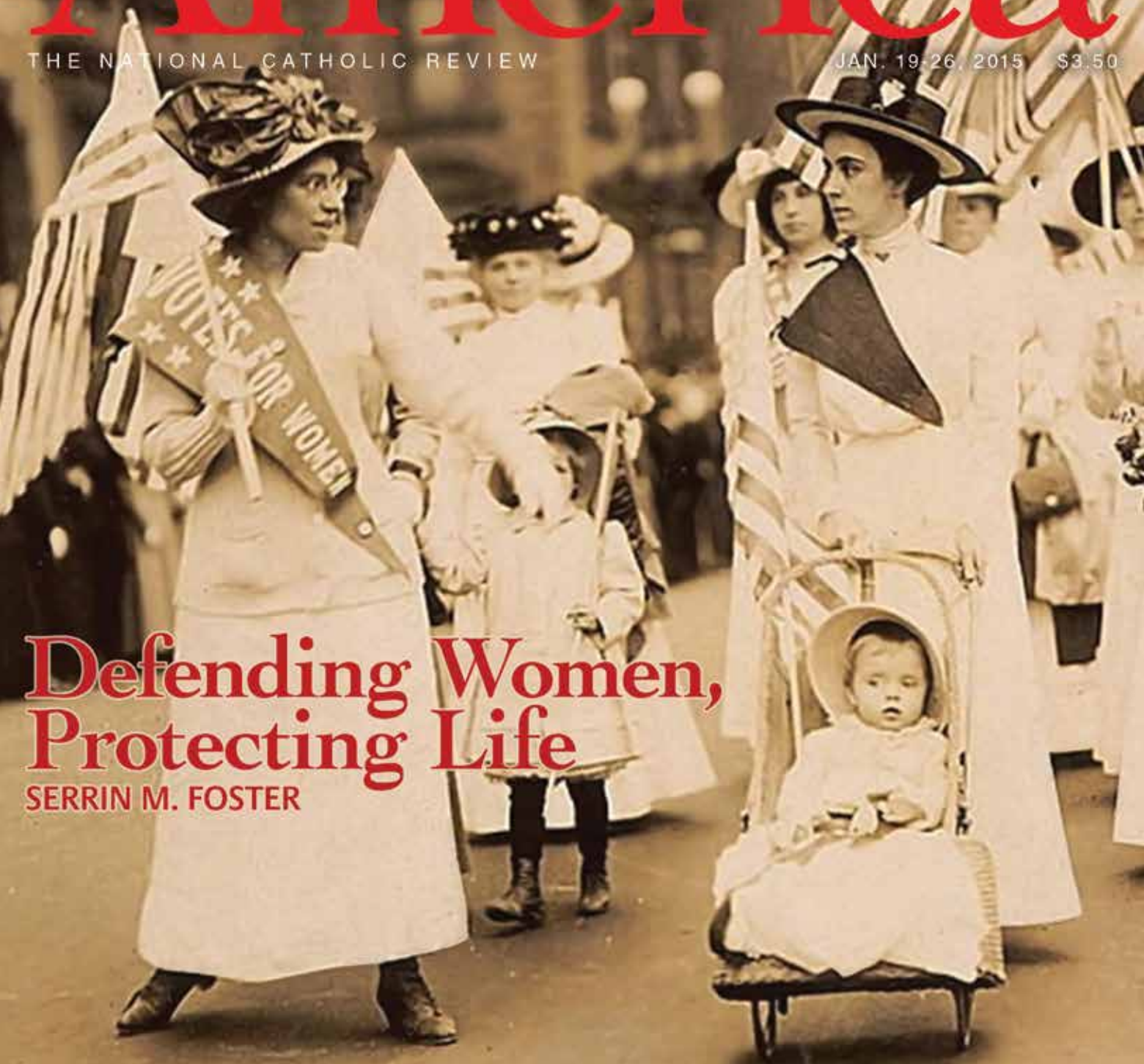


America

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Defending Women, Protecting Life

SERRIN M. FOSTER

JOHN ANDERSON
REVIEWS 'SELMA'

As this issue goes to press, preparations are underway for the March for Life, the annual gathering of pro-life activists, clergy and civic leaders in Washington, D.C. From our founding in 1909, **America** has advocated for a consistent ethic of life in all our private choices and public decision-making. In this commitment, we are allied with the sentiments expressed in the statement by the Society of Jesus of the United States, “Standing for the Unborn,” which was published in **America** on May 26, 2003.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

When we, the leadership of the Society of Jesus in the United States, survey the developments unfolding in our culture, we are deeply distressed at the massive injustices. A spirit of callous disregard for life shows itself in direct assaults on human life such as abortion and capital punishment, as well as in senseless violence, escalating militarism, racism, xenophobia and the skewed accumulation of wealth and life-sustaining resources. These realities compel us to speak out against what Pope John Paul II has called “the culture of death”...

Some influential voices posit a zero-sum conflict between “women’s reproductive rights” and the right to life of unborn children. Jesuits ought to find their place among those who demonstrate the obvious confluence of women’s rights and respect for life in all its forms. Pope John Paul II summed this partnership up when he wrote: “Therefore, in firmly rejecting ‘pro-choice’ it is necessary to become courageously ‘pro-woman,’ promoting a choice that is truly in favor of women.”...

As Catholics and Jesuits, we would naturally prefer to live in a country where every citizen, voter and court consistently favor legal

recognition of and protection for the unborn.... We must acknowledge, however, that phrases such as “the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”...are phrases with contested meanings that others understand differently than we do.... The more attractive option seeks neither to flee nor to dominate situations of pluralism. It commits us rather to a process of engaging those who initially disagree with us on some issues, seeking to create an acceptable consensus wherever possible by building upon those truths on which we can reach agreement.... This path of “proposing, rather than imposing,” was described by the great American Jesuit theologian of the past century, John Courtney Murray. While emphasizing the value of tolerance and mutual dialogue, he also advised against any sort of moral relativism....

Another way of describing this stance is to say that Jesuits are committed to narrowing the gap between the current civil law of our nation and the demands of the moral law as we understand it. Our long-term goal remains full legal recognition of and protection for the unborn child—from the moment of conception....

In the near future, we cannot realistically expect complete agreement among all participants in the abortion debate. We must listen respectfully to others’ opinions, just as we expect a fair hearing of our own arguments against abortion. Our confidence in the persuasive power of well articulated defenses of pro-life positions sustains us, even as we acknowledge the long struggle ahead.... In the meantime, our common calling is to stand in solidarity with the unborn, the “least of our brothers and sisters” (Mt 25:40), through prayer and political activism.

106 West 56th Street
New York, NY 10019-3803
Ph: 212-581-4640; Fax: 212-399-3596
Subscriptions: 1-800-627-9533
www.americamagazine.org
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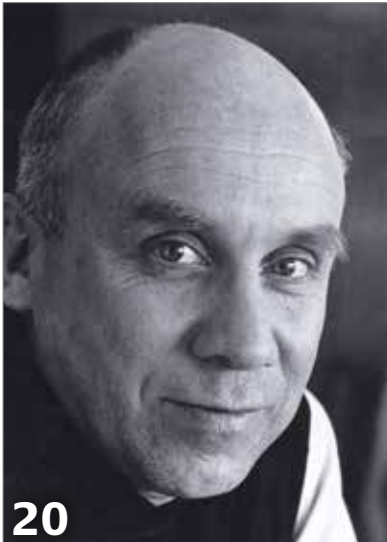
MODERATOR, CATHOLIC BOOK CLUB
Kevin Spinale, S.J.

EDITORIAL E-MAIL
america@americamagazine.org

PUBLISHER AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER Edward
Spallone. **DEPUTY PUBLISHER** Rosa Del Saz. **VICE
PRESIDENT/ADVANCEMENT** Daniel Pawlus. **DEVELOPMENT
COORDINATOR** Kerry Goleski. **OPERATIONS
STAFF** Chris Keller, Glenda Castro. **ADVERTISING
CONTACT** ads@americamagazine.org; 212-515-0102.
SUBSCRIPTION CONTACT/ADDITIONAL COPIES
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ON THE WEB

The Catholic Book Club discusses **Jesus: A Pilgrimage**, by James Martin, S.J., and Rob Weinert-Kendt reviews "Cabaret," right, on Broadway. Full digital highlights at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



New Hope in Cuba

Though the decision to re-engage with Cuba has outraged some in the exile community and certain U.S. politicians eyeing 2016, President Obama's decision to seize the opportunity presented by the release of the imprisoned American Alan Gross was the right one. Isolation has been given 50 years to "work" in Cuba; that has been more than enough time to demonstrate its ineffectiveness.

In his announcement of the diplomatic shift on Dec. 17, President Obama acknowledged a simple fact the church has been pointing out for years: the only people being hurt by the unimaginative policy maintained by the United States have been the Cuban people themselves. Creating a failed state 90 miles off America's shore is no way to resolve U.S. differences with the Castro brothers or humanely encourage change in that one-party state. While the embargo whittled down living standards in Cuba, the United States achieved historic breakthroughs with previous Communist adversaries, including China and the former Soviet Union. It is hard to make the case that it is unable to do the same with Cuba.

Pope Francis is to be applauded for his role in securing this major diplomatic success. The church has made great strides in its relationship with Cuban authorities in recent years. More important, because of this dialogue the church has progressively moved the Castro brothers to allow greater liberty and tolerance for religious expression. The process has been imperfect and much more needs to be done, but the enhanced encounter with the United States will surely have an accelerating effect on improving living standards and human rights in Cuba—an outcome to which nobody should object.

Progress at Guantánamo

After years of delay, the campaign to transfer detainees from the U.S. prison at Guantánamo Bay is finally gaining momentum. Since the beginning of 2014, 28 detainees have been moved, and the Vatican is exerting pressure on the United States to find "humanitarian solutions" for the remaining prisoners. Six captives were resettled in Uruguay in December, and five were transferred to Kazakhstan at the end of the year. These men had been imprisoned for over 10 years and were never charged with a crime.

As of this writing, 127 individuals remain imprisoned at Guantánamo. Of that number, 55 have been cleared for release or transfer. Most of these men cannot be repatriated because of the political instability of their home countries. Representative Howard McKeon, the Republican chair of the House Armed Services Committee, has

expressed concerns about moving additional prisoners, but the individuals approved for release do not pose any security risk. They were cleared for release in 2009 by an interagency task force that included the departments of Defense, State, Justice and Homeland Security, in addition to the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The Organization of American States is pushing for more Latin American countries to accept detainees. An added push from the Argentine pope's diplomatic corps could help further the cause. But the United States must be willing to resettle detainees within its own borders as well. From both a practical and a moral perspective, the United States has to lead by example. Otherwise President Obama's pledge to close the prison, which he promised to do on his first day of office, may remain unfulfilled on his last.

Outreach in Belarus

When Communism collapsed in the early 1990s, many foresaw a brighter future for those who had been trapped behind the Iron Curtain. While the past two decades have seen success stories in Eastern and Central Europe, most notably Poland, other nations continue to grapple with the vestiges of their totalitarian past. Belarus in particular faces grinding poverty, divorce and soaring alcoholism, as well as an atheistic philosophy that left in its wake one of the highest abortion rates in Europe. In an attempt to redress such issues, the church has stepped in to provide material and spiritual assistance to people in need.

It is not an easy task, as Magda Kaczmarek, a staff member of Aid to the Church in Need, told the Catholic News Agency. Many searching for support "are open to God" but "were not able or not allowed to live out their faith for any number of reasons." She said the church is "committed to finding them, reminding them of their Catholic roots and offering them pastoral care once again."

Efforts to reclaim church patrimony and re-establish places of worship confiscated during the Soviet era have been slowed by bureaucratic inertia. And while current President Alexander Lukashenko has not hindered the church's charitable activities, the church does not receive state funding. Yet in partnership with the Orthodox Church—a positive development in itself—efforts are being made to patiently rebuild Belarusian society, sickened from extreme secularism. By coming to grips with the social ills of Belarus while also working to renew religious vocations, the church hopes to give the people living there a reason to believe again, in themselves and in God.

Torture Is Still With Us

When America published “Facing Up to Torture,” by Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., just over a year ago (11/11/13), enough was known about the shameful history of torture in the United States to shock the conscience. That report, however, pointed to unfinished business: the declassification of the Senate Intelligence Committee’s definitive report on the Central Intelligence Agency interrogation program and the punishment of those found responsible for torture.

On Dec. 9, 2014, the Senate released a 528-page executive summary of that report. The results of the investigation into the treatment of 119 detainees between 2002 and 2008 present a serious moral challenge to all Americans, a fact that is unfortunately clouded by the partisan nature of the report. Republican members of the committee withdrew from the study in 2009 and have criticized the report’s authors for failing to interview key witnesses. C.I.A. Director John Brennan defended the use of what he calls “enhanced interrogation techniques.” President Obama has condemned torture but stood behind the C.I.A.

We now know that among those held, 26 were wrongfully detained; 39 were subjected to so-called enhanced interrogation techniques; three underwent waterboarding; and one innocent man was killed. The agency maintained five “black sites,” including one in Thailand, where Abu Zubaydah was held. At first he cooperated with C.I.A. and Federal Bureau of Investigation questioning; but once F.B.I. officers left the site, violence set the tone. In isolation for 47 days, he was smashed against the wall, stuffed in a small box and waterboarded 83 times until he vomited, coughed and trembled with spasms. C.I.A. employees appalled at this treatment wept, shook and asked to be transferred.

Other interrogations, based on the “psychology of helplessness,” belong in a horror film. Sensory and sleep deprivation induce a psychosis in which people lose control of what they say and think. The C.I.A. interrogation guide favors the D.D.D. method, “Debility, Dependency and Dread,” which breaks the captive’s will to resist. We live in a world where shared values no longer exist, argued the C.I.A. psychologists; breaking down captives with this technique would “save lives,” they told themselves. A New Haven University psychiatrist, Charles A. Morgan III, told *The New York Times* (12/10) that the C.I.A. psychologists had misunderstood the theory. These tactics were, in effect, “making people less reliable and more stupid.” Meanwhile, doctors cooperated in the violation of five prisoners under the guise of excruciatingly painful—

and medically unnecessary—“rectal rehydrations.”

Senator Dianne Feinstein, chairperson of the Intelligence Committee, was determined to publish the report before the end of the year, lest the findings be suppressed by the next Congress and the American people never know what was done in their names. Those who hoped that the report could lead to contrition and reconciliation, even a restoration of justice, may be disappointed. Three former C.I.A. directors penned an op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* arguing that the methods employed produced important information during a time of national crisis. Most disturbingly, in an interview on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” former Vice President Dick Cheney said of the interrogation program, “I would do it again in a minute.”

Those responsible for torturing have broken international and U.S. law, no matter what “permissions” were concocted by the George W. Bush’s legal team. Meanwhile, a passive American public devours television shows in which police or special agents rough up suspects, overlooking that these “heroes” are doing something immoral. The argument that brutal tactics “work” is both a proven untruth and a distraction from the moral issue.

Without bold political and religious leadership, justice will not be fully served. Senator John McCain, who himself was tortured as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, courageously broke with many of his Republican colleagues to commend the release of the report. In a powerful speech on the Senate floor, he said victims tell their torturers what they want to hear and, regardless of its efficacy, torture compromises “our belief that all people, even captured enemies, possess basic human rights.” Bishop Oscar Cantú, chair of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has declared torture an “intrinsic evil that cannot be justified under any circumstances,” for it violates the “God-given dignity inherent in all people.”

That so many innocent people were detained and often abused demands a public apology and financial compensation. The U.N. Convention Against Torture, which the United States ratified in 1994, bans torture and other inhumane treatment and requires that torturers be prosecuted. The American torturers imagined they could answer evil with more evil rather. If we allow this to stand, history will judge us to our nation’s lasting shame.



REPLY ALL

Living Law

Re “Has Natural Law Died?” by John J. Conley, S.J. (12/22): Speaking as a lawyer, I would argue that natural law is, for the first time in the last few centuries, actually starting to take hold—just not within the church. In particular, natural law concepts are now finding broad use in European legal systems. I’m speaking about the concept of “human dignity,” which (as even secular, atheist lawyers in Europe admit) was placed within European constitutions by directly borrowing from Catholic natural law theory. For instance, Germany’s Basic Law (their constitution) states, “Human dignity shall be inviolable.”

Obviously, it is impossible to understand this extraordinary commitment to human dignity without acknowledging the historical context in which the Basic Law was created (i.e., the Holocaust). Nevertheless, this concept of human dignity is widely understood to be a statement of a natural law right. Furthermore, this article of the Basic Law isn’t treated as mere surplus; it is frequently used as a basis for legal decisions resulting in practical effects on the lives of German citizens. It is fascinating to see natural law being used with eagerness in secular states while receiving less attention within our own church.

WENDELL MONTGOMERY
Online Comment

Family Blessings

Re “A More Perfect Union,” by Helen Alvaré (12/22): Complementarity can be a powerful and excellent thing, and certainly the special relationship between a man and woman building a home and family is particularly valuable and to be treasured. Problems arise when valuing the differences between men and women leads to devaluing the parts of either that are not different, such as the intellect, will, courage, com-

passion and tenderness that fill both. Differences are assigned where there need not be differences, or gifts of genius are underutilized when they show up in those of the gender less commonly known for expressing that gift.

Beyond that, treasuring the complementary family calls into question the non-complementary family. The widow raising her sons without a father, for example, could be considered lesser. But God may have given her every strength and blessing to be all that her sons require in their parent, and certainly she should not feel compelled to find another husband immediately because of some supposed lack. Nontraditional families may not have all the same blessings the complementary family has, but God gives to each family unique blessings and graces that must also be treasured. In the race to praise the complementarity of the family, these nontraditional families may end up condemned.

WINNI VEILS
Online Comment

Religion-Speak

“Family in Focus” (12/8), by the Rev. Robert P. Imbelli, impressed upon me the great need for new language on the part of our church leaders in talking about marriage. One paragraph in the article particularly drew my attention: “The ‘divine pedagogy’ which the synod report extols, builds upon the primordial relation of man and woman and leads it to its consummation in Christian marriage, wherein it sacramentalizes the spousal covenant between Christ and his beloved, the church.”

Having a master of divinity in Catholic theology, I understand what this passage is saying—and it represents what I personally refer to as religion-speak. To the average Catholic it is nothing more than “theological gobbledegook.” I can imagine the reader responding, “With all due respect, Father, would you please come down out of your tree and talk to me face to face

about my lived experience of marriage?”

Educated Catholics understand the need for fidelity, exclusivity and permanence in marriage, and they know an awful lot about how people should go about loving one another in everyday life. Religion-speak only distances such Catholics from those attempting to catechize them, who give the impression that they don’t have the foggiest idea what they are talking about. Unless the church adopts a new language in its catechesis of marriage, it will never accomplish the goals of the new evangelization.

THOMAS SEVERIN
Connellsville, Pa.

Midlife Reading

Re “Life’s Second Half,” by James Martin, S.J. (12/8): I thoroughly enjoyed Father Martin’s enthusiasm about his readings on the second half of life and concur with his recommendations. Having been facilitator of many workshops on midlife and what follows, I have often witnessed the excitement of people who discover that what they are experiencing is normal and universal. I suggest that Father Martin might also want to acquaint himself and readers with the work of Anne Brennan and Janice Brewi, Sisters of St. Joseph, who truly pioneered exploration of the spiritual and religious implications of life cycle theory.

ANN WITTMAN, S.C.S.C.
Merrill, Wisc.

Embracing Uncertainty

Re “Call to Conversion,” by Gerard O’Connell (12/8): Pope Francis seems to be one of those rare persons who are entirely comfortable with uncertainty. Those who mutter darkly that he has an agenda that will force the church to outcomes that he has preordained might pause and reflect. Perhaps, instead, he truly believes in the working of the Holy Spirit. He may actually trust that God can take care of his own. Whether or not we (the pope included) know where all this upheaval may end

is immaterial. God knows, and that's enough to keep us going.

Francis has started a series of conversations, and no one knows where they will lead. We need to allow these conversations to unfold, listening with respect and concern to all the voices that speak—both those that say what we wish to hear and those that speak messages we'd rather not listen to. If the pope can embrace uncertainty, can the rest of us not at least try to do the same?

CAROLANN CIRBEE

Online Comment

Ordinary Blessings

Re "Everyday Sacraments," by Angela Alaimo O'Donnell (12/8): When my mother entered her mid-80s we knew she could not live alone anymore. She did not want to move and was very comfortable in her own home, so we decided to renovate her home, put an addition, move in and take care of her there. We moved in two years ago. We do the most ordinary of things. Trips to the supermarket become exercise as we walk up and down the aisles. Church events I took for granted now become stimulation and entertainment and vehicles for socialization that don't require much traveling. I try to add lettuce and tomato to nearly every sandwich to make sure Mom is getting a varied diet. Our life could not be more mundane. But thanks to Ms. O'Donnell sharing her story, I can now see the sacramental nature of what we do every day.

MONICA DOYLE

Online Comment

A Sustainable Tax

Re "Renew This World," by Gary Gardner (12/1): Some years ago, I took part in a renewal process in which parishioners throughout the Diocese of Superior met in small groups and gingerly waded into the sea of discourse after having listened on the shore for so many years. Something like that will be needed throughout the church as we extend our spirituality to include the earth that God gave to us all—not just

f STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to the final report of the six-year Vatican investigation of women's religious orders in the United States released on Dec. 16, 2014.

I'm so happy to see this outcome. It is unfortunate that any of this had to happen, when these are the people doing the actual work all the time without recognition. But if the only thing that we take from this is that we have finally heard the sisters' pain, then some good definitely has come

from the whole experience. Maybe all of us can take a moment to show appreciation to the women religious we know.

ANNETTE GAPE

I'm happy for the relief of the women religious, but I'm praying for the day the men of the Catholic Church don't take the attitude that they need to review the women of the church. Or is it now the nuns' turn to review the priests?

MARY KRICK-NELSON

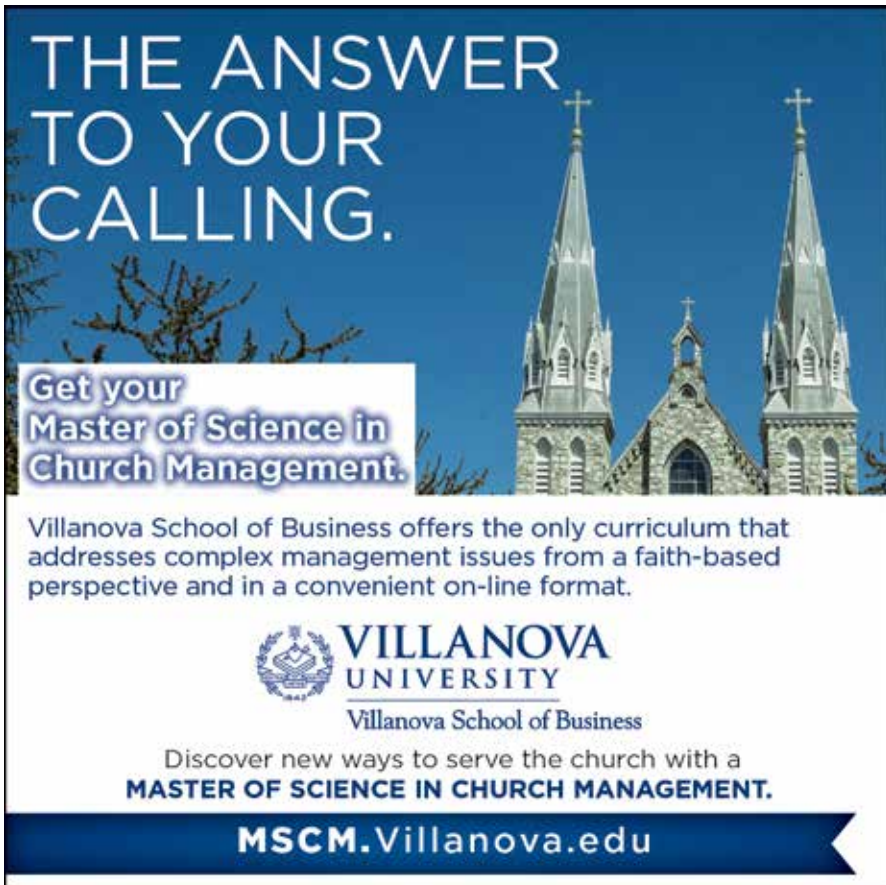
to those currently monopolizing the land, water and air, and paying scarcely any dues.

One way to update the sharing modeled in the Acts of the Apostles is to advocate the elimination of taxes on labor and capital. Instead, a limited government could collect rent on those monopolizing the earth. Then after retaining a pittance to fund a transparent

government, the remaining tax revenue could be distributed to each, making for greater equity, since no other privileges would be granted. Taxing the use and abuse of the environment instead of taxing the economy makes for a sustainable economy within a sustainable environment

ERNEST MARTINSON


Online Comment



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SYRIA

Record Year of Suffering as War Takes a High Toll on Civilians

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights issued a depressing portrait on Jan. 1 of a year in death in Syria. According to the group's tracking of the many casualties of the ongoing and complex conflict, the civil war in Syria claimed 76,021 lives in 2014. Its researchers acknowledged that this figure is likely a deep undercount of the true toll, but even the conservative figure marks 2014 as the deadliest year in Syria since the violence began in 2011.

It comes as no surprise that the fractured nation's civilian population is enduring significant suffering. According to the observatory, 17,790 civilians, including 3,501 children and 1,987 women, died in 2014. The observatory tallied the death toll among the Pro-Assad regime Syrian military, militias and various sympathizing entities at 25,160. Rebel fighters suffered 15,488 losses, and deaths among Islamic State fighters and other Islamic militants groups totaled 16,979.

"Worth noting," the group said, is that its tally does not include "thousands of detainees inside regime prisons and thousands of those who disappeared during regime raids and massacres," nor does it include, among others, "hundreds of regular soldiers and pro-regime militants and supporters captured by [Islamic State] fighters, Al-Nusra front, rebel and Islamic battalions on charge of dealing with the regime."

The human rights group deplored the "silence of the international community for the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Syria." That silence, it argues, "encourages the criminals to kill more and more Syrian people." The observatory's researchers add that 1.5 million people have been wounded in the conflict, many of them suffering permanent disabilities. Hundreds of thousands of children have been orphaned by the civil war, the group says, noting that more than half of Syria's people have been internally displaced or become refugees and that the nation's infrastructure and public and private properties continue to be obliterated by the conflict.

The group calls upon "all sides to support the Syrian people in their

aspirations toward freedom, equality and democracy and to exert all effort in guaranteeing that the perpetrators and their wrong-doings will not go unpunished.

Russian and Chinese Security Council vetoes have prevented charges of crimes against humanity from being referred to the International Criminal Court, the observatory called for the establishment of a special international court to investigate war crime allegations in Syria. "We in the Syrian Observatory demand the punishment of all perpetrators, instigators, collaborators and all individuals and sides who used the Syrian blood as a political card and as means to carry out their personal agendas, as well as those who transformed a revolution for dignity [into] a sectarian and ethnic civil war."

Syria's suffering figured prominently in Pope Francis's "Urbi et



Orbi" Christmas message. He explored God on Christmas Day to aid the victims of a "brutal persecution" in Iraq and Syria. "I ask him, the Savior of the world, to look upon our brothers and sisters in Iraq and Syria, who for too long now have suffered the effects of ongoing conflict, and who, together with those belonging to other ethnic and religious groups, are suffering a brutal persecution," the pope said.

"May Christmas bring them hope, as indeed also to the many displaced persons, exiles and refugees, children, adults and elderly, from this region and from the whole world," Pope Francis said. "May indifference be changed into closeness and rejection into hospitality, so that all who now are suffering may receive the necessary humanitarian help to overcome the rigors of winter, return to their countries and live with dignity."



CITY IN RUINS. A young boy of Aleppo emerges from the rubble with what little he could salvage after an Assad regime attack in November.

PASTORAL WORKERS

26 Killed in Service to Church

Pope Francis expressed his “deep sadness” and condolences on Jan. 1 to the ecclesial community of the Diocese of Altamirano in Mexico after the murder of the Rev. Gregorio López Gorostieta, before urging “the priests and other missionaries of the diocese to continue their ecclesial mission with ardor despite the difficulties, following the example of Jesus, the Good Shepherd.”

According to the diocese, Father López Gorostieta’s body was found on Christmas Day, dumped in an alley in Ciudad Altamirano. Though authorities have yet to identify any suspects or even a motive for the killing, Father López Gorostieta had recently been

preaching against organized crime.

Father López Gorostieta’s abduction provoked more outrage in the State of Guerrero, which is still reeling from the disappearance and apparent murder of 43 student-teachers just a few months earlier. “We are tired of pain and delinquency, injustice and corruption,” Altamirano’s Bishop Maximino Martínez Miranda told the media. “We want the incidents...as well as the death of so many people in Guerrero state [to be clarified]. We live in a moment of violence.”

Another Altamirano priest, the Rev. Ascensión Acuna Osorio, was murdered in September. The two killings contribute to another grim year for Catholic pastoral workers in Latin America and around the world. In its annual survey, Fides, the news agency of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, reports that 26 pastoral workers were killed in 2014—three more than in the previous year—and 18 others were taken by the Ebola virus while responding to that devastating crisis in Africa. While news stories last year depicted the brutal persecution of Christians in Iraq, Syria and throughout the Middle East, it is actually in the Americas where the most deaths of Catholic pastoral workers took place in 2014.

According to Fides, 17 priests, one religious brother, six religious women, a seminarian and a lay person were killed last year. Most of the murders were committed during robberies, but, the report adds, many of these robberies were carried out with such “brutality and ferociousness” that they are signs of intolerance and “moral degradation” as well as “economic and cultural poverty.”

For the sixth year in a row, the majority of the murdered pasto-

ral workers worldwide, 14, were killed in the Americas. Breaking the statistics down by continent, Fides reports that 12 priests, one brother and one seminarian were killed in the Americas; seven—two priests and five sisters—were killed in Africa; two—a Jesuit priest in Syria and a woman religious in Malaysia—died in Asia; a priest and a lay collaborator were murdered in Papua New Guinea; and in Europe, an Italian priest was beaten to death in his rectory.

The survey drew special attention to four members of the Hospitaller Order of St. John of God, a religious sister and 13 lay workers who died at Catholic hospitals in Liberia and Sierra Leone after contracting Ebola. These 18 “gave their lives for others like Christ,” said Jesús Etayo Arrondo, prior general of the Hospitallers.

The fates of five kidnapped priests remains unknown, Fides said. Three Assumptionist priests were kidnapped in the North Kivu Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo in October 2012; the Italian Jesuit Father Paolo Dall’Oglio was kidnapped in Syria in 2013; and an Indian Jesuit, Alexis Prem Kumar, director of Jesuit Refugee Service in Afghanistan, was kidnapped in June outside a J.R.S.-run school in Herat.



CIRCLE OF LIFE. Health workers at prayer as they start their shift in Monrovia, Liberia, in September.

Catholic Numbers Rise

The number of Catholics in the world has increased, with growth registered across all five continents, according to Vatican news agency Fides. The number of Catholics in the world stood at nearly 1.23 billion people, with an overall increase of more than 15 million over the 2013 numbers. The Americas and Africa registered the biggest increases followed by Asia, Europe and Oceania. The world percentage of Catholics stood at 17.49 percent, a decrease of 0.01 percent from 2011. The global number of priests increased by 895 to 414,313. Europe once again registered the largest decrease in priests (-1,375), followed by the Americas (-90) and Oceania (-80). In Africa the number of priests grew by 1,076 and in Asia by 1,364. There was an overall decrease in the number of women religious worldwide, whose numbers dropped by 10,677 to 702,529. Once again Africa and Asia showed increases, while Europe and the Americas showed the biggest decrease in women religious. The number of lay missionaries in the world decreased 19,234 to 362,488. Globally the church runs 71,188 kindergartens, 95,246 primary schools and 43,783 secondary schools. Charity and health care centers in the world run by the church total 115,352.

Pope Names 15 Cardinals

Underscoring the geographical diversity of his selections, Pope Francis named 15 cardinal electors “from 14 nations of every continent, showing the inseparable link between the church of Rome and the particular churches present in the world.” The pope announced the names on Jan. 4 and said he would formally induct the men into the College of Cardinals on Feb. 14. With these selections, the pope continues giving gradu-

NEWS BRIEFS

In his World Day of Peace address on Jan. 1, Pope Francis continued his promotion of a world free of **human trafficking** and modern forms of slavery, calling for a globalization of solidarity which rejects a globalization of indifference. • The Italian coast guard took control on Jan. 1 of a **cargo ship adrift** without fuel in rough seas, carrying 450 mostly Syrian migrants. • The United Nations says conflict in Iraq **claimed 12,282 civilians** in 2014, making it the deadliest year since 2007, with most deaths—nearly 8,500—occurring after the dramatic expansion of the Islamic State insurgency in Anbar Province in June. • Three-term New York **Governor Mario Cuomo**, a progressive Democrat who controversially sought to balance his Catholic faith with the pressing social matters of his times such as abortion and poverty, passed away on Jan. 1, 2015, at the age of 82. • Breaking their silence against the “inhuman” power of the Mafia, the Bishops’ Conference of Calabria in Italy endorsed a document **condemning the local Mafia**, or ‘Ndrangheta, on Jan. 2, just two days after Pope Francis took a strong stand on Mafia corruption in his New Year’s Eve message. • Maryland’s outgoing Gov. Martin O’Malley on Dec. 31 **commuted the death sentences** of the last four inmates on the state’s death row to life imprisonment without possibility of parole.



ally more representation at the highest levels of the church to the poorer countries in the global south. The new cardinals will include the first in history from Cape Verde, Tonga and Myanmar. Three of the new cardinal electors hail from Asia, three from Latin America, two from Africa and two from Oceania. Of the five Europeans on the list, three lead dioceses in Italy and Spain that have not traditionally had cardinals as bishops—another sign of Pope Francis’ willingness to break precedent. None of the new cardinals hails from the United States or Canada.

Communion Change?

According to the findings of a German bishops’ report released on Dec. 22, most of the country’s 66 bishops now favor allowing divorced Catholics living in new civil unions to participate

in confession and receive Communion in “particular justified instances.” The report said the exclusion of divorced Catholics was “no longer comprehensible” to many priests. “For many Catholics engaged in church life, the pastoral care of faithful with a civil divorce and living in new unions is a test of the church’s credibility,” the document continued. “The church’s teaching and pastoral work must uphold Jesus’ instruction on the indissolubility of marriage, but also his invoking of God’s mercy on those who are sinful.” The summary said most divorced German Catholics considered their separation and new relationship “morally justified” and viewed their consequent exclusion from sacraments as “constituting unjustified discrimination and being merciless.”

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

DISPATCH | LOS ANGELES

Career Interrupted

It's your typical Hollywood story: In the late 1970s, a Jewish kid from Los Angeles answers an ad to work as secretary to a film producer. She wants to get in "the business," but she doesn't exactly have the pedigree. Dad's an economist; Mom runs a bookstore. Growing up, she'd gone to what she called "a hippie school," where students would sit on the floor and read Robert Penn Warren. All she has is ambition.

Ten years later she's an executive at Columbia Pictures, developing films like "Groundhog Day," "Awakenings" and "A League of Their Own." A few years after that, she's president of the company. Three times under her leadership Columbia has the highest grossing year of any movie studio ever. She is elevated to co-chairperson at Columbia's parent corporation, Sony Pictures Entertainment. Today Forbes ranks her the 28th most powerful woman in the world.

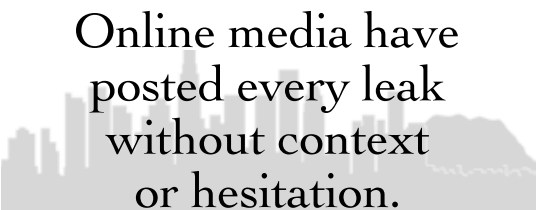
And she has made her name on more than summer blockbusters. Throughout her career she has fought for more stories about women, like "Girl, Interrupted," "28 Days" and "Sense and Sensibility," and hired talented female creators like Nora Ephron, Amy Heckerling and Nancy Meyers.

She has also called for Hollywood to end gay slurs in films, reminding her fellow executives that "what the media says about your sexual orientation and the color of your skin and the shape of your eyes and your ethnicity...really sinks in. What we see teaches us about how to feel about ourselves and how to

feel about each other."

When polled by the Los Angeles Times writer Steven Zeitchik, people in the film industry said of her, "More than any studio chief, she has been willing to roll the dice on difficult films, the kind of films that make so many want to be a part of this hair-raising world in the first place."

Then, according to the White



Online media have
posted every leak
without context
or hesitation.

House, North Korea hacked her company as retaliation for producing "The Interview," and the life of Sony's Amy Pascal became anything but that typical Hollywood success story.

Plenty of questions have been asked about "The Interview." In what world does a film about assassinating a real-life world leader seem like a good idea? Would anyone be crying "free speech" if it were a comedy about two guys who murder President Obama?

But also, can anyone deny that America desperately needs films, ridiculous or otherwise, that consider its shocking-to-the-point-of-absurd willingness to assassinate people? In Pakistan today, drone strikes are so familiar that the media there have produced cartoons about a drone and its pal, a dengue fever-carrying mosquito.

Between leaked emails and public criticism from no less than President Obama, Pascal has been branded foul-mouthed, racist, sexist and a coward.

But for those familiar with her, little

of this holds up. And that's the part of the Sony story that has been missed. Trading on our instinctive inability to pass a wreck without slowing to look, online media sites with telling names like Gawker, BuzzFeed or Dlisted have driven the story, posting every leak without context or hesitation, which the mainstream media then pick up. (Gawker created an entire site for the leaks.)

The BuzzFeed writer Anne Helen Petersen recently opined that the role of journalists today "isn't as gatekeepers, but as interpreters." But a simple Google search reveals that most of these online "interpreters" are simply regurgitating one another's information, even using the very same language, without fact checking or analysis.

And do any of us really want reality interpreted by publications whose headline articles include "24 Times Grindr Brought Awkwardness to a Whole New Level," "Girls Explain How They Flirt" and "Which 'Love Actually' Couple Are You and Your Significant Other?" (These are all real headlines from BuzzFeed.)

Anyone who has worked in Hollywood will tell you Pascal's emails are typical of the business. The media industry is a never-ending series of high-stakes, high-stress negotiations; writer/producer Judd Apatow aptly labels it "a game of chicken." Ugly compromises are made; awful things get said. "Everyone is insulted, and at the end of the day we figure it out and we're friends."

That reality is not presented on these sites because they don't make for clickable headlines. News equals Buzz.

So instead of being gatekeeper or interpreter, our press becomes more and more a circus barker, looking for the next bearded lady or three-headed goat to draw our attention.

JIM McDERMOTT

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



Internal Affairs

Among the charming figures of New York City civic life in recent decades has been Joseph O'Hare, S.J., who served as editor in chief of *America* from 1975 to 1984 and as president of Fordham University from 1984 to 2003. Anyone who knows Father O'Hare (now living back in his native Bronx) can attest that he is also a world-class raconteur. Among his tales is one about his father, also Joe O'Hare, and my grandfather, Michael Keane, fellow Irishmen who served together in the New York Police Department's mounted unit.

One night during the 1930s, Troop B was summoned to break up an anarchist riot near Central Park. "Sidewalk to sidewalk, men," their commanding officer told them, "don't let any of them behind your horse." Upon arriving at Columbus Circle, the officers were horrified to discover the supposed anarchists were in fact a group of fellow Irish-Americans, protesting continued British interference in Irish affairs.

The boys of the N.Y.P.D. halted. What to do? Spur their horses into a crowd of fellow countrymen? Ultimately, they half-heartedly followed orders. O'Hare's father found himself confronted by a woman wielding a long hatpin. "Look, look, it's the bully of King George!" she shouted while poking him with the hatpin. "It's that tyrant who put you up on that horse!"

That the story has lasted almost a century is a testament to its emotional power, if not to its factual reliability (sometimes the desire for good *craic* can trump concerns over accuracy). That it

has no ending says something about the tension that exists in police life between solidarity with the people one guards and solidarity with one's fellow officers. Finally, it's a reminder of a grim truth about human nature: it's easier to demonize your enemies when they don't look, talk or think like you.

Until very recently, most cops in New York City looked like me. For most of my life, my own sympathies were with the police, until the fall of 2011, when as a participant in the Occupy protests in Berkeley and Oakland, I saw police drag a woman 20 feet by her hair. I ducked and ran as police fired tear gas into crowds of college students and hipsters. I bailed a seminarian friend out of jail who was beaten by Oakland police while walking away from an Occupy protest.

That last arrest resulted in a trial in which an Oakland cop who could have been my brother lied repeatedly under oath. Astonishingly, the victim of his attack was the one found guilty—of obstructing a public street. It was then that I began to understand a little better what many poor and minority Americans face when they deal with the police—to witness the illegal and immoral use of force, then see its victim punished for enduring it. (His victim—it's a small world—is now the poetry editor of this magazine.)

The explosions of anger by many New Yorkers over incidents like the death by choking of Eric Garner suggest that many Americans feel the same way: there is a deep resentment over police misconduct. Such incidents also remind us that our city's vaunted

drop in crime over the past decades has come at a terrible price.

The resentment many feel is not assuaged by folks like Patrick Lynch, president of the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, who suggest that protests against police misconduct led to the recent slaying of two N.Y.P.D. officers by a madman. Lynch's logic—if you protest how we behave, if you object to our violence, then there is blood on your hands when we

It's easier to demonize your enemies when they don't look, talk or think like you.

die—is the language of totalitarianism, and will only harden the hearts of many who see the N.Y.P.D. as the enemy. That logic also eliminates the sympathy of the vast majority of Americans who say "what kind of animal kills a cop?"

So where do we go from here?

I would suggest that the insights of officers Keane and O'Hare 80 years ago might make for a good start. We would all do well to recognize that they—those people—look, act and think just as we do. Even when their skin color, when their experiences of life, when their relationship with the police and with society is radically different from ours. Or even when they are cops. We'd all do well to hesitate before calling someone a criminal, before calling a cop a thug.

We're going to need to think of each other as fellow humans if we're going to make it through this, as fellow countrymen in the land of the living. Because what could be more dishonorable than trampling a fellow countryman. And they are fellow countrymen, are they not?

JAMES T. KEANE, a former associate editor of *America*, is an editor at Orbis Books in Ossining, N.Y. Twitter: @jamestkeane.

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The Feminist Case Against Abortion

Recovering the pro-life roots of the women's movement

BY SERRIN M. FOSTER

Not all feminists support abortion. Properly defined, feminism is a philosophy that embraces basic rights for all human beings without exception—without regard to race, religion, sex, size, age, location, disability or parentage. Feminism rejects the use of force to dominate, control or destroy anyone.

The organization Feminists for Life continues a 200-year-old tradition begun by Mary Wollstonecraft in England in 1792. Decrying the sexual exploitation of women in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Wollstonecraft also condemned those who would “either destroy the embryo in the womb or cast it off when born,” saying: “Nature in everything deserves respect, and those who violate her laws seldom violate them with impunity.”

Mary Wollstonecraft died from complications following the birth of her second baby girl, who was named Mary in her honor. Like her mother, the younger Mary would become a great writer, producing one of the greatest novels ever to address the dangers of violating nature—*Frankenstein*, by Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley.

Fifty years after Mary Wollstonecraft's book was published, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton traveled to England to fight for the abolition of slavery. Barred from speaking at the 1842 World Anti-Slavery Convention simply because they were women, Mott and Stanton determined to hold a convention advancing the rights of women.

At that time, American women could not vote or hold property. They could not control their own money, sit on a jury or even testify on their own behalf. Women's rights to assemble, speak freely, attend college and maintain child custody after divorce or spousal death were severely limited. Marital rape went unacknowledged. The early American fem-

inists—facing conditions similar to those in developing countries today—were strongly opposed to abortion; despite their own struggles, they believed in the worth of all human lives.

Abortion was common in the 1800s. Sarah Norton, who with Susan B. Anthony successfully argued for women's admission to Cornell University, wrote in 1870:

Child murderers practice their profession without let or hindrance, and open infant butcheries unquestioned... Perhaps there will come a day when...an unmarried mother will not be despised because of her motherhood...and when the right of the unborn to be born will not be denied or interfered with.

In 1868 Eleanor Kirk, a novelist turned activist, linked the need for women's rights with the need to protect the unborn. When a woman told her that suffrage was unnecessary because she and her husband were “one,” Kirk asked what would become of her babies if her husband ceased to provide for them:

What will become of the babies—did you ask—and you? Can you not see that the idea is to educate women that they may be self-reliant, self-sustaining, self-respected? The wheel is a big one, and needs a strong push, and a push all together, giving to it an impulse that will keep it constantly revolving, and the first revolution must be Female Suffrage.

Without known exception, the early feminists condemned abortion in no uncertain terms. In the radical feminist newspaper *The Revolution*, the founder, Susan B. Anthony, and the co-editor, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, refused to publish advertisements for “Foeticides and Infanticides.” Stanton, who in 1848 organized the first women's convention in Seneca Falls, N.Y., classified abortion as a form of “infanticide” and, referring to the “murder of children, either before or after birth,” said, “We believe the cause of all these abuses lies in the degradation of women.”

Early feminists argued that women who had abortions



SERRIN M. FOSTER is president of *Feminists for Life of America*, the creator of the *Women Deserve Better* campaign and editor in chief of *The American Feminist*. Since 1994 the author has focused her efforts on serving women at high risk of abortion, including the poor, victims of violence and college-age women. This essay, adapted from the landmark speech “*The Feminist Case Against Abortion*,” is part of *America's* coverage of issues related to the Synod of Bishops on the Family.



ON THE MOVE. A suffrage parade, New York City, May 6, 1912

were responsible for their actions but that they resorted to abortion primarily because, within families and throughout society, they lacked autonomy, financial resources and emotional support. A passage in Susan B. Anthony's newspaper states:

Guilty? Yes, no matter what the motive, love of ease, or a desire to save from suffering the unborn innocent, the woman is awfully guilty who commits the deed. It will burden her conscience in life, it will burden her soul in death; but oh, thrice guilty is he who drove her to the desperation which impelled her to the crime!

Victoria Woodhull, the first woman to run for president (in 1872), concurred. In her own newspaper, *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, Woodhull wrote: "The rights of children, then, as individuals, begin while they yet remain the foetus." Woodhull and her sister, Tennessee Claflin, declared, "Pregnancy is not a disease, but a beautiful office of nature."

Clearly, we have a wealth of evidence contradicting the lie that feminists must support abortion. Some who begrudgingly admit the early American feminists were anti-abortion have suggested that their stance arose from Victorian attitudes about sex. That is not true either. Elizabeth Cady Stanton shocked Victorian society by parading around in public visi-

bly pregnant. She raised a flag to celebrate the birth of her son. Stanton celebrated womanhood. She was in-your-face about her ability to have children.

But like today's pro-life feminists, our feminist foremothers also recognized that women need not bear children to share in the celebration of womanhood. Susan B. Anthony was once complimented by a man who said that she "ought to have been a wife and mother." Anthony replied:

Sweeter even than to have had the joy of caring for children of my own has it been to me to help bring about a better state of things for mothers generally, so their unborn little ones could not be willed away from them.

In her later years, Anthony passed on the responsibility for women's rights to a new generation, just as we must prepare to do. At the turn of the century, one young woman, Alice Paul, assumed leadership. Paul fought tirelessly for passage of the 19th Amendment, which in 1920 finally guaranteed to American women the right to vote.

The Betrayal of Modern Women

Much later in life, Alice Paul was asked by a friend what she thought of linking abortion to women's rights. The author of the original Equal Rights Amendment called abortion "the

ultimate exploitation of women.” Yet what earlier feminists called a “disgusting and degrading crime” was, in the 1970s, lauded as the most fundamental right, without which all other rights are meaningless. So how did the second wave feminist movement come to embrace abortion?

Two of the male founders of the National Association to Repeal Abortion Laws were among the first to portray abortion as a “right” rather than an act of violence. Larry Lader promoted abortion as population control. His NARAL co-founder, Dr. Bernard Nathanson, saw a botched abortion in Chicago and reasoned that “legal” would mean “safer.” Nathanson later became pro-life. But in the early 1970s, the men traveled the country advocating the repeal of what they believed to be antiquated abortion laws. After failing to convince legislators that anti-abortion laws were “archaic,” Lader saw an opportunity. According to Nathanson, Lader approached leaders of the women’s movement. He reasoned that if a woman wanted to be educated like a man, hired like a man and promoted like a man, women should not expect their employers to accommodate pregnancy.

Forty-two years after the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion, many within the pro-life movement focus on the undeniable humanity of each unborn child, clearly visible through the millions of sonograms obtained by proud parents each year. But it is also a good time to evaluate the impact that *Roe v. Wade* attorney Sarah Weddington’s pro-abortion arguments have had on women.

In 1973, Weddington exposed the discrimination and other injustices faced by pregnant women who are poor or in the workplace or school. But she did not demand that these injustices be remedied. Instead, she demanded for women the “right” to submit to these injustices by destroying their pregnancies. Weddington repeatedly said that women need “relief” from pregnancy, instead of arguing that women need relief from these injustices.

What if Weddington had used her legal acumen to challenge the system and address women’s needs? Women are not suddenly stupid when they become pregnant. They can still read, write and think. But by accepting pregnancy discrimination in school and in the workplace, by accepting the widespread lack of support for pregnant women and parents—especially among the poor—Weddington and the Supreme Court betrayed women and undermined the support women need and deserve.

The Failing Report Card

Planned Parenthood is the largest provider of abortions in the United States. According to the Guttmacher Institute,

their former research arm:

- Three out of four women who have abortions say that having a baby would interfere with work, school or the ability to care for a dependent.
- 69 percent are economically disadvantaged.
- 61 percent are already mothers.
- Women of color are disproportionately at risk of abortion.
- Half of all abortions are performed on women who have already had an abortion.
- 44 percent of all abortions are performed on college-age women.

All too often, the root causes underlying these statistics are shame and fear generated about pregnancy by the attitudes of parents, friends and the fathers of children. Fatherhood has been diminished. Children are disconnected from their fathers, who have rights as well as responsibilities. And millions of women have paid the price. Women, many impoverished because of the billions owed to mothers for child support, are struggling in school and the workplace without societal support. After all, when “it’s her body, it’s her choice,” it’s her problem.

For all these reasons and more, more than a million times a year in the United States, a woman lays her body down or swallows a bitter pill called “choice”—driven to abortion because of a lack of resources and support.

Abortion solves nothing. Almost four decades after *Roe*, we mourn the loss of 57 million American children that we will never meet. We will never know what they might have contributed to this world. But we must also remember the hundreds of women and teens who have lost their lives to legal but lethal abortion because they did not want to inconvenience us with their pregnancies.

We mourn with the parents of Holly Patterson, who died from sepsis after she took RU-486, and with the parents of Dawn Ravenell, the 13-year-old girl who never came home after she had an abortion without her parent’s knowledge. We mourn with the husband of Karnamaya Mongar, a poor immigrant who died as a result of her abortion at the hands of the convicted murderer Kermit Gosnell. Where is the outrage from women’s advocates?

Hard Cases, Exceptional Choices

Talking about abortion brings out raw emotions. Nothing is more divisive than talk about pregnancy and rape, and nothing challenges pro-life beliefs more than this heated issue. Just

In all its forms, abortion has masked—rather than solved—the problems women face.

as we have challenged thinking about special-needs babies and their parents, we must help women who have conceived during rape and welcome children conceived in violence.

We must help people have the courage to look into the face of a child conceived during rape and say, “You didn’t deserve the death penalty.” The circumstances of one’s conception do not determine a person’s worth. These children should not be regarded as “exceptions.” But their mothers should be recognized as “exceptional.” And as advocates of life, peace and justice, we will never trade one form of violence for another.

Today we stand in solidarity with women coerced into abortion because they felt they had no choice. We stand with women who were vulnerable because they were young, or poor, or in schools or workplaces that would not accommodate their needs as mothers.

We stand in solidarity with women who have been betrayed by those they count on the most, with women who have underestimated their own strength, with women who have experienced abortion and are silent no more, with young men and women who mourn their missing siblings. We mourn with men who weren’t given a choice or who contributed to an abortion that they now regret.

In all its forms, abortion has masked—rather than solved—the problems women face. Abortion is a failed experiment on women. Why celebrate failure?

Addressing Root Causes

For decades, abortion advocates have asked, “What about the woman?” And pro-lifers have answered, “What about the baby?” This does nothing to address the needs of women who are pregnant. We should start by addressing the needs of women—for family housing, child care, maternity coverage, for the ability to telecommute to school or work, to job-share, to make a living wage and to find practical resources.

As pro-life employers and educators, we must examine our own policies and practices in our own communities, workplaces, colleges and universities. With woman-centered problem solving, we can set the example for the nation and the world. We must ramp up efforts to systemically address the unmet needs of struggling parents, birthparents and victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Because 61 percent of abortions are performed on mothers who already have dependents, Feminists for Life is determined to help those facing tough economic times; FFL has published “Raising Kids on a Shoestring,” a national directory filled with creative, frugal and free solutions for pregnant women, parents and advisors.

And Feminists for Life advocates unconditional support for women who lovingly place their babies into the arms of adoptive couples. We applaud birthmothers like the former FFL board chair Jessica O’Connor-Petts, who tells us that

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“adoption can be an empowering option for women.”

We must focus our efforts on collegians who have never known a day without legal abortion. Forty-three percent of all abortions are performed on college-age women, women who will become our future leaders and educators in every field. For these reasons, Feminists for Life’s flagship effort is our college outreach program.

In addition to teaching the rich, pro-life feminist history that we have uncovered, we have been moderating FFL Pregnancy Resource Forums at campuses across the country. The first such panel discussion was at Georgetown University in 1997. Administrators, community leaders and students came together in a nonconfrontational setting to identify available resources on and off campus and to set priorities for new policies, resources and ways to communicate nonviolent options.

Within two years, Georgetown University’s board of trustees set aside endowed housing for parenting students. The Hoya Kids Learning Center was established. Pregnant and parenting students had access to health services and user-friendly information on the school’s website. Students created volunteer babysitting services. A “safety net” team of university administrators organized to ensure that no pregnant women—including birthmothers and international students—fall through the cracks. And every year, Georgetown hosts a Pregnancy Resource Forum to take another look at ways they can improve.

The first Georgetown forum started with the story of a woman who had an abortion because she did not know where to go for help. At the 14th annual forum, babies played on the floor. Beaming mothers told us they have “everything [they] need.” This past fall I moderated the 19th annual forum at Georgetown University. Because of our early efforts at Georgetown, Villanova and Notre Dame, this is the first year that babies born with the support of administrators are now likely entering college themselves.

Other colleges have also expanded their support for student parents. Pepperdine University created a task force to support pregnant women, adjusting policies to better suit student parents’ needs and building family housing. A donor recently stepped forward to fund a housing scholarship. Abbot Placid Solari and the monks of Belmont Abbey donated land adjacent to Belmont Abbey for “A Room at the Inn,” now called Mira-Via, so that women will not feel pressured to terminate either their pregnancies or their educations. Pregnant women and new mothers can now have their babies and continue with school.

Pro-life and pro-choice students came together at Wellesley College to hold a rummage sale benefitting a pregnant student who lost her financial aid for housing. The young woman had her baby and graduated. A University of Virginia student started a babysitting club. Berkeley Students for Life held bake sales to pay for diaper decks. Students for Life at St. Louis University started a scholarship fund for child care. There are many other examples like this as the ideas of Feminists for Life members and supporters go viral.

In 2010, FFL Pregnancy Resource Forums findings became the inspiration for federal grants to states through the Department of Health and Human Services’ Pregnancy Assistance Fund. After the first 10 years of FFL’s College Outreach Program, Planned Parenthood reported a 30 percent drop in abortions among college-educated women.



Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony

Women Deserve Better


Abortion betrays the basic feminist principles of nonviolence, nondiscrimination and justice for all. Abortion is a reflection that we have not met the needs of women—and that women have settled for less. Women deserve better.

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Merton (Still) Matters

How the Trappist monk and author speaks to millennials

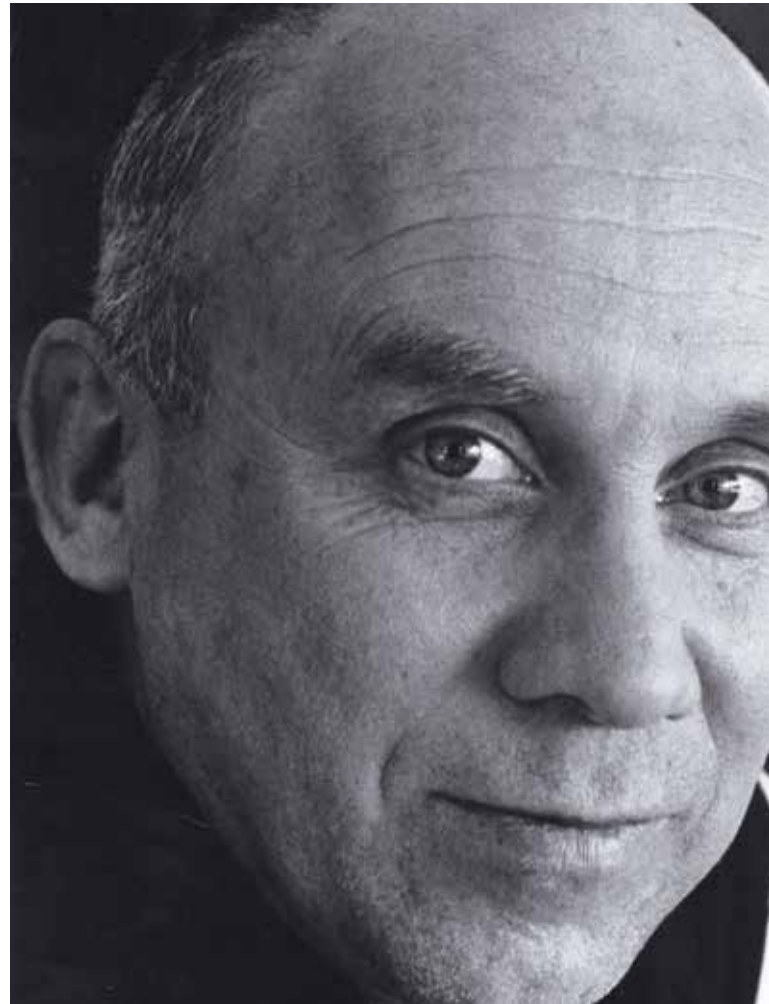
BY DANIEL P. HORAN

Jan. 31, 2015, would have marked the 100th birthday of the American Trappist monk and author Thomas Merton. But having died suddenly in Thailand on Dec. 10, 1968, while overseas to speak at conferences for Catholic monastic communities in Asia, Merton never lived to see a birthday beyond his 53rd. Yet his wisdom, writing and model of Christian engagement with the world continue to be relevant and timely.

Though Thomas Merton's life was short, his output in terms of writing, poetry and correspondence was extraordinarily productive. The diversity of his work makes abundantly clear his importance in a number of areas related to Christian living, creative expression and social action. His continued popularity is confirmed by his perennial status as a best-selling author, a rare accomplishment. Many of his books have never gone out of print. The depth of his thought and spiritual genius is confirmed by the ever-growing bibliography of new articles and books written about Merton by scholars in diverse fields from theology and spirituality to American history, literature and peace studies.

While a general consensus appears to affirm the enduring status and legacy of Merton's life and work, there are detractors who claim he is outdated and his appeal overstated. Among the most recognizable critics of Merton's legacy and relevance is Cardinal Donald Wuerl, the current archbishop of Washington, D.C. In 2005, when Cardinal Wuerl was bishop of Pittsburgh, he chaired a committee that oversaw the production of a new *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, which was aimed particularly at young adults. Each chapter was to include a profile of an American Catholic whose life and work could serve as a model for Christian living. As the author and peace activist Jim Forest recalls in an afterward to his biography of Merton, *Living With Wisdom*, Cardinal Wuerl decided that the profile of Merton originally planned for the catechism should be removed from the draft text. Among the reasons given was that "the generation we were speaking to had no idea who [Merton] was."

As both a member of the millennial generation and a professional scholar of Merton's work, I take Cardinal Wuerl's remark very seriously. In a sense, he is right. Not



many of my peers—let alone people younger than I—know Merton in the same way that previous generations have, many of whom read Merton's spiritual autobiography *The Seven Storey Mountain* and recognized Thomas Merton as a household name.

Yet in another sense Cardinal Wuerl's reported view discounted the power of Merton's true legacy. Merton does, in fact, resonate with the young adults who are introduced to his work, and it is the responsibility of the American church to remedy precisely what the cardinal was diagnosing. We must pass on to the next generation the wisdom and example of Merton so young Catholics can know him too.


As we celebrate the centenary of Merton's birth it seems fitting to take a closer look at some of the ways Merton can

DANIEL P. HORAN, O.F.M., is a columnist for *America* and the author of several books, including *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton*.

continue to speak to us today. Several themes are especially timely, particularly for us millennials.

The Original 'Slacktivist'

Conversion is arguably the most significant theme in Merton's life. Those who came to know Merton first through



Merton critiqued the injustices of his time—racism, nuclear armament, poverty—and reached out to support, comfort and guide his readers.

The Seven Storey Mountain would recognize it as the thread that drives the narrative. Born to creative but largely unreligious parents, both of whom died before Merton turned 16, Merton grew up in an environment mostly devoid of religious practice or reflection. From the time of his memoir's publication onward, Merton was hailed as a contemporary St. Augustine, whose "modern-day *Confessions*" highlighted how God's grace breaks through an all-but-atheistic young man's self-centeredness to inspire conversion to Christianity and eventually religious life. This is how Merton presented his story, which concludes with his entrance into the Trappist Order at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky.

But Merton's conversion did not end there. Real conversion never ends. In fact, like Augustine's *Confessions*,

Merton's memoir bears the marks of what literary critics call the "unreliable narrator." We are presented with a compelling narrative, undoubtedly grounded in truth, but one that nevertheless emphasizes certain elements and overlooks others. With time on our side, as well as the resources of Merton's journals, correspondence and the impressive official biography by Michael Mott, we know that his young adult life was probably much like the experience of the average college student. He questioned his beliefs, experimented with political associations, including Communism, developed his creative and artistic side, made lifelong friends, got into trouble and was shaped by his undergraduate mentors. If anything, Merton suffered most acutely from a closed worldview and lack of awareness of the needs of others, especially those outside his immediate circle.

This introspective worldview followed the young Merton into the monastery and can be seen in his early writings. It is not that he was misanthropic or dismissed those who suffered, but that he was preoccupied with his own spiritual journey. The 1940s and early 1950s saw the publication of books and essays by an enthusiastic young monk who wanted to share his faith with others, but the themes verged on the solipsistic: solitude, contemplation, asceticism, the monastic vocation. If we take Merton at his narrative word in *The Seven Storey Mountain*, then the conversion we are left with is one from the self-centeredness of "secular life" to the navel-gazing of "religious life."

But as Lawrence Cunningham of the University of Notre Dame has written, "The period of the 1950s was a time of deep change in Merton's thinking, a change radical enough to be called a 'conversion' (or, perhaps better, a series of conversions)." Merton's experience of graced conversion did not end with his profession of religious vows and the donning of a Trappist habit. Rather, the shifts in Merton's outlook on the world and God's presence in it powerfully influenced his writing style and subject matter. It was as if a veil was lifted or his eyes were opened to the realities of violence, injustice and suffering around the world. He began to correspond with civil rights activists, world leaders and artists. He established what he would later describe in a letter to Pope John XXIII as "an apostolate of friendship" that allowed him to reach out to so many through his writing and correspondence.

Merton's turn toward the world and the prophetic shift in his priorities seems to offer a timely lesson for today's young adults. The neologism "slacktivism" has gained currency recently to describe the minimal efforts people engage in, often by means of social media, to "support" an issue or cause, but that have minimal or no practical effect. These produce mostly a sense of self-satisfaction from having done "something good."

In an age of hyperconnectivity and rapid communication,

young women and men are instantly aware of what is happening around the globe. The result is something like a preliminary conversion, a move toward awareness of something beyond oneself. But the slacktivism of today is not unlike the religious interiority of Merton's early conversion. Over time Merton came to realize that he was (to be anachronistic) a slacktivist, someone who thought he was doing good for others but without taking the risk of putting himself in relationship with those he sought to help. Millennials can look to Merton as a model of someone who remained open to continual conversion, open to the challenge of God's spirit, open to doing something more and risking much for the sake of another. He used his social location within the monastery, on the margins of society, to critique the injustices of his time—racism, nuclear armament, poverty—and then reach out to support, comfort and guide his readers and help to organize change.

Reading across Merton's corpus, beyond *The Seven Storey Mountain* into his social criticism of the 1960s, can offer young people today a model for moving from slacktivism toward solidarity, from Tweeting about an issue toward doing something real about it.

Interreligious Dialogue

In October 1968, near the end of his life, Merton concluded a talk to a group of monks in Calcutta and with these now famous lines: "My dear brothers, we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are."

Merton's ongoing conversion opened him up to a variety of encounters and relationships that traversed the boundaries of the early 20th-century insular world of American Catholicism to engage in dialogue with people of different faiths and those with no affiliation at all. As early as the 1950s, Merton anticipated one of the monumental shifts that would emerge from the Second Vatican Council. Even today Merton is criticized by some who hold to a naïve reading of the patristic saying, *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* ("Outside the church there is no salvation") and believe that Merton overstepped his bounds as a Catholic priest by participating in dialogue with Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and Christians of other denominations. Some have even gone so far as to claim that Merton had "abandoned his faith" for some syncretic religious view. This could not be further from the truth.

There is nothing in Merton's published works, nor in his private journals and correspondence, that would indicate interest in leaving the Catholic Church. In his 1966 book, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, Merton wrote:

The more I am able to affirm others, to say "yes" to them in myself, by discovering them in myself and myself in

them, the more real I am.... I will be a better Catholic, not if I can refute every shade of Protestantism [or other faiths], but if I can affirm the truth in it and still go further.

At the root of Merton's engagement with people different from himself was the sense of "original unity," which he recognized bound all people together as children of God. He understood that he could not have an authentic conversation about faith with others if he did not have a firm commitment and deep love for his own tradition. Before Vatican II promulgated "The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," Merton already understood that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these [other] religions" (No. 2).

There is much that can be said about the still timely insights Merton presents to us about engaging other religious traditions. Perhaps the most pertinent is the need to live honestly in the tension between maintaining one's own faith commitments and humbly learning from the experiences of others, all the while holding onto the belief that we are indeed, somehow, "already one."


The Dalai Lama wrote in an op-ed in *The New York Times* in 2010, "While preserving faith toward one's own tradition, one can respect, admire and appreciate other traditions." He went on to explain that it was none other than Thomas Merton, with whom he met personally in 1968, who offered him this insight. "Merton told me he could be perfectly faithful to Christianity, yet learn in depth from other religions like Buddhism. The same is true for me as an ardent Buddhist learning from the world's other great religions." For Merton then, as for the Dalai Lama today, compassion for and personal encounter with people of other faiths does not diminish one's own religious convictions—if anything, it strengthens them. Merton shows us as much by living out what he came to realize was his "vocation of unity," to borrow a phrase from the Merton scholar Christine Bochen.

The Potential Appeal

Merton continues to speak a prophetic word to us today, but who is listening? Cardinal Wuerl may be correct that Merton is not as popular as he once was, but it is not because Merton does not appeal to young adults. Courses on Merton's life and work are taught at colleges and universities around the United States today. The International Thomas Merton Society (on whose board of directors I currently serve) established the Robert E. Daggy scholarship program in 1996 to fund young adult participation at the society's biennial conference. Set up by the late Rev. William Shannon, a renowned Merton scholar and the first president of the Merton Society, the scholarship has helped hundreds of

young women and men delve more deeply into the popular and scholarly discussions about Merton's life and work. My own travels speaking around the country and abroad offer anecdotal confirmation that when young adults are exposed to Merton's writings and thought, they are captivated and often can relate to his experience of conversion, his openness to the diversity of others and his radical commitment to social justice and peace.

Merton's writings are having an impact in a variety of locations and among diverse populations. There are currently 43 local chapters of the Merton Society and more continue to spring up, especially in Europe. But perhaps the most unexpected chapter is the one in the Massachusetts Correctional Institution in Shirley, Mass. Founded in 2013 by the retired educator and Merton enthusiast John Collins, the chapter is an outgrowth of a talk he gave about Merton at the inmates' request. In an interview with *The National Catholic Reporter*, several of the incarcerated men—some who have been in prison for decades—spoke about the significance of reading Merton. Joseph Labriola recalled being in solitary confinement, discovering a copy of Merton's *New Seeds of Contemplation* in his cell and reading out his cell's window to other convicts. One prisoner, Timothy Muise, said that the Merton group "affords men the opportunity to change, to re-evaluate their life in God's light."

The increasing diversity of Merton's readership is clear evidence that he is neither outdated nor irrelevant. It would seem that a century after his birth, Merton still has much to offer the church and world, and there is no indication that his reflections on peacemaking and interreligious dialogue will be outdated anytime soon. His wisdom speaks deeply to the hearts of those who encounter it. One can only imagine the possibilities that another century of his influence may have in bringing us all closer to that "original unity" about which he speaks, helping to lead us to recognize that "what we have to be is what we are." 



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Which Side Are We On?

Catholic teachers and the right to unionize

BY CLAYTON SINYAI

Catholic social teaching on the rights of workers to organize is clear and consistent. “The repeated calls issued within the church’s social doctrine, beginning with ‘Rerum Novarum,’ for the promotion of workers’ associations that can defend their rights,” writes Pope Benedict XVI in the encyclical “Charity in Truth,” “must therefore be honored today even more than in the past.”

What does this teaching imply for Catholic institutions? After all, perhaps one million American workers are employed by them, from hospitals and nursing homes to parish offices and parochial schools. In their 1986 pastoral letter “Economic Justice for All,” the U.S. bishops connected the dots. “All the moral principles that govern the just operation of any economic endeavor apply to the church and its agencies and institutions; indeed the church should be exemplary,” the bishops wrote. “All church institutions must also fully recognize the rights of employees to organize and bargain collectively with the institution through whatever association or organization they freely choose.”

In Pittsburgh, two groups of Catholic educators have formed workers’ associations; they have received sharply different responses from their employers. The teachers in Pittsburgh’s Catholic high schools—and many Catholic elementary schools—have established a respectful and mutually rewarding system of collective bargaining. Meanwhile, Duquesne University and its adjunct faculty are entering litigation with university administrators citing their religious identity as a reason for rejecting collective bargaining rather than adopting it.

Duquesne has attracted more headlines. In the past few years, adjunct instructors at dozens of universities—public and private, Catholic and secular—have sought to organize and thus improve their conditions of work. Yesterday’s “adjunct faculty” were mostly working professionals who taught a course now and then in their free time, earning a small stipend. Tenured professors carried the bulk of the teaching responsibilities and earned a generous salary and benefits.

This wage and benefit structure remains in place, but the adjunct instructors have changed. Universities have

cut expenses by transferring increasing amounts of their teaching load from expensive tenured faculty to cheaper adjuncts, paid between \$2,000 and \$4,000 per course. Many of these instructors are aspiring professors unable to find a tenured position in the new education economy. An instructor stringing together a full-time teaching load on this piecework basis is fortunate to earn \$25,000 per year. John Manning, an adjunct professor at Duquesne, supplements his wages by tending bar, observing, “I make more money serving students beer than teaching them.” In addition, as “part-time” workers, adjunct instructors seldom enjoy health insurance or retirement benefits.

In 2012 adjunct faculty members at Duquesne resolved to form a union and turned to the United Steelworkers for help. (This may sound peculiar, but in Western Pennsylvania workers of all kinds have seen what the U.S.W. has done for steelworkers and asked to join. Today most of the union’s members are employed outside the steel industry.) Duquesne was initially receptive and quickly agreed to terms and conditions for a secret ballot election to be held under the auspices of the region’s National Labor Relations Board office. If a majority of the adjuncts voted for union representation, the union would be certified as their representative for collective bargaining.

“We are very pleased with how the university has worked cooperatively with the Union in the initial process leading to the election,” said U.S.W. Senior Associate General Counsel Dan Kovalik in May. “We take this as a very positive sign of how Duquesne views potential unionization and are confident that if we prevail in the election, the university will be a willing and amicable bargaining partner.”

Reverse Gear

The adjuncts voted for the union in a 50-to-9 landslide, but the university did an about-face. Duquesne hired Arnold Perl, a veteran union fighter from Memphis who boasts of “extensive experience counseling organizations on remaining union free.” Duquesne now contended that collective bargaining would be a threat to its religious mission and that it should not be under N.L.R.B. jurisdiction at all. “We are not unmindful of the teachings of the Catholic Church on labor,” President Charles Dougherty said in a letter published on the university website. “Nevertheless, we believe that, in the case of faculty who are central to the core

CLAYTON SINYAI, a member of the Catholic Labor Network, directs the Catholic Employer Project, which monitors labor relations practices at Catholic institutions. He can be reached at clayton@catholiclabor.org.

of who and what we are, concerns for our religious mission are a higher priority.... We can never risk bargaining away the core tenants [tenets] of our mission." Duquesne has taken its legal case to Washington.

Does a Catholic institution's mission foreclose collective bargaining by faculty? This would surely come as a surprise to Bishop David Zubik, the local diocesan bishop. In April, after some tough bargaining, the Diocese of Pittsburgh signed a five-year contract with a union representing 214 lay teachers at its eight diocesan Catholic high schools. Superintendent Mike Latusek described the schools' relationship with the teachers as "very positive and collaborative. We both want to do what's best for the schools and preserve Catholic education in the Diocese."

And how did the teachers overcome the hurdle of legal jurisdiction? They didn't. The diocese is exempt from N.L.R.B. regulation. The Diocese of Pittsburgh does not bargain with the teachers' union because the government says they must; they do it because Catholic social teaching says that is what an employer should do. They do it because of their religious identity.

A History

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when unions like

the Mineworkers, the Teamsters and the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers (predecessor to today's U.S.W.) got their start, there was no federal labor board. Workers who formed a union had to persuade or compel employers to bargain with them, usually using strikes or boycotts. All too often labor disputes were marked by economic disruption and even violence.

In 1935, the National Labor Relations Act (the Wagner Act) brought a measure of order to this process. Workers covered by the act were free to advocate for or against unionization and could file a complaint with the newly created N.L.R.B. if an employer fired or otherwise retaliated against them for their choice. Workers could also ask the board to supervise a secret ballot election on union representation: if a majority of workers voted yes, the board certified it as their representative, and the employer was legally obliged to negotiate with the union about wages and conditions of work.

Some employees were explicitly excluded from N.L.R.A. coverage—for example, supervisory employees and farmworkers. It is widely believed that these workers do not have the right to form unions, but that is not exactly true; they just do not have access to the Labor Board. They have to operate under the pre-1935 rulebook. This

LABOR LESSON. Rae O'Hair, left, a Duquesne University alumna, and her friend Daniele Orosz rally for unionizing adjunct faculty in December 2013.



PHOTO: LAKE FONG/POST-GAZETTE

is why Cesar Chavez and the United Farmworkers had to use boycotts, protests and hunger strikes to press for recognition; they were not eligible to file for a labor board election. Farmhands and foremen have every right to form unions and negotiate contracts, but they seldom succeed. Employers fire the activists or lock out the recalcitrant workers, and the workers have no legal recourse.

In 1979 the Supreme Court added another category of workers to the list excluded from N.L.R.A. coverage: Catholic school teachers. By the 1970s, lay teachers had come to outnumber vowed religious in the Catholic schools. These teachers were dedicated to their faith and expected to sacrifice for their calling, but they had not taken a vow of poverty. Indeed, it would have been unsuitable for their station in life, as many of them had families to support. This was one reason that Catholic school teachers rushed by the thousands to form labor unions. Bishops, priests and principals across the nation reacted in different ways.

Cardinal John Cody of Chicago took a hard line, refusing to recognize and bargain with the Windy City's Catholic teachers. When the teachers turned to the labor board, Cody contended that Catholic K-12 schools were religious institutions exempt from federal labor law. In *N.L.R.B. v. Catholic Bishop* (1979) the Supreme Court, by a narrow 5-to-4 margin, ruled that the N.L.R.A. did not cover parochial schools.

Unions and Religious Freedom

Bishop Vincent Leonard of Pittsburgh shared many of Cardinal Cody's concerns about religious freedom. He did not conclude, however, that because the schools were exempt from federal jurisdiction they were equally exempt from Catholic social teaching regarding the rights of labor. Working with the diocesan counsel, Nicholas Cafardi (now a Duquesne law professor); the superintendent, Rev. Hugh Lang; and the teachers, he crafted a system of labor relations preserving all the just rights workers enjoyed under the National Labor Relations Act without being subject to it. In place of the N.L.R.B., the two sides selected a mutually acceptable, neutral arbiter to supervise union elections and collective bargaining. Faculty members at all eight diocesan Catholic high schools and about half the elementary schools have opted for union representation by the Federation of Pittsburgh Diocesan Teachers.

This sort of arrangement is not unique to Pittsburgh. The National Association of Catholic School Teachers, the Pittsburgh teachers' parent body, claims thousands of members in dozens of parish and diocesan schools across the country. Their contracts share one unique feature, though, generally called the "bishop's clause" or the "cardinal's clause." In the Pittsburgh contract, the clause states that "the Diocesan Bishop shall maintain the sole prerogative to dismiss a teacher for public immorality, public scandal or public rejection of teachings, doctrine or laws of the Catholic Church."

Daniel Klisavage, the teachers' union president, says that the clause is no problem for his members. "They knew there was a cross on the building when they walked in to teach," he explains. They had, after all, turned down the superior wages and benefits available in the public school system in order to serve in Catholic education.

The bishop's clause helps explain why the K-12 Catholic schools have serious reservations about National Labor Relations Act jurisdiction. When we enroll our children in Catholic schools, we entrust their teachers with considerable responsibility for their faith formation. A teacher arguing against the real presence in the Eucharist in a middle school classroom or advocating on television for abortion rights does not belong in front of Catholic schoolchildren—this is not a negotiable matter.

But is Duquesne proposing to discipline teachers who challenge Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist or who support legalized abortion? Catholic universities generally—and appropriately—permit a level of free inquiry not suitable to elementary or secondary education. Duquesne representatives did not respond to repeated requests to explain their concerns in more detail.

If the university's concerns in fact have merit, the obvious way to reconcile fealty to Catholic social teaching and their

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freedom of exercise concerns would be collective bargaining outside the N.L.R.B. framework, much the way Catholic K-12 schools in Pittsburgh do. The union actually proposed this in late 2013, but the university declined to discuss the matter.

The Elephant in the Room

Not every Catholic university has responded this way to the organizing wave among our nation's adjunct faculty. When adjuncts at Georgetown began to discuss forming a union, administrators reflected on the university's detailed "just employment policy" rooted in Catholic social teaching and concluded that it was the adjuncts' decision to make. They remained neutral, and the adjuncts voted for the union in an N.L.R.B. election. Administrators at the University of St. Thomas did not contest adjuncts' right to organize but argued strongly against a yes vote in the N.L.R.B. election. There, the union was defeated by a significant margin.

The elephant in the room has little to do with unions or universities. When Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sibelius told Catholic hospitals that they would be required to provide contraception services for employees under the Affordable Care Act, she created a firestorm of conflict between the church and the White House over religious freedom issues. The legal issues are not resolved, and the bitter feelings will remain for a long time.

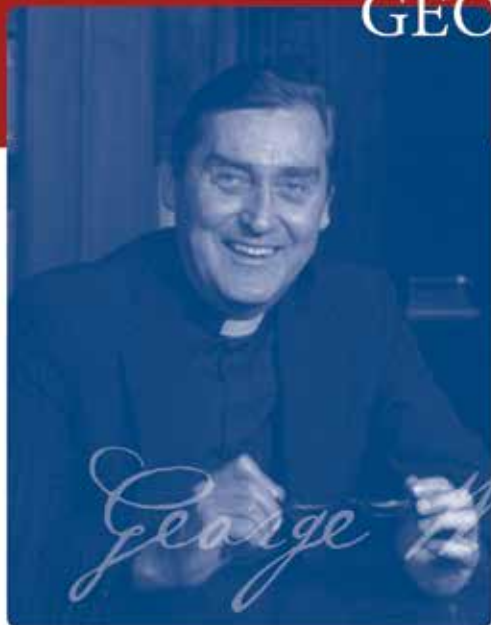
The ill-conceived mandate has made for some sloppy analogies, opening the door to arguments like those presented by Duquesne. But the circumstances could hardly be more different: H.H.S. is directing the hospitals to violate Catholic principles on contraception, while the N.L.R.B. is telling Duquesne and others to honor Catholic principles on the rights of labor.

Duquesne and the other Catholic universities adopting the same position (including Seattle University, St. Xavier University and Manhattan College) are trying to occupy an almost inconceivably narrow conceptual space. They are at once claiming to be too religious to be subject to enforcement action by the N.L.R.B. yet not religious enough to honor their adjuncts' right to organize out of simple fidelity to Catholic social teaching, the way the Diocese of Pittsburgh does.

In 1986 the bishops rightly observed that church institutions must be "exemplary" in their practice of Catholic social teaching. When a Catholic hospital or university respects the worker rights it preaches, it helps to evangelize the world; when it fails to do so, it runs the risk of scandalizing the faithful by suggesting these principles do not count. As Klisavage, himself a Duquesne graduate, observes, "How can the church support the rights of steelworkers and grape pickers when we don't support the rights of our own?" ▲

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Francis Returns to Asia

Pope Francis' second visit to Asia (Jan. 12 to 19)—to Sri Lanka and the Philippines—is about to take place as I write. I am one of some 70 reporters accompanying him and will report for **America**. Here I wish to simply highlight some similarities and differences between the two countries, from the religious and political perspectives, and to frame some of the challenges Francis will face.

The Philippines, with 7,000 islands and 100 million inhabitants, is the dynamic Catholic hub of Asia and home to over 50 percent of Asia's 140 million Catholics. Seventy-nine percent of Filipinos are Catholics; 10 percent belong to other Christian communities; and 11 percent are Muslims.

"Mercy and compassion" is the logo for Francis' visit here, a reminder that he is coming primarily to comfort survivors and relatives of the victims of Typhoon Haiyan and the 4 million Filipinos it left homeless in 2013. He will also console those hit by recent earthquakes. His heart is taking him to this place of intense human suffering, which at times verges on despair. He wants to embrace people here personally and to give hope.

Many hope that after helping broker the United States-Cuba accord, Pope Francis can have an impact on the stalled negotiations to end the 46-year armed conflict between the Communist Party and the Philippine government. Both sides accepted a Christmas ceasefire that includes the time of his visit.

In the Philippines he will see the deep divide between the rich (a num-

ber of very rich families who hold political and economic power, most of them educated in the best Catholic schools) and the poor, who are the vast majority. Many wonder why the church's social teaching has failed to take root in the hearts and minds of most of the rich and powerful of this Catholic nation, and why corruption has thrived in its political and economic arenas. It will be interesting to see how Francis addresses this reality.

Corruption at the top of the political and economic sectors is not unique to the Philippines; it exists also in Sri Lanka, a beautiful island with 21 million people, known as "the pearl of the Indian ocean." Seventy percent of the population are Buddhist, 13 percent Hindu, 10 percent Muslim and 7 percent Christian (including six million Catholics).

The cardinal archbishop of Colombo, Malcolm Ranjith, is a close friend of the country's president, Mahinda Rajapaksa, a Buddhist, and his family—far too close, say many local Catholics. He invited Benedict XVI to come and bless a new Asian theological institute, but Francis is coming instead to canonize the country's first saint, Blessed Joseph Vaz, a 17th-century missionary priest, and to comfort the victims of the 25-year conflict that ended in 2009 and to promote reconciliation.

In recent decades the Philippines and Sri Lanka have seen many of their citizens emigrate because of poverty and, in Sri Lanka's case, also because of the 25-year armed conflict between the Tamil Tigers and government forces.

Millions of Filipinos work overseas today, as do an estimated 1.5 percent of Sri Lanka's population. Moreover, Sri Lanka has hundreds of thousands of displaced persons because of the conflict that left some 100,000 dead—mostly Tamils. That conflict ended in such a brutal manner that the United Nations opened an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity, but Rajapaksa's government refuses to cooperate.

Most of Sri Lanka's Tamils feel they are second class citizens. Francis is expected to address this situation and call for respect for their human rights and reconciliation when he visits the Marian shrine of Mahdu in the former war zone.

Francis is the third pope to visit both countries and, of course, their

The Sri Lankan and Filipino churches are in different ways 'bridge' churches.

churches, which in different ways are "bridge churches." Sri Lanka's church is home to both Sinhalese and Tamils, while the dynamic Filipino church is a bridge to China and Myanmar and provides assistance to other Asian churches. Francis will want to support and encourage all this and also promote dialogue between the religions in both countries.

While the Philippine president declared four days of national holiday for Pope Francis' visit, Sri Lanka's president took the controversial decision to hold elections five days before his arrival, seeking a third term in office. Though the aftermath of past elections was marred by violence, Sri Lankan Catholics are hoping peace will prevail this time, when Pope Francis comes.

GERARD O'CONNELL

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

BOOKS & CULTURE



The cast of "Selma"

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

UP THE MOUNTAIN

The powerful message of 'Selma'

The making of a movie like *Selma*—director Ava DuVernay's powerful portrayal of the mid-'60s civil rights protests that helped changed the mind of a president and a nation—constitutes that rare thing, the no-lose/no-win situation. When the subject is as near-saintly as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a filmmaker, even if she wanted to, could not escape a certain amount of reflected glory. At the same time, when the subject is as near-saintly as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., putting a character on screen who validates both the myth and the man is a near-impossibility.

Nevertheless: DuVernay succeeds despite the odds, with actor David Oyelowo creating a King who is mag-

isterial, flawed, a leader, a schemer, a preacher, a politician, something of a sorcerer and a man who seems to know that his allotment of sand is streaming through the cosmic hourglass. This may be partly the viewer's projection, of course, but we know what we know. And there's no escaping history.

Nor is there any escaping current events. While DuVernay is not out to make everybody happy, her film's release and recent news events have converged in a manner that should make the marketing department of Paramount Pictures something close to deliriously happy, while leaving the rest of us slightly despondent.

"*Selma*" is a historical movie, of course, a period piece about a moment

when our founding principles were questioned, challenged and born again. Like "*Lincoln*," the film is not a soup-to-nuts biopic in any traditional sense but the story of an episode in a nation's maturation and a rigorous exercise in hindsight.

Thanks to recent actions by some national politicians, however, and the U.S. Supreme Court, and police departments and grand juries in New York, St. Louis and elsewhere, "*Selma*" has exploded out of the past and landed squarely around our necks like a metaphorical noose. Efforts to limit access to the polls—the very thing both blacks and whites are bleeding for in 1965 on *Selma*'s Edmund Pettus Bridge—have found quite a bit of traction, especially in the states where a U.S. Supreme Court majority led by Chief Justice John Roberts has rather blithely rolled back restrictions of the Voting Rights Act. This is the very legislation M.L.K. is seen strong-arm-

ing Lyndon Baines Johnson (Tom Wilkinson) into supporting, at a time when the American president would have preferred to be strategizing his War on Poverty.

There is no escaping, either, the reflection “Selma” will cast on the ranks of police departments across the land, whose public relations could not be much worse at the moment and whose tactics at times seem, in light of “Selma,” to be rooted in the grand old traditions of Bull Connor, the Ku Klux Klan and a strain of systemic racism that, as shown in the film, tends to manifest itself in brutality.

Pure evil, however, is never that interesting in and of itself, any more than is pure insanity. There has to be a portion of complexity in the malevolence—the Iago factor, so to speak. What is it in “Selma” that lay behind the violence, so artfully recreated by the director and perpetrated against all those peaceful protesters pouring across the bridge and demanding their inalienable, God-and-Thomas-Jefferson-given rights? DuVernay doesn’t bother to examine the roots of such hate displayed by poor white Southerners, who curse or spit or do worse against the demonstrators during the historical marches of the movie. What the venom is about, quite obviously, is the desperate rage of a people who will have no one to look down on, once black Americans get to

vote like their white counterparts. This is the stuff of pathos, which isn’t always so riveting either.

Where DuVernay metes out her vitriol instead is among the politicians—George Wallace, played with

well—the knowledge is never absent from Oyelowo’s face—that a cauldron is simmering back in Alabama. There Wallace rules, and men like Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark (Stan Houston) are allowed to keep their personal version of the “peace.” (Of Clark, James Baldwin wrote, “One has to assume that he is a man like me, but he does not know what drives him to use the club, to menace with a gun, and to use a cattle prod against a woman’s breasts.... [White Southerners’] moral lives have been destroyed by a plague called color.”) Black Americans—facing obstructions at the polls that can only be alleviated by a specifically targeted federal law—have to take to the street to force that law into being.



Oprah Winfrey plays Annie Lee Cooper in “Selma.”

It is an invigorating movie, this “Selma,” with the characters and rhetoric providing much of the power. DuVernay’s portrayal of King’s posse—among them the Rev. Hosea Williams (Wendell Pierce), Andrew Young (Andre Holland) and Bayard Rustin (Ruben Santiago-Hudson)—brings the supporting cast of the civil rights battle to full-blooded life as never before. The director is not a stylist, preferring to shoot the story straightforwardly, mostly, with a few flourishes that seem forced. The murder of the four little girls in the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham in 1963 is electrifying at first, but she allows the computerized aftershocks to go on too long. Similarly, one can feel the assault on Annie Lee Cooper (Oprah Winfrey), but her Spike Lee-inspired slo-mo descent onto a receding sidewalk feels like film-school stuff. “Selma” is so moving—and immediate—that such distractions hardly seem necessary.

cold-blooded cynicism by Tim Roth, and L.B.J., whom Wilkinson imbues with just the right amount of Texas vexation at having his well-ordered agenda upset by this soft-spoken audacity called Martin Luther King. (For what it’s worth, Oyelowo, Roth, Wilkinson and Paul Webb, the screenwriter, are all British.)

DuVernay, who up until a few years ago was working as a publicist for other people’s movies, begins her narrative in 1964, with King about to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in the cool, civilized confines of Oslo, knowing full

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

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HIP-HOP, MY FIRST LOVE

I remember the first time I heard Steely Dan's "Deacon Blues," a song about winning and losing in life. I was 10 years old, attempting to explain the lyrics to my father. Sitting across from me in the kitchen of our old apartment, his acoustic guitar across his lap, my father responded: "Not the lyrics. Feeling. How does the song make you feel?" The focus for him was always on the inspiration behind the art: What was the artist trying to evoke in listeners? What experiences was he or she describing?

Influenced by my parents, my collection ranges from merengue artists like Johnny Ventura and Juan Luis Guerra to rock bands like Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath. But it wasn't until I fell in love with hip-hop music that I truly understood the point my father was emphasizing: how deeply music touches the soul.

One of my first encounters with hip-hop was "Get A Hold," by A Tribe Called Quest, a group known for optimistic lyrics like "positivity has risen" and "Love it when God keeps on overlookin.'" From A.T.C.Q., I discovered other artists: Common and his classic "I Used to Love H.E.R.," an extended metaphor about a woman who represents hip-hop; Slick Rick's "Children's Story," a parable disguised as a bedtime story; Gang Starr's "Code of the Streets," a recollection of the frustrations faced by black men in the 1990s. Most memorable was the discovery of Eric B. & Rakim. Arguably the most pivotal musicians in all of hip-hop, the duo uses elements like alliteration, allusions and metaphors to create classics like "I Ain't No Joke" and "Follow the Leader." They also embody what makes hip-hop music so power-

ful: the way it alters language.

Hip-hop artists alter the English language in their music to create what is called "flow," a combination of rhythms and rhymes. Whether through alliteration, assonance, similes or metaphors, artists use their flow to create a kind of poetry for audiences. Adam Bradley, a scholar of African-American literature, analyzes this in *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop*. The flow used by rappers creates a different kind of storytelling, one that is more relatable and colloquial. Through this storytelling, Bradley says, the genre gives "voice to a group hardly heard before by America at large."

For me, an immigrant woman from the Dominican Republic who was raised in the Bronx, hip-hop finally showed me a world I was familiar with. As I grew up, television screens were rarely populated by people of color. Screen starlets were blonde, blue eyed and, well, white; and the cities on screen were also different from the New York City I knew. I wondered: Where are the people who look like me? Where are the cities that look like the Bronx streets I travel? I found answers in hip-hop. I saw my face in the characters described by artists like A.T.C.Q. and Gang Starr; I saw the experiences of my neighbors and even the strangers in my communities. I saw the city I knew in songs like Rakim's "New York (Ya' Out There)" and Nas's "New York State of Mind." I was empowered. For the first time ever, my culture was popular culture.

Hip-hop is also a pivotal part of social activism in today's world. As the world continues to react to the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, hip-hop offers communities of color the opportunity to see ourselves in a positive light. The strongest source of this reflection is Kendrick Lamar, a 27-year-old rapper from Compton, Calif., considered by many to be the

greatest rapper in hip-hop right now. From issues like the temptation of gang culture ("But what am I supposed to do/ When the topic is red or blue") to racism ("Racism is still alive/ Yellow tape and colored lines") to the perils of alcoholism ("Now I done grew up/ Round some people living their life in bottles"), Lamar documents the realities faced by people of color in the United States today, realities not shown on CNN or

Hip-hop
creates a
different
kind of
storytelling.



Fox News. Appearing on "The Colbert Report" on Dec. 16, he emphasized the importance of using these themes to remind his listeners that he is "coming from a dark place and doing something positive."

Hip-hop might be mistaken by many for loud, unintelligible songs dedicated to drugs, sex and violence. For my fellow "hip-hop heads" and me, however, there is another side, the side that emphasizes solidarity, positivity, hope. As the rapper Common says in Bradley's *Poetics*, the power of hip-hop lies in its representation of what many simply see as "the ghetto." It is our voice.

OLGA SEGURA

THE COMPANY MAN

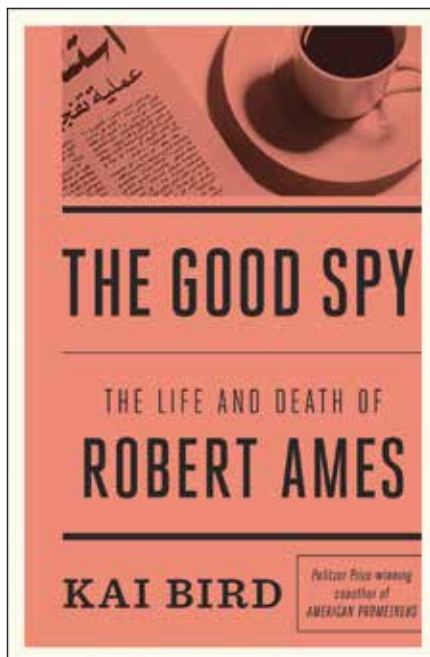
THE GOOD SPY The Life and Death of Robert Ames

By Kai Bird
Crown. 430p \$26

Why should anyone bother to read 400 pages about the life and the career of a man who died 30 years ago, an unknown second-level officer in the Central Intelligence Agency, even if the book is well researched and well-written? Answering this question requires us to work out some prior questions. This is quite appropriate, since we are dealing with an agency whose stock in trade is the answering of questions, even if the answers are not provided to the general public. The initial easy questions are: 1) Who was Robert Ames? and 2) why was his career important?

Ames, unlike the early stars of the C.I.A., came from a working class family in Philadelphia and attended LaSalle University. Being tall, he developed an early and lasting enthusiasm for basketball; he was a “sixth man” on LaSalle’s national championship team in 1956. He also excelled as a student before doing two years service in the Army working on signals intelligence in Ethiopia for the National Security Agency, an agency which at that time had a very low public profile. During his time there, he converted to Catholicism, which, as Bird remarks, “suited his future profession.” He also began to study Arabic, which over the years he was to master and to make a cornerstone of his career. He began to work for the C.I.A. in 1961. Most of his career was spent in the Middle East, with important tours in Lebanon and Iran, where he served under Richard Helms, a future director of the C.I.A. In Lebanon he grew close to Ali Hassan

Salameh, an affluent Palestinian, both flamboyant and fatalistic, who was a member of the inner circle around Yassir Arafat. Ames treated him as a friend and source rather than as an “agent” or paid spy. Salameh was widely thought to be involved in planning the massacre of Israeli athletes at the



Munich Olympics in 1972. In 1979 he was killed by Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, in an explosion in Beirut. Salameh, Bird argues, provided a back channel for communications between the U.S. government and the Palestine Liberation Organization. So the C.I.A. was not greatly pleased by this demonstration of the skills of Mossad.

By then Ames had returned to Washington, where his skills were now highly valued and where in the early '80s he became a regular briefer on the Middle East for President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz. Just as his influence within the policy pro-

cess was rising, Ames decided to make a quick return trip to the Middle East after an absence of five years. On April 18, 1983, he happened to be in Beirut, where he was killed in the spectacular bombing of the U.S. embassy. At the time of his death, he was a widely admired professional but unknown to the general public; he was also a devoted family man living in suburban calm of Reston, Va., and as far from the James Bond world of blood, sex and intrigue as can be imagined. He had made his career by carefully cultivated contacts with thoughtful persons in the Arab world, contacts achieved and deepened through his grasp of Arabic language and politics. He was “the good spy,” both in the sense of having developed the skills needed for high quality intelligence work and in the sense of showing a character that could inspire trust in the often murky corridors of Washington and the dark streets of Middle Eastern capitals. Bird has through careful research and extensive interviews with former officers of the C.I.A. built an absorbing account of Ames as an inconspicuous but not insignificant figure in the intelligence world of the Carter and Reagan administrations, a period when the attention of the intelligence agencies was beginning to turn from the once all-absorbing conflict with the Soviet Union to the more unstable and divided world of the Middle East.

But the larger question we need to answer is what guidance does this biography, which can be seen as merely a fragment of a complex and still unfinished history, give us as our government continues to spend blood, treasure and credibility on the struggles of the Middle East. First, it reminds us of certain constant features of these struggles. One is the difficulty of combining our perception of our own interests and of the needs of the region with the political demands and pressures created by our relationship with Israel, which is far from being a

client-state but is both a beneficiary and critic of U.S. policy.

Another is the problem of working within the political systems of the area, which are badly divided with shifting alliances and variable foreign connections. In the conflicts of the region, alliances are rarely stable and are nearly always limited by profound differences among the parties. The enemy of my enemy is likely to be both my enemy and my friend. The region which the United States wishes to stabilize and hopes to transform brings us into a world which makes Machiavelli seem both highly relevant and comparatively innocent. All this has greatly changed since the 1980s. It has only become more difficult.

Bird's book also gives us a good angle for understanding continuing divisions within the world of intelligence services. The longstanding division between analysis and operations runs through the C.I.A. and other agencies and produces different ways of thinking and evaluating as well as different, sometimes conflicting, priorities. Ames built his career on the operations side of the house but was in most ways more like analysts in his personal style. The conflict between those who rely on intelligence drawn from human sources ("spies") and those who rely on electronic methods of gathering information has a history, but it has recently been intensified by disclosures about the resources and activities of the National Security Agency. Ames and Bird clearly favor an analytic approach which emphasizes cultural, personal and historical factors which are not well captured by either electronic eavesdropping or by invasive operations on alien territory.

Ames's approach is more likely to be effective when the task confronting U.S. policy makers is to bring a conflict to an end through agreement to move towards peace and when it is no longer a matter of forcing the participants in local conflict to accept the results pro-

duced by America's use of overwhelming force. Bird sees Ames as a significant contributor to the peacemaking process in the Middle East. His portrayal of Ames is a valuable addition to the series of biographies he has devoted to more prominent shapers of U.S. policy since 1945, including J. Robert Oppenheimer, John McCloy,

McGeorge and William Bundy. Ames's problems are still largely our problems; his qualities of character and intellect are still what we need in intelligence work today.

JOHN P. LANGAN, S.J., is a senior research fellow on the Kennedy Institute of Ethics Core Faculty at the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

MARY CHRISTINE ATHANS

MOTHER MCAULEY'S VISION

WOMEN OF FAITH

The Chicago Sisters of Mercy and the Evolution of a Religious Community

By Mary Beth Fraser Connolly
Fordham University Press. 372p \$65

One need not be a Sister of Mercy to appreciate *Women of Faith*. Historian Mary Beth Frazer Connolly has done extensive archival work to bring to life the work of Mother Catherine McAuley's "daughters" since their arrival in Chicago in 1846. This volume is one of recent endeavors of women's religious congregations examining the *charism*, or animating spirit, of their founders in order to live out that spirit with authenticity in their various works of ministry in accord with the Second Vatican Council's "Perfectae Caritatis" ("The Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of Religious Life").

Although in-depth exploration of the history of individual congregations was given new impetus by Vatican II, it was the First Triennial Conference of the History of Women Religious in 1989 which became a catalyst for many congregations to network and

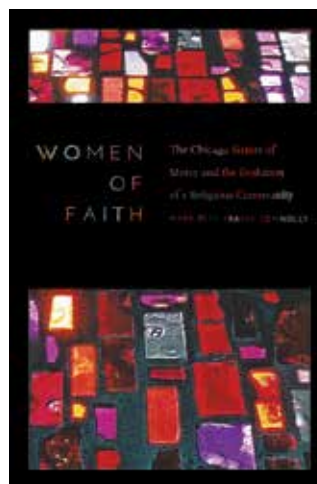
share research. Connolly's volume is another contribution to the substantial work accomplished in individual congregations.

When Mother McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy in Dublin in 1831 she rejected enclosure and her sisters became known as "the walking nuns" as they traveled the streets caring for the poor. She believed that when a new

convent was established it became independent. Although she continued to communicate with the new foundations, she was no longer their superior. When she died in 1841, her vision was continued by her sisters around the world.

The first Sisters of Mercy in the United States, led by Mother Frances Xavier Warde, settled in Pittsburgh in

1843. Three years later Warde brought five young sisters to Chicago at the invitation of Bishop William Quarter, the first bishop of the new diocese. The Chicago Mercys became the first religious community of women in that city. They established St. Xavier Academy, expanded now to St. Xavier University. In 1852 they opened Mercy Hospital, the beginning of their multiple ministries of mercy in the Chicago area.



Connolly's book is framed by the evolution of governance which the Sisters of Mercy developed in the United States: (1) Until 1929, each house was independent, as mentioned above. By the early 1900s there were eight independent Mercy communities in northern Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin. (2) The first merger in the United States in 1929 was known as "the amalgamation." This formed the umbrella group, the Sisters of Mercy of the Union. The eight foundations in the Midwest came together as the Chicago Province. (3) The second merger in 1991 formed the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. The Chicago Province was named the Chicago Regional Community. (4) By 2008, with declining membership and the need for sharing resources, the Chicago Regional Community joined five other groups—Auburn and Burlingame, California; Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Omaha; and Detroit—to form the new Sisters of Mercy West Midwest. The goal was to maintain Mercy *charism* and identity.

Connolly does not describe these governmental changes without also exploring the ministries of the Chicago Mercys in schools, hospitals and care for the poor, particularly women and children. Using letters, personal and public communications, the oral tradition and interviews with a variety of sisters, she describes the Mercy spirit as not dissimilar to "the walking nuns" of Mother McAuley's day.

The author's descriptions of the impact of the Sister Formation Conference and the renewal after Vatican II will be recognizable by sisters from most active religious congregations in the United States: return to baptismal names; moving to smaller communities, houses and apartments; experimentation with the religious habit and with new forms of prayer; ministry in other forms of education or health care including pastoral work in parishes or hospitals, teaching in public

institutions or as advocates for those in need. She discusses declining numbers of vowed members, but also the gift of Mercy Associates who bring the Mercy *charism* to life in a unique way. She briefly includes more recent challenges including the Apostolic Visitation and the Doctrinal Assessment of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

As one who is not a Sister of Mercy, I would have appreciated knowing more about Mother McAuley, the origins of Dublin's House on Baggot Street and the challenges she met from the hierarchy in Dublin and Rome in forming her new group which eschewed the idea of enclosure. Similar religious groups "in her neighborhood" like Honora Nagel's Presentation Sisters, Mary Aikenhead's Religious Sisters of Charity and Mary Frances Clark's Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (only an informal group until they arrived in the United States), offer us a view of the spirit of young women of that era who were part of the missionary thrust which blossomed after the Catholic Church had almost been destroyed in Europe during the French Revolution and Napoleon. Were they the forerunners of the Peace Corps or Jesuit Volunteer Corps of the following century? Or perhaps new forms of religious life in the 21st?

JASON BERRY

BELIEF IN BROTHERHOOD

MALCOLM X AT OXFORD UNION Racial Politics in a Global Era

By Saladin Ambar
Oxford University Press. 240p \$29.95

Malcolm X's ideological journey from the black separatist Nation of Islam to his standing as an independent activist, renewed by a sense of Islam as a global faith, animates this probing,

It might also have been helpful to know that the Mercy Rule was based on that of St. Augustine. In addition, exactly what was the Fourth Vow of Service and did it exist from the beginning? I found it mentioned briefly only later in the book. I was curious as to what Connolly meant by "educators, whether religious, lay or secular." In the Epilogue, Connolly includes important information on the Catholic Church in the United States. It would have been useful for that to be included in earlier sections for the benefit of those who are not familiar with that material. I loved the quotations from Mother McAuley and wondered whether "No Sister of Mercy is a finished product until her death" was one of her gems of wisdom.

Connolly's volume is a genuine contribution to research on women's religious congregations. It will be of interest not only to Sisters of Mercy and other religious, but to all exploring post-Vatican II renewal and the possibilities that exist for the church in the 21st century.

MARY CHRISTINE ATHANS, B.V.M., is professor emerita at The Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity of the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota and adjunct faculty at Catholic Theological Union and Loyola University Chicago. Her most recent book is *In Quest of the Jewish Mary: The Mother of Jesus in History, Theology and Spirituality*.

readable book by Saladin Ambar, an assistant professor of political science at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa.

Ambar's focus is Malcolm's 1964 appearance at the Oxford Union Society of Oxford University in a debate on race relations. The precise topic of the debate was a phrase from Senator Barry Goldwater's speech that year in accepting the Republican presidential nomination: "Extremism in

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Fr. Chi Ngo, S.J.

February 27 – March 1
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*Non-silent Retreat for
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John McKellar, Ph.D. and
Fr. Robert McKay

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32nd Annual Retreat for
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*Silent Retreat for Wom-
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Fr. Tony Sauer, S.J. and
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the defense of liberty is no vice; moderation in the pursuit of justice is no virtue."

Malcolm X arrived in an England that had barely begun to emerge as the postcolonial, multicolored society we see today. In the American South, a lethal white backlash to civil rights demonstrations was jarring the national psyche. President Lyndon Johnson's 1964 campaign to secure an elected presidency, a year after he succeeded the assassinated John F. Kennedy, used Goldwater's lines to portray him as a reckless extremist. Johnson won in a landslide.

Goldwater's de facto equation of extremism as a virtue in defense of liberty made for a riveting exchange at the Oxford debating society. As the author points out, the university mirrored a

national elite that had lost its empire. "As the institution became less white, less male, and less privileged in the postwar period," he writes, "the politics of the nation and the university were compelled to address these changes, to grapple with the extremist sentiments against this new field of race relations."

On his trip to Mecca, given fine grain detail by Alex Haley in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, the diversity of peoples within Islam sparked an awakening that led to his break from the separatist Muslims in America.

But where Martin Luther King Jr. held nonviolence as "a nonnegotiable principle," writes Ambar, "For Malcolm X, nonviolence was premised upon reciprocity—a form of equivalency in moral conduct."

He drew applause in the debate for saying, "I believe in Allah, I believe in Muhammad as the apostle of Allah, I believe in brotherhood, of all men, but I don't believe in brotherhood with anybody who's not ready to practice brotherhood with our people."

It is hard to imagine a remark like that in the coverage of today's embattled map of Islam. But Malcolm was waging a war of words with public opinion in America, and indeed Western countries wherever he could attract press. He had a wide viewfinder on global events.

In the Congo, the independence leader Patrice Lumumba won election as prime minister only to be killed after speaking out against Western control of the region's vast mineral wealth. C.I.A. historian Timothy Weiner, in *Legacy of Ashes*, reports that the CIA paid \$250,000 to Lumumba adversary Joseph Mobutu, who had him kidnapped and shot dead. Mobutu as dictator went on to steal billions from American aid as a reliable ally in fighting Communism.

At the time, Malcolm X had only hunches about how and why Lumumba died; but in the revolutionary aftershocks of a destabilized country, Malcolm rained his scorn on "American-trained pilots...dropping bombs on villages where they have no defense whatsoever against such planes, blowing to bits Black women—Congolese women, Congolese children, Congolese babies. This is extremism. But it is never referred to as



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extremism, because it is endorsed by the West, it's financed by America."

Ambar might have profitably treated Malcolm's rhetoric as an echo of George Orwell's famous essay, "Politics and the English Language," on the distortions of language in service of political ends. Nevertheless, the author brings a keen interpretive edge to bear on what Malcolm X achieved at the Oxford event, his oratory drawing the audience toward an understanding of the historical memory that he insisted on as a fundamental in discussing politics. The irony of Goldwater's language hangs heavy with each brush stroke in Ambar's textured portrait:

For Malcolm, extremism in the defense of liberty was a rational act. That black people had to generate explanations for its necessity was the truly 'radical' conception. In this way, Malcolm saw the reality of American, and

indeed, global race relations as part of a system premised upon absurdity, a kind of color-infused, surrealistic world that offered you the back of the hand if you described it for what it was.

A year before his assassination in Harlem by three Nation of Islam gunmen, Malcolm X impressed his initially skeptical audience at Oxford with a lightning rod intelligence and flashes of humor. Professor Ambar includes a transcript that makes for an absorbing read in its own right. At one point, Malcolm makes reference to a dinner that he had had the night before the debate at which a young woman told him:

Well, I'm surprised that you're not what I expected," and I said what do you mean? [Laughter.] And she said, "Well, I was looking for your horns." {Laughter},

and so I told her I have them, but I keep them hidden [Laughter] unless someone draws them out.

We can only wonder where Malcolm X's journey might have led had he not been murdered for speaking truth to a power structure of racial separatists. He never became an apostle of integration; he wanted justice first and last for people of color. In a poignant epilogue, Saladin Ambar writes of the impact Malcolm had on his generation of young black males who "took on new names—if not because of Malcolm, then at least with his ghostly assistance...Many of us made knowing Malcolm a kind of vocation."

Malcolm X at Oxford Union is a testament to the depth of that vocation.

JASON BERRY is the author of *Amazing Grace: With Charles Evers in Mississippi, and other works, most recently, Render unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church.*

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Following a Friend

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JAN. 25, 2015

Readings: Jon 3:1–10; Ps 25:4–9; 1 Cor 7:29–31; Mk 1:14–20

“Follow me and I will make you fish for people” (Mk 1:17)

When is the best time to repent? Now. Now is the time. Now is always the time. Who knows whether there will be time if you wait? This seems to be the approach of the Ninevites, who appear in the prophetic book of Jonah as the most eager of penitents. Scholars do not see Jonah as a historical account of a mission to Nineveh, but a didactic tale, even a satire, in which irony abounds. It features a recalcitrant prophet, who would rather see the Gentiles properly destroyed than saved, and sailors and denizens of a city noted for its evil and cruelty, who cannot wait to repent of their sins to a God they do not know.

Jonah is notorious for offering the pithiest prophetic message in the Old Testament, only five words in Hebrew: “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” The same verb used here to describe the coming destruction of Nineveh is used to pronounce the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 19:21, 25 and 29. But its use by Jonah worked on the Ninevites! Upon hearing Jonah’s message, the people of Nineveh “believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.” The king of Nineveh becomes a model of true repentance, as he “covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes” and called on his people to “turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands.”

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

God’s gracious response to Nineveh puts Jonah’s petulant attitude in perspective: “When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.”

It is a humorous story, but it illuminates God’s universal compassion and mercy. Forgiveness is a sign of God’s power, cast in sharp relief here with the weakness of Jonah’s human pettiness.

God’s call to repentance in the particular case of Nineveh, however, is a universal call that knows no bounds except the human response: will we respond when the chance is offered? Paul called the Corinthians to see the world in its eschatological reality, “for the present form of this world is passing away.” While the apocalyptic end has not yet arrived, Paul’s warning retains its bite today, since all of those whom he first warned in Corinth had to face their own physical deaths. Whether the kingdom comes in power during our lives or we face our physical death as those who came before us did, we must reckon that now is the time of repentance. What other time is there?

Repentance, as the Ninevites demonstrated, is a simple process: turn from sin and turn to God. It is a process of letting go and mourning, like Augustine, the loss of the cruel comfort of sin. But we ought to concentrate more fully on what we gain, namely, a

friend who guides us to the highest good, who calls us to the kingdom of God.

Jesus offers this guidance, announcing that “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” It is also personal guidance, for he calls Simon and his brother Andrew as they are “casting a net into the sea.... And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people.’

And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. Immediately he called them; and they left their father



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Walk with Jesus along the seashore. Are you willing to repent and follow Jesus now?

Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.” Repentance here is less about giving up a former life, though it is that, than about gaining a new life with Jesus.

The immediacy of repentance in Mark is also on display, for the new disciples respond without question and follow Jesus. In this way it is no different than the story on display in Jonah when he brings his message to Nineveh. It seems strange, perhaps unbelievable, that people would respond to God so quickly, but there is a reality buttressing these quick decisions. When the truth has been found, and the time is right, why not turn to the truth in fullness? Why not repent now? Why not follow now?

Tell Me the Good News

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), FEB. 1, 2015

Readings: Dt 18:15–20; Ps 95:1–9; 1 Cor 7:32–35; Mk 1:21–28

“What is this? A new teaching—with authority!” (Mk 1:27)

We are all formally students for some time in our lives, and it is best to remain informal students throughout our lives, for there is no point at which there is not something we can learn. At the same time, most of us function as teachers at many points in our lives, some of us professionally but most of us casually, guiding and directing people in ways that might even escape us. We teach by how we live, how we treat people, how we respond under stress, how we reprimand a child, how we help a neighbor, as well as by more concrete and direct ways of teaching.

Some of us, by training and vocation, teach religion and theology, and it is those of us engaged in this vocation who must always remain students in our area of expertise, for Jesus says: “But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah” (Mt 23:9–10). This teaching is directed at all Christians, but it is a difficult teaching for those called upon to be teachers and instructors, for it is easy to forget that in the things of God we are always students.

It is telling, and especially humbling for biblical scholars, to remember that Jesus did not choose his apostles from among the biblical interpreters or experts in Jewish *halakha* (roughly equivalent to canon lawyers today) but

from among the fishermen. How could fishermen be teachers in the Bible and Jewish law when they had not been formally trained? What did they know that the experts did not?

What the fishermen knew, or were willing to encounter, was the only true subject: God. The unschooled fishermen knew Jesus, spent time with Jesus and were willing to learn from Jesus what they did not know. This is why, as Ben F. Meyer wrote years ago, “professional interpreters appear to differ markedly from commonsense readers and, on technical aspects of interpretation...they do. In other respects, however, e.g., encounter with the text, report on encounter, critique of truth and value, the superiority of the professionals is random and unreliable.” It was not technical expertise that Jesus sought in his apostles but the willingness to encounter the Word of God as life-changing and life-giving.

It was the encounter with truth that led the students, the crowds of ordinary people in Galilee, Judea and elsewhere, to throng around the teacher Jesus; they responded as people hungry to learn the deepest reality about God and themselves. So, “when the Sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” The religious experts, the scribes, are mentioned, though it seems they are not present, as a contrast to Jesus’ authority. Perhaps the experts hung back, wary of how

Jesus’ teaching might affect their livelihood or authority, or because they disagreed that Jesus’ authority was grounded in the Scriptures or God.

Yet, Jesus’ final act in the Capernaum synagogue is the demonstration of the divine ground of his teaching authority, for “just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, ‘What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.’” Jesus healed the man of the unclean spirit, and the people were again amazed, referring to this

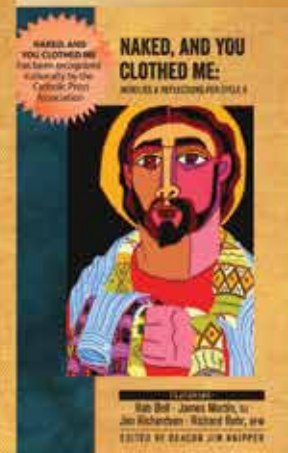
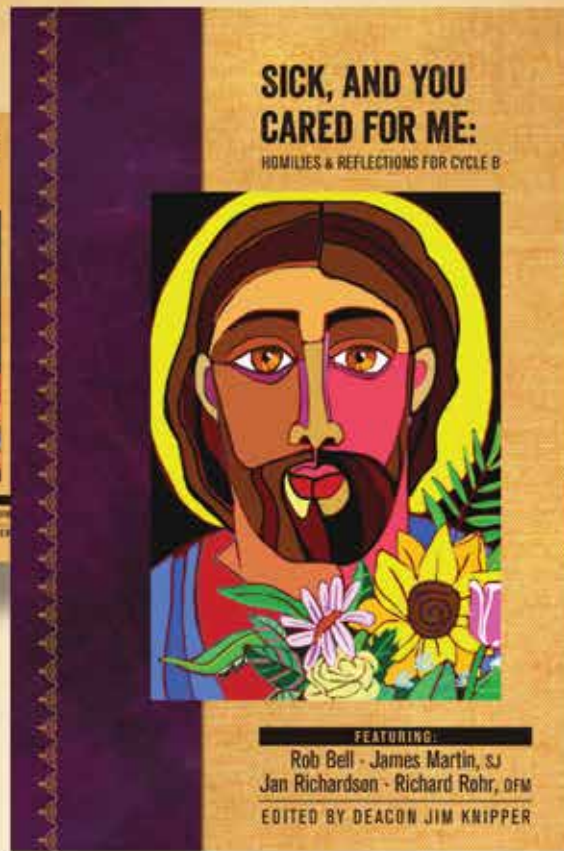
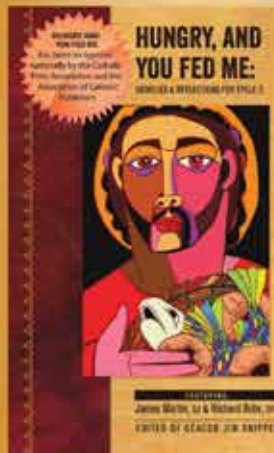
PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Imagine yourself in the Capernaum synagogue. Are you prepared to learn from the one true teacher?

action of Jesus as a “teaching”: “They kept on asking one another, ‘What is this? A new teaching—with authority!’” It is God’s presence and power that is the lesson not only to learn but to encounter.

It is necessary to have teachers in all areas of knowledge, and this includes theology and biblical studies. Expertise and properly ordered authority are essential for all fields. But ultimately we are all students of the one teacher, whose authority is ordered to our salvation and joy. From this school we never graduate; this teacher is always guiding us. This education is perfected for our final purpose: to know God.

JOHN W. MARTENS



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