which...has sustained Israeli rule by curtailing the possibilities, and frequently the duration, of Palestinian lives.”

In punitive raids, random doors are burst open in the middle of the night, belongings ransacked, the contents of the pantry poured out on the floor. Anyone offering so much as a word of protest is beaten and arrested. The purpose? A clear message: This house is not yours, this land is not yours, your person is not yours.

As a community-center volunteer held (and tortured) for three months put it: “If they could take the air from us, they would.”

The statistics are here too, if you need them. Forty percent of Palestinian males have been in Israeli prison at least once, and even those sent to trial were at the mercy of a military court system with a 99.74 percent conviction rate. The same military has an indictment rate of 1.4 percent against soldiers accused of misconduct. And all the while, “settlements”—huge suburbs and townships—have been expanded; construction more than doubled in 2014 and jumped another 40 percent last year.

Palestinians have now been pushed from nearly 60 percent of the West Bank. With effective leadership systematically broken up, assassinated, or imprisoned, leaving only the venally corrupt Palestinian Authority, that percentage seems destined only to increase as Israel asserts “complete and irrevocable” control. And yet, as Ehrenreich shows, “ordinary” people stubbornly refuse to submit.

There is no pontificating in this

book—no offering of blandly confident “solutions.” I have none to put forward either, especially in this U.S. election season when even Bernie Sanders’s mealy-mouthed statement that “we need to be able to say that Netanyahu is not always right” is regarded as a daring political stance, a

marvel of honesty and insight.

What I *can* say is this: If you really do want honesty and insight, read *The Way to the Spring*.

**LESLEY HAZLETON**, *a.k.a. The Accidental Theologist*, has written several books on Middle East politics and religion. Her latest book is *Agnostic: A Spirited Manifesto*.

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# Lord of All

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), JULY 10, 2016

Readings: Dt 30:10-14; Ps 69:14-37; Col 1:15-20; Lk 10:25-37

*“For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created” (Col 1:16)*

In Colossians, traditionally understood to have been written by the apostle Paul, Christ is described as “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,” and it is said that “in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him.” This presentation of glorious majesty, apart from reflecting the reality of Christ’s lordship, seems also to have been written directly in response to what biblical scholars call the “Colossian heresy.”

What was the Colossian heresy? It is difficult, on the basis of Paul’s letter, to be precise, though Col 2:8-23 gives us a sense of some of the practices and beliefs of this group in the city of Colossae, and there seem to be elements of Greco-Roman philosophy, Jewish practices, perhaps even incipient Gnosticism added to their belief in Christ. More significant than the precise contours of the heresy, though, is that Colossians is arguing against any system or belief that would reduce the sufficiency of Christ for salvation. As Michael Gorman writes, believers “are not to be seduced and captured by any supposed alternative or supplement to Christ that is ultimately only an emp-

ty, deceitful philosophy (worldview and practices) stemming from human tradition and, worse, from the (hostile) elemental powers of the universe, not from God’s revelation in Christ” (*Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, p. 485).

Colossians is not an argument against philosophy but an argument for Jesus Christ, “for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.” The teaching of the sufficiency of Christ, and the cross of Jesus Christ, for salvation means that no secondary lords are necessary, which the Colossian heresy seems to have on offer. To say Christ is lord of all means precisely that. It does not mean he is lord when it suits my personal desires, or combined with some other gods, or when it suits my country, right or wrong.

Why should an ancient, vaguely defined Colossian heresy engage us today? Because every heretical impulse is ancient and vague, promising us a little of this politician, a little of that god, a little less Christ, a little more us. We are all challenged to decide daily, and never more than in the midst of political campaigns, who and what we accept as lord. Biblical scholars today see more of a theo-political aspect to Paul’s thinking than previous generations did, not in terms of Paul wanting

to get mixed up in day-to-day politics of the Roman Empire but in terms of seeing the Lord Jesus Christ as the true alternative to political leaders, emperors, who would be lords of this world. But Paul was clear that there is only one Lord, in this world and the next.

How does one apply the rhetoric of “lord of heaven and earth” to daily life, political and otherwise? Rhetorically, and in reality, it seems too majestic to apply to our lives, but its application comes in the nitty-gritty of daily life. Jesus gives us the example in the parable of the good Samaritan. It is in the acting out of God’s love for each creature that we show whom we serve. Our political lives, seeking the good of the city of man, are



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Contemplate Jesus as lord of heaven and earth. Are there certain contexts in which you have not put Christ first? What does it mean for you to put Christ above all things in your daily life? How are you applying the good Samaritan parable in your life?

felt most profoundly when we help the neighbor in need. This is how we demonstrate Christ is lord of earth. But in caring for our earthly neighbor and acting out God’s love, we are also building up the city of God, and showing that Christ is lord of heaven. When we live for love of God and love of neighbor, we show that Christ is “the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.” That is always the answer to the Colossian heresy in any age: Christ has the first place in everything.

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



**CATHOLIC INITIATIVES**

# One Necessary Thing

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), JULY 17, 2016

Readings: Gn 18:1-10; Ps 15:2-5; Col 1:24-28; Lk 10:38-42

*“Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things” (Lk 10:41)*

**M**artha was made for our time: busy with many things, seeking to be recognized and also, it must be said, trying to do her best. We meet her in Luke’s Gospel when Jesus comes to visit the two sisters, Mary and Martha, in their home. Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and “listened to his word,” while Martha was distracted by “much service.” Indeed, Martha was so distracted by her own work that she complained that her sister was not helping her, a complaint that rings true in our own day as well. But Jesus does not take up her cause; instead he challenges Martha by pointing out that she is “worried” and “distracted” by her service. Jesus says that only “one thing is necessary” and that Mary has chosen the “better portion.”

Martha is by no means a negative figure, as hospitality is an essential gift to others, but she is a slightly harried figure. Martha’s troubles stem not from the service she renders but from her desire to be acknowledged for it, a concern that rings true more than ever in our social media age; and these worries and distractions are keeping her from offering herself freely to Jesus and from being present to the Messiah in her midst. Jesus says that “one thing is necessary,” and this is to find Christ in our midst and to be with him, as Mary was.

How will we find Christ in our midst if we do not slow down? How will we find Jesus’ face in the stranger if our service, even our good service, is

done in order to serve our needs? How do we find Christ in “the least of these” if our focus is on ourselves? We all have the potential to be Mary, but our age, for all of its great gifts, makes it hard to be the one who quiets down and listens.

We can now worry about every corner of the world as we scroll through our Twitter feeds or Facebook pages. We can worry about the world around us without being present to those with us. This anxiety can foster a sense of meaninglessness or helplessness. This worry and anxiety, though, is paired with the constant distractedness of daily life.

People are too busy even to take vacations or get enough sleep, since there is so much work to do and, positively, “more service” to do. Yet even leisure, the simple relaxation of watching an episode of a TV series, might not be enough to stave off distraction today, as I cannot watch TV without my smartphone open so I can find out what everyone else is thinking about “The Americans” or “Game of Thrones” or just surfing the web to see what else might catch my attention. Distractedness is a sign of our electronic connectedness and our human disconnectedness. We yearn for deep relationship, as Mary had with Jesus, but this requires putting away the tools and mind-set of anxiety and distraction.

It is not that Martha is doing anything wrong in showing hospitality, or that we are doing anything wrong in

trying to do a lot of things; it is that we can do better. And it is not just that we need to challenge the busyness of our daily lives and to relax—we do—but it is that there is something better waiting for us. The good news is that Jesus wants us to be with him.

With Jesus we are not judged by how much we can accomplish, but we are accepted for who we are. Jesus asks us to spend time with him. Our worth is not dependent upon what we can do but upon who we are: beloved friends of Jesus, who calls us to be with him and love him. In that context, we can be pre-

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Meditate on your own worry and distractedness. What pulls you away from being present with Jesus? What would help you concentrate on the one necessary thing? Is there one thing you could do today to be at the feet of Jesus?

pared to serve our friends and others, do our work and show hospitality, not because we want to be acknowledged and rewarded but because we love others and love God.

What a remarkable reality. The more we love others, care for others, not out of worriedness or distractedness, but out of love, the more we are at ease with others and ourselves. We are not doing for, we are being with. It is the heart of the one necessary thing: being present to Jesus in order to love others.

**JOHN W. MARTENS**

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