

# America



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## God and Taxes

GARY A. ANDERSON · JOSEPH J. DUNN

**O**n March 28, **America** and St. Joseph's Seminary welcomed Antonio Spadaro, S.J., editor of the Italian Jesuit journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, to the Sheen Center for Thought and Culture in New York. You will recall that Father Spadaro was the person who interviewed Pope Francis last year on behalf of *Civiltà* and **America** as well as 14 other Jesuit journals around the world. That interview, which dominated the news cycle in the United States, fully inaugurated the Age of Francis.

In the 18 months since those heady days, the pope has emerged as the most credible public figure on the planet, the subject of constant speculation and the source of not a few surprises. As Kathleen Parker observed in *The Washington Post*, Francis is the E. F. Hutton pope: when he speaks, people listen. That has been true of most popes, but Pope Francis' unique elixir of credibility, authority and simplicity turns almost every papal pronouncement and gesture into media gold.

Yet it is not just the media that are paying rapt attention, says Father Spadaro. Catholics throughout the world are watching with hope and awe, most of them asking just what the pope is really doing. Father Spadaro told his New York audience that this quintessentially American question, "What's the bottom line?" is actually the wrong question.

Pope Francis does not think in results, he said, but in processes. In other words, the pope is setting in motion a series of processes through which we can better discern the mission of the church in the modern world, but he doesn't have specific, predetermined outcomes in mind. That is the key, says Father Spadaro.

Sure, the pope is working on systematic reform of the policies and procedures of the Roman Curia, but when it comes to the big questions that occupy most of our water-cooler conversations, the pope doesn't have

easy answers, let alone answers he seeks to impose. He wants, rather, to create a culture and a process in which we can better discern the Holy Spirit's answers to those questions, not necessarily in an absolute way, but in a way that makes sense in our own time.

Many commentators call this a radically new way of proceeding. But is it? On the one hand, as a friend recently observed, no U.S. corporation would hire a chief executive officer who did not have goals and a plan to realize them, let alone a man who would publicly admit as much. On the other hand, the church is not a corporation and the pope is not a C.E.O.

If anything, says Father Spadaro, the pope believes that the Holy Spirit is the church's C.E.O. and the pope is more like the chief operating officer—a big deal, to be sure, but the number two at most. In that sense, what the pope is doing is not entirely new, but rather the ancient way of the church. In other words, the pope's "process" is actually a pilgrimage and, as every pilgrim knows, what happens in every step along the path is often more important than the destination.

That way of looking at things, of course, is counterintuitive for everyone but people of faith. And that is what the pope is ultimately inviting us into: an act of faith. But let's not mistake faith for certainty. They are not the same. In fact, they are opposites. Certainty is found in finite spaces, while the subject of faith is eternal.

As the pope has written, we cannot "allow our hope to be dimmed by facile answers and solutions which block our progress, 'fragmenting' time and changing it into space. Time is always much greater than space. Space hardens processes, whereas time propels toward the future and encourages us to go forward in hope." A people of faith does not possess "a light that dissipates all of our shadows, but rather a light that guides our steps in the night; and this is enough for the journey." **MATT MALONE, S.J.**

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### From Researchers, Prudence

Leading scientists are seeking to put the brakes on research that could lead down the road to “designer babies,” that boogeyman of reproductive technologies that once seemed far off. Prompted by rumors that laboratories in China have begun using powerful new genome-editing technologies on human embryos, two groups of prominent biologists and bioethicists have called for a moratorium on human germ-line modification. A technique developed in 2012 has made it easier and cheaper to alter human DNA in sperm, eggs and embryos, modifications that would be inherited by children and future generations, with unforeseeable and potentially dangerous consequences.

In an article published online in the journal *Science* on March 19, one of these groups raised concerns that the gene-editing technique—which can be used to cure genetic disease as well as enhance traits like intelligence or beauty—could be applied before its safety is adequately assessed. The authors support continued laboratory research into the method but draw the line at clinical (that is, human) experimentation, at least until there is “open discussion of the merits and risks of human genome modification” by scientists and the broader public. A group writing in *Nature* (3/12) goes further, seeking voluntary agreement among scientists to stop all human germ-line research.

The scientific community has sometimes been unfairly characterized in religious circles as being unfettered by ethical constraints or as driven by a desire for progress at any price. But science never operates in a vacuum but rather, as this invitation to dialogue demonstrates, within a web of personal beliefs and societal values. Commending the prudence of these scientists and acknowledging that people of faith do not have a monopoly on morality would be a fruitful way for the church to enter into this vital debate that will affect the future of human life and reproduction.

### ‘Scraping Old Wounds’

Even though the Civil War ended in 1865, every so often some lingering conflict rises to the surface, demanding to be refought. The most recent battle is the court case of *Walker v. Sons of Confederate Veterans*, a dispute over whether an application for a state-issued specialty license plate featuring the Confederate flag was unlawfully denied in Texas. The state Department of Motor Vehicles had denied permission in 2011 for such a plate to be issued, saying that it is “offensive.” The Confederate heritage group claims the denial violates the right to free speech; Texas insists that it is not a First Amendment question at all, as the license plate

represents government speech.

As the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in late March, groups on either side of the issue made their cases in the court of public opinion. Sherrilyn Ifill, president of the N.A.A.C.P. Legal Defense and Educational Fund, called the Southern flag a “powerful symbol of the oppression of black people.” Ben Jones, spokesperson for the Sons of Confederate Veterans and a former Democratic congressman from Georgia, claimed the Confederate flag “represents the independent spirit of the South, no matter what race you are,” and that the group is “not a bunch of racists. It’s a group that longs for reconciliation and progress, but will not forget the past.”

If the goal is “reconciliation and progress,” this is an odd way of going about it. As former Texas Gov. Rick Perry states, “We don’t need to be scraping old wounds.” It would be best if the court heeded that caveat.

### Honoring Jean Vanier

“It takes a long time to move from violence to tenderness,” Jean Vanier wrote in a letter accepting the \$1.7 million 2015 Templeton Prize on March 11. Mr. Vanier, the founder of L’Arche, a network of homes for people with disabilities and their caregivers, was speaking about Pauline, a woman who joined his community in 1970. Epileptic, with one leg and one arm paralyzed, Pauline was “filled with violence and rage” when he first met her, but over time her caregivers realized her behavior was a cry for the attention that comes with friendship. Slowly her violence gave way to tenderness as her caregivers spent more time with her and took time to listen to her.

Pauline’s journey from violence to tenderness is one that we are all called to follow as Christians. The genius of Mr. Vanier’s spirituality is that he locates that journey in the encounter between persons. Only when we truly meet another individual will our hearts grow fuller and more loving. People with disabilities offer a special opportunity for such encounters because they “are essentially people of the heart,” Mr. Vanier says.

In the press conference announcing the Templeton award, Mr. Vanier demonstrated what these encounters look like. When one young man with a disability took the microphone, Mr. Vanier leaned in and focused intently on the questioner, a broad smile on his face. It was as if no one else were in the room. Mr. Vanier hopes the \$1.7 million gift will help create more spaces for people to learn from individuals with disabilities. “Our society will really become human as we discover that the strong need the weak,” he says, “just as the weak need the strong.”

# Martyrdom Revisited

We live in an era of new martyrs and new questions about the nature of martyrdom. In Libya, in mid-February, the windswept beach was a scene befitting a tourist poster—except for the line of kneeling men in orange suits and their anonymous executioners wrapped in black: 21 Coptic Christians marched to their deaths. These were simple workingmen who died with “Jesus” on their lips, according to accounts that sprang up on the Internet.

The tale of the murdered American James Foley has undergone a few revisions since the dreadful news of his execution—and the gruesome video that documented it—was released by those who had for years held him captive. The story of the death of Mr. Foley, first depicted as a devout, courageous Catholic graduate of Marquette University who kept the faith to the end, became muddled by the surprising revelation that at the last he may have yielded to his captors’ coercive demands to convert.

It probably surprised the people of El Salvador, who long ago informally canonized Óscar Romero, that it took the Vatican more than two decades to confirm his martyrdom. But in his death, as in his life, Romero was swept up in larger political and ideological forces. Within the Curia his cause had been “blocked,” and his martyrdom denied.

He could not be a true Catholic martyr, some argued; he was merely the victim of a political assassination. He preached agitation, not the Gospel, others charged.

According to church tradition, martyrdom cannot be declared unless the victim was targeted out of hatred for the church and refused an opportunity to renounce his or her faith. That would seem to put a natural limit on the number of people who may be considered martyrs, even as during these troubled times, according to some accounts, thousands of Christians die each year because of the simple fact of their faith. Indeed, that understanding of martyrdom has come to appear sadly deficient. How else, if not as martyrdom, is one to describe, for instance, the self-sacrifice of a Maximilian Kolbe? In Auschwitz, Father Kolbe offered his life in exchange for that of another Polish prisoner when Nazi soldiers came looking for someone to murder in a reprisal execution.

This year, the readings for the Sunday before the 35th anniversary of Óscar Romero’s martyrdom, March 24, included the Gospel verse the archbishop put to such eloquent and prescient use in his last homily: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just

a grain of wheat, but if it dies it produces much fruit” (Jn 12:24). Óscar Romero said then: let them take my life, I offer it up freely; he would be raised up in his people. He had already given over his life on behalf of the *campesinos*, catechists, union organizers and academics of El Salvador and, yes, even on behalf of the rebels and landholders and soldiers, too. In this instance, the blood of the martyr is not just the seed of the church but of justice.

If we might recover the original meaning of the word—that is, to understand martyrs as witnesses to their faith—and join to it Kolbe’s and Romero’s model of self-offering, especially on behalf of others, we could become more generous in our understanding of martyrdom. Surely just as important as the way martyrs died is how they lived, the witness they gave to their faith by their lives (understanding that even our saints are far from perfect beings).

Whether James Foley died a Catholic martyr, saying the name of Jesus, or murmuring a forced prayer to Allah, he died true to his vocation as a journalist, a commitment that grew from his Catholic upbringing: to be, like Óscar Romero, a voice for the voiceless, to tell the stories of the ignored to the indifferent, that they might be shaken from their indolence.

And these 21 men from Egypt, they did not go to Libya and to their deaths because of their faith, but because of their families. Did they understand the danger they were exposing themselves to in the chaos of Libya? It was a risk they considered worth accepting; they had been offering themselves up long before they reached that beach by the Mediterranean.

Without the church’s demand for justice and human dignity, Romero would not have been a threat that required stamping out. Indeed, Óscar Romero was killed out of hatred of the faith, dying a martyr’s death—not because he was shot through the heart while saying Mass, but because he dared to make real the Gospel demands for dignity and justice on behalf of the defenseless and marginalized in El Salvador.

And while some may fret over liberation theology in discerning the nature of Romero’s martyrdom, the liberation that he offered was meant for both oppressed and oppressor, a gift for all. It was the Beatitudes, not revolution, that compelled him.



## REPLY ALL

### Prisoners' Rights

Re "Peace and Toilet Paper" (Editorial, 3/23): When we incarcerate people, we deprive them not only of their freedom, but of rights that you and I take for granted. Many well-meaning citizens have told me that when someone commits a crime, they give up all their rights: the right to safety, health and even life. This is not true. The incarcerated do give up their right to freedom, but all their other rights now become the duty of the state to provide. Yet in most jails and prisons, health and dental care are usually provided by the lowest bidder.

"Peace and Toilet Paper" is lacking in hard data—only anecdotal information is used. This is largely because the data that would allow a citizen to tabulate how many inmates die in prison due to abuse or neglect is not collected. We really have no idea how bad it is.

As a tax-paying citizen, I find it unconscionable to contract out safety, health and dental services. We should take full responsibility to provide these services for the incarcerated. If we cannot afford it, then we should not be locking up so many people.

(DEACON) CHRIS SCHWARTZ  
*Beltsville, Md.*

*Deacon Schwartz is the coordinator for ministry to the incarcerated for the Archdiocese of Washington.*

### Conversation Stopper

Re "No White Man Is Innocent," by Nathan Schneider (3/23): My problem with the use of the label "white privilege" isn't that I think that there is no deep, systemic racism (there is); rather, it's that the concept is thrown around far too easily in conversation, often in a way that cuts short serious debate. It's become a kind of "gotcha" device to thwart someone who is engaging in honest dialogue. This creates resentment and serves no real purpose. I've long thought that search

for ego-renewal animates many of my fellow progressives, who spend too little time creating bridges and developing cross-racial strategies for change. Whites and blacks should be unafraid to weigh in on issues of racial justice.

VINCE KILLORAN  
*Online Comment*

### We Must Weep

It seems there is incredibly strong resistance by many of us Caucasians to admit the existence of a collective guilt arising from the more than 300 years of slavery and racial discrimination against African-Americans in the United States. This is undoubtedly what is called a social sin that cannot be forgiven unless a real conversion happens. As William Stringfellow said, weeping because of the pain inflicted and the pain of guilt felt may be just the beginning of our social redemption. If the comments on this article represent the sentiments of our white Catholic population, we are still far from realizing the magnitude of our collective sin and thus far from redemption.

ROBERTO BLUM  
*Online Comment*

### Children at Risk

"Jailing Families" (Editorial, 3/2) speaks to the failure of our immigration system to understand the perilous situations that drive children and families to risk their lives seeking refuge in our land of freedom and opportunity. Hoping to escape poverty, violence and war, many wind up in our detention centers.

These children are precious to God. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." What is God revealing about the value and dignity of children? When God enfleshed himself in human nature as the infant Jesus, he became totally dependent on Mary and Joseph as well as on the religious and civic cultures of the day. I suggest that we look at our own culture to assess how it nurtures children. Children are nurtured primarily by

loving adults, who provide security, stability, sustenance and hope. Culturally we support this trust through decisions and investments that affect families and children. Do we invest in all schools to provide equal opportunities for every child? Do parents receive the support they need?

In the Philippines a young girl in her devastating suffering tearfully asked Pope Francis, "Why did God let this happen to us?" The pope could answer only with his own bewilderment at this question while he embraced the tearful child. "Certain realities in life we only see through eyes that are cleansed through our tears," the pope said. Conscientious citizens may ask their legislators, "Why do the children of the world suffer?"

LORETTA SULLIVAN, O.P.  
*Columbus, Ohio*

### Parental Choice

Re "Vaccine Wars," by Michael Rozier, S.J. (3/9): The topic of vaccines is not a black or white issue. Most parents who seek an alternate schedule, "clean vaccines" or single-dose vaccines are seen as troublemakers rather than parents who are aware of vaccine injuries and want to diminish any potential injury for their child.

Why no mention of the legitimate links between vaccines and injury? I was a "go-along" mom with my first child, who received mercury vaccines without full disclosure to me prior to vaccination and then, after two days of round-the-clock diarrhea and vomiting, the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, "since we were in the office." What did I know? My son has severe allergies, eczema and, yes, autism. Proven link? No. But do you think I was going to give my younger son the same triple-dose vaccine?

Parents have every right to know about the Big Pharma business that is the vaccine program. Can you imagine what the positive impact would be on our children's cognitive, physical and

## **f** STATUS UPDATE

In the blog post "A Christian Response to Alzheimer's" (In All Things, 3/18), Sidney Callahan describes the suffering and challenges experienced by those with the degenerative disease and their caretakers and asks what spiritual preparation they might seek. Readers respond.

Even through the painful process of dementia, people are loveable and need to be treated with dignity. I suggest that anyone with this diagnosis work with family and friends to make a "memory book." Using the skills of surface reading and looking at pictures, which are usually preserved well

emotional health if doctor's prescribed probiotics, healthful food and provided reliable and consistent support for breastfeeding?

JACQUELINE O'BRIEN  
*Online Comment*

### **Greater Good**

As a 63-year-old grandmother with an autoimmune disease of 30-plus years, I have to take a medication to suppress my immune system. As a result, my disease is in remission; the side effects, however, are horrific. I am extremely susceptible to life-threatening infections, including pneumonia and tuberculosis. I must arrange my life around potential exposure from my beloved children and grandchildren, in addition to a constant anxiety that I will be exposed, even at Mass.

So to all who refuse to vaccinate, I am here to say you are putting lives at risk with your misguided intentions of protecting your children. I believe the government should require certain vaccinations as mandatory for the greater good of our society as a whole, especially the most vulnerable among us: the very young who cannot be vaccinated until a certain age, the elderly and any others who, like me, are at risk.

SARAH WEIGERT  
*Online Comment*

into the progression of Alzheimer's, memories can be triggered, attention can be focused on something pleasant and meaningful, production of meaningful language can be stimulated, and caregivers can be reminded of the dignified life of a patient who is severely disabled by memory loss.

LAURA O'KEEFFE

I recommend taking St. Albert the Great as a patron (both persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's and family and friends). He will surely care. Albert, doctor of the Church, teacher of St. Thomas and the man who "had read and knew everything," died with

Alzheimer's or some other illness that caused all his memory to disappear.

BEN EMBLEY

My father died from Alzheimer's. He was a brilliant chemical engineer. It was a painful "long goodbye," as Patty Davis called it in her book about President Reagan. The miracle of it was that in the end, after he had forgotten everything, he could still say the Lord's Prayer with me and tell me he loved me. He taught me that our true essence is love, and that will never go away. Love is who we really are, and love never dies.

CYNTHIA ANDERSEN FORD

### **Beneath the Beauty**

The old adage, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," is surely evident in how Matt Malone, S.J., views the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (Of Many Things, 2/9) compared with how this reader views it.

Father Malone sees ageless beauty that has stood "among the rubble of man's broken dreams...since 400 A.D." I see a symbol of the church's blatant dis-

regard for the broken dreams of the victims of sexual abuse by members of the clergy. When Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston resigned in disgrace after the revelations of rampant sexual abuse and his role in the subsequent hierarchical cover-up, the cardinal was relocated to Rome, where he was awarded the parish of Santa Maria Maggiore. Outer beauty often hides the rot beneath.

ANNE KERRIGAN  
*West Islip, N.Y.*

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# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

U.S. CHURCH

## Catholic Marriage: On the Rocks Or on the Rebound?



**MARRIAGE COUNSELORS.** Jeff and Alice Heinzen arrive at the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family last October.

**T**he number of new Catholic marriages in the United States is at its lowest point since 1965. Statistics from Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate show that while there were over 420,000 Catholic weddings in 1970, that number has dwindled to just over 154,000 in the year 2014.

"There's no definitive answer" for this trend, according to Mark Gray, a senior research associate and poll director at the center.

"We're seeing an increase in cohabitation," which can "create a hurdle to receiving the sacrament of marriage, depending on the parish or diocese's policies," Gray said. "There's also the notion of a destination wedding trumping the traditional notion of getting married within the church."

Tim Staples, director of apologetics at Catholic Answers in El Cajon, Calif., told CNS that "though a particular bishop may grant permission for a Catholic to be married outside of an actual Catholic church, the law of the church does not permit it, ordinarily speaking.

"For Catholics, there must be an official representative of the church present [or a proper dispensation given] in order for there to be a valid marriage, or, we could say, for one to be married 'in the church,'" he said.

The United States also sees "a very large share [of annulments] that occur in the church globally," according to Gray. However, even the United States is seeing a lower number of annulments, which have dropped from 60,691 in 1985, the earliest data available, to 18,558 last year. "Divorce is becoming less common" in the United States, according to Gray. "In aggregate terms, fewer marriages means fewer divorces."

Despite these numbers, Gray remains optimistic. "We've historically seen changes in the past...much like the baby-boomer generation. Things were different before World War II.

Mass attendance was down, as were baptisms and [sacramental] marriage rates, but the baby-boomer generation saw a time of cultural change, so it's difficult to predict what's going to happen."

With regard to young people in the church, Gray said that "millennials are a little more traditional, a little more romantic and more interested in marrying in the church."

Last October, Jeff and Alice Heinzen, a married couple from

Wisconsin, served as auditors to the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family. Alice is director of the Office for Marriage and Family Life in the Diocese of La Crosse and Jeff is the president of McDonell Catholic Schools in Chippewa Falls.

One of the several "takeaway" messages of the synod for American Catholics, according to the Heinzens, is "to remain accountable to the truths that come from God [when it comes to marriage]. We must never stray or be led away from the Gospel message when we deal with families."

"Perhaps the greatest challenge [to marriage] both here and abroad," they wrote in a joint email, "is the triumph of self-reliance over self-sacrifice. Today's culture values independence over interdependence. The need to commit oneself to another in marriage makes little sense when the perceived outcome is 'me' and not 'we.'"

However, like Gray, the Heinzens also see a cultural renewal emerging on the Catholic marriage front. “One of the most positive cultural trends that we see is a shift in catechesis from a child-centered focus to a parent-centered focus,” they said. “This trend al-

lows parishes to utilize the basic desire found in most parents’ hearts to provide the very best for their children.... This shift in the catechetical approach is bearing great results because parents are learning how to become primary educators for their children.”

HAITI

## Education Is Key to Recovery

**B**ishop Launay Saturne of Jacmel has a vision that he believes could change the future of Haiti. He wants to build partnerships between Catholic parishes in other countries and Catholic schools in his diocese—modeled on the medical missions that many parishes in developed nations already have established in Haiti.

“We need direct help. We’re not asking for money. But we want people to come and get involved, because the children cannot learn. The teachers are not being paid. The schools are in bad shape,” he said.

Haiti’s schools are a far cry from those of the neighboring Dominican Republic, let alone those of more developed countries: Textbooks and basic supplies are hard to come by; few teachers have more than a ninth-grade education; buildings are in need of repair; equipment is virtually nil.

“To evangelize I have to do it through reinforcement of the human spirit. For me to do so, I have to do it through education. It’s the only way,” Bishop Saturne said.

Haitians 25 years and older have on average 4.9 years of education, and only 29 percent attended secondary school. “We have a population where the majority of people are unemployed,” explained Archbishop Guire Poulard of Port-au-Prince.

Haiti’s 2010 earthquake exacted a major toll on educational facilities.

In some communities as many as 90 percent of students lost their schools, many of which have yet to be rebuilt. Others, like Christ the King School in



**HELP AND HOPE.** Sister Augusta Ernest, principal at St. Martin de Porres School in Hinche, Haiti.

the capital, conduct some classes under corrugated metal awnings inside the shell of the destroyed parish church.

Help for schools must come from outside sources because the government provides little funding for education. Ninety percent of primary schools are private, operated by religious organizations, nongovernmental organizations and community groups, according to the U.S. Agency for

International Development.

The World Bank reports that 24 percent of Haitians live in abject poverty. After the initial response to the earthquake emergency, Catholic Relief Services refocused its efforts on human development. Jeff McIntosh, deputy country representative for programming in Haiti for Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops’ overseas relief and development agency, said that a lack of basic services—like disposal of waste, including human waste—hinders advancement. He explained that the problems Haiti is facing “predate the earthquake,” adding that “many people say it wasn’t the earthquake that caused all the damage,” but poverty. C.R.S. has turned to the agricultural sector to help boost livelihoods. Coffee and cocoa are two crops that can bring much-needed income to growers, McIntosh said.

In the background of Haiti’s education and development challenges lies a simmering political crisis. Opposition leaders cite President Michel Martelly’s inability to live up to campaign promises to remake Haiti’s image in the wake of the earthquake. A long disagreement over election rules between the president and a group of opposition senators led Parliament to dissolve in January and Prime Minister Laurent Lamothe to resign, leaving Martelly to rule by decree.

The announcement on March 13 by Haiti’s electoral council that long-overdue elections for Parliament and president will be held this year may quell protests that have been occurring since October.

Archbishop Poulard said he viewed the opposition as shaping actions for their own benefit. “They don’t care so much about the possible catastrophic consequences that could be the result of their action.”

## Conscience and Equality

After years of disagreement about the rights of states, communities and the federal government to define marriage, two state legislatures have proposed different means to reconcile the conflicting interests of gay rights groups and proponents of religious liberty. In Oklahoma, H.B. 1125, which was referred to the state Senate on March 16, would create a system whereby the state of Oklahoma no longer issues marriage licenses but simply records the marriage. All marriages in the state would be considered valid to be recorded as long as they are “contracted by a formal ceremony performed or solemnized in the presence of at least two adult, competent persons as witnesses, by an ordained or authorized preacher or minister of the Gospel, priest or other ecclesiastical dignitary.” In Utah, lawmakers passed S.B. 296, which prohibits employment and housing discrimination based on “sexual orientation or gender identity,” and a companion bill, S.B. 297, which protects religious exemptions for clergy and religious organizations that are morally opposed to same-sex marriage.

### Fleeing Boko Haram

A delegation representing Catholic organizations in Nigeria offered words of comfort and pledged help for Nigerian refugees who fled to neighboring Cameroon because of a violent insurgency. Led by Bishop Lucius Iwejuru Ugorji of Umuahia, chairman of Caritas Nigeria, the delegation visited Minawao Camp in Maroua, Cameroon, in mid-March to meet with some of the estimated 36,000 Nigerians who have sought safety in recent weeks. “We are here to facilitate your going back to Nigeria. We

## NEWS BRIEFS

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees reported that **866,000 asylum applications** were registered in industrialized countries last year, the highest number of claims in 22 years and a 45 percent increase over 2013. + Pope Francis prayed for the repose of the souls of the **150 passengers and crew** of a Germanwings plane that was deliberately crashed in the French Alps on March 24. + The newly erected **Diocese of Nogales** in northern Mexico, located along the border of Arizona, will be headed by Bishop José Leopoldo González González. + An online petition issued by the Global Catholic Climate Movement on March 23 called on world leaders “to **drastically cut carbon emissions** to keep the global temperature rise below the dangerous threshold of 1.5°C, and to aid the world’s poorest in coping with climate change impacts.” + The United States removed 45 Cuban companies, individuals and ships from a sanctions **blacklist for suspected links to terrorism** or international drug trafficking, though Cuba remains on the U.S. State Department’s list of state sponsors of terrorism. + **Kara Tippetts**, 38, an evangelical Christian blogger, wife and mother of four who advocated against assisted-suicide after being diagnosed with metastatic breast cancer in 2012, died on March 22.



**Germanwings’ airline employees**

will ensure that your plight here will get an immediate attention of the federal government of Nigeria who, too, are aware of our visit,” Bishop Ugorji told the refugees. The refugees were forced to flee violence by Boko Haram, a Muslim militant group based in northeast Nigeria, in recent months. Bishop Ugorji thanked officials of the Diocese of Maroua-Mokolo and the Cameroonian bishops’ conference for welcoming and assisting the refugees. “Their action demonstrates the ecclesial unity of the church in responding to human needs irrespective of tribe, nation or even religion,” he said.

### Catholics in Yemen

Despite rising tensions in Yemen and continued fighting between government and rebel forces, Catholic officials said the six Salesian priests and

the 20 members of the Missionaries of Charity assigned to the country have remained. “Our priests are safe,” and the sisters continue to work in four cities, “including the hot spot” of Sanaa, said Gandolf Wild, O.F.M.Cap., secretary of the vicariate of southern Arabia. The sisters and the priests in Yemen have what Pope Francis has described as “the courage to be present in the midst of conflict and tension,” wrote Bishop Paul Hinder, apostolic vicar of southern Arabia, in his pastoral letter for Holy Week and Easter, adding that this is “a credible sign of the presence of the Spirit.” He asked the region’s Catholics to celebrate Holy Week and Easter with special prayers for “all who are discriminated against, tortured, expelled from their homes, abused and killed.”

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

DISPATCH | BEIJING

## Pollution's Shadow Over the Future

**I**s the air in your country like this?" the motorized tricycle driver asked. "It's terrible here," he said. Any long-term foreign resident of Beijing has had this conversation scores of times.

Discussing the day's air quality is now the default subject for awkward Beijing small talk. Smartphone apps relay up-to-the-hour information on the particulate matter index readings taken by the U.S. Embassy in Beijing.

And pollution may be Beijing's biggest impediment to winning the right to host the 2022 Winter Olympics. Even the Chinese capital's relative lack of snow seems a smaller obstacle than whether or not its winter skies will be choked with coal dust seven years from now.

During a visit by the International Olympic Committee Evaluation Commission during the final week of March, Beijing closed three of its four coal-burning plants and pledged \$7.6 billion to clean up its air. Both externally and internally, Beijing's 2022 Olympic bid is a pledge to itself to finally address pollution, especially air pollution, which was an issue the last time it held the games, in 2008.

The subject came into sharp relief in March, when a documentary called "Under the Dome" appeared on China's popular online video websites. Part TED talk, part interview, part investigative report, the exposé on pollution in China has sparked a new debate about health and the environment.

**STEVEN SCHWANKERT**, *author of Poseidon: China's Secret Salvage of Britain's Lost Submarine (Hong Kong University Press), is America's Beijing correspondent. Twitter: @greatwriteshark.*

Called China's "An Inconvenient Truth" by some and its "Silent Spring" by others, the film's director and protagonist Chai Jing is more Rachel Carson than Al Gore. Formerly employed by the country's largest and most influential state-run broadcaster, China Central Television (CCTV), Chai left her career as a television journalist to start a family. But during a prenatal

### The exposé on pollution in China has sparked a new debate about health and the environment.

exam she was thrust into a story that would give her more reason to investigate than any previous subject. Her unborn daughter had a tumor, one that would need to be operated on as soon as she was born. Chai blames the tumor's development on Beijing's now infamous pollution.

The documentary's release date was chosen to coincide with the opening of China's annual Two Meetings season. These are the China People's Political Consultative Conference, a largely ceremonial body that includes several famous actors and former N.B.A. star Yao Ming, and the National People's Congress, China's primary lawmaking body. Both meet in Beijing. The Two Meetings and their annual March convocation have traditionally been a magnet for political activists.

Over 100 million people saw "Under the Dome" on popular online video channels like Youku. And then, as suddenly as it had become a sensa-

tion, on the following weekend (March 7) "Under the Dome" was scrubbed from almost all Chinese Internet sites.

What are perhaps the film's most poignant lines may be what cast an official pall over "Under the Dome": "In the war between human beings and air pollution, this is how history will be made: When millions of everyday people stand up one day and say: 'No. I'm not satisfied. I don't want to wait. I will not sit back. I will stand up and do something. Right now, right here, right in this moment, in this life.'"

That clear call to action is just the kind of message that China's government does not want going out to "millions of everyday people." Chai presents a conundrum for China's government. She is neither a student with a banner nor a disgruntled worker with a pitchfork. Instead she comes across as what she is: a reasonably affluent, stay-at-home mom concerned about her newborn daughter's health and the world into which she has brought her. Having worked for the state-run media's largest broadcaster, Chai is also easily recognizable to millions of everyday people who saw her on CCTV. Think Diane Sawyer and you're not far off.

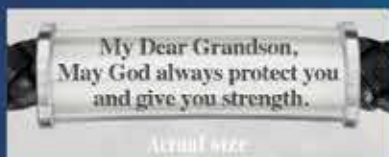
The difference is that if Chai's story were Diane Sawyer's, then Sawyer's network would work with her to produce and tell it. In Chai's case, she specifically chose to produce the film herself and release it online, knowing CCTV wouldn't touch it with a 10-foot pole.

Journalists covering the Two Meetings season saw her as one of their own and kept the story alive. But now, Chai and "Under the Dome" remain in limbo. If the video does not return to more mainstream sites, "millions of everyday people" may not be inspired to "stand up, right now."

**STEVEN SCHWANKERT**

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# A Mess and a Miracle

**W**here is the most dangerous place, and what is the greatest challenge for U.S. foreign policy? The terror of ISIS in the Middle East? Nuclear negotiations with Iran? A broken peace process in the Holy Land? Russian aggression in Ukraine? Actually, the most dangerous place for our nation's foreign policy may be the United States Capitol. The greatest challenge may be how Congress frequently undermines, evades or polarizes essential choices about U.S. leadership in a dangerous world.

Since 2015 began:

- Speaker of the House John Boehner invited the Israeli prime minister to use a joint session of Congress to attack the policies, leadership and competence of the U.S. president in leading a coalition of world powers to curb the nuclear ambitions of Iran. Sixty members boycotted the session; many more cheered Mr. Netanyahu's attacks on the efforts of the U.S. government.

- Forty-seven Republican senators wrote a letter to the leaders of Iran insisting that the president with whom they were negotiating did not have the power to reach a lasting agreement, strengthening those who oppose any restraints on Iran's nuclear capacity. After headlines called them traitors and fools, some explained they had hurriedly signed as they left D.C. to avoid a snowstorm.

- Congress continued to evade its responsibilities to debate and decide on the use of military force to combat ISIS and related terrorist groups who are savaging Christians, other

Muslims and any sense of decency. Congress would rather criticize than vote on whether, how and how long to authorize the use of force.

- House Republicans seized on Hillary Clinton's private email and unpersuasive excuses to rehash and politicize Benghazi once again, even though the Republican House Intelligence Committee dismissed major accusations and conspiracy theories.

- An already insular White House has grown more secretive, increasingly asserting executive power and dismissing Congressional roles and responsibilities, since legislative action seems almost impossible in polarized and paralyzed Washington.

Beyond these partisan games, there is a surprising example of cooperation across political and ideological lines to advance the common good and U.S. interests. Bipartisan commitment and effective religious advocacy have increased U.S. assistance for the poorest people on earth, helping to reduce hunger, save lives and advance our nation's interests. At a time of substantial budget cuts, help by the United States to reduce poverty has grown from \$21.8 billion in fiscal year 2012 to \$26.8 billion in FY 2015.

The concept of foreign aid is neither popular nor understood. Its opponents, however, are not powerful lobbies but ignorance and indifference. Polls report Americans think the United States spends too much on foreign aid. When asked how much of the federal budget is spent, the average answer is 25 percent. When asked how much should be spent, a typical answer is 10 per-

cent. In fact, the United States invests less than 1 percent of the federal budget in development assistance focused on poverty. Much more is needed, but resisting cuts and increasing assistance is a Washington miracle in today's budgetary and partisan context.

This is the result of determined advocacy in Washington and around the country. Stephen Colecchi of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops reports that the conference and Catholic Relief

Services are "relentless in defending poverty-reducing assistance and urgent humanitarian aid." Both Colecchi and David Beckmann of Bread for the World said they make the case that this is "the right thing to do...and the smart thing to do," for economic, security and moral reasons. Beckmann says

The most dangerous place for foreign policy may be the U.S. Capitol.

they advocate both "reforms to make aid more effective" and "additional resources to reach more people."

These efforts build on and contribute to the leadership of the Obama administration and unusual cooperation between Congress and the administration. Key Congressional Republicans and Democrats work together to protect these resources and make these life-saving investments. This essential alliance will be tested in the current budget battles. In contrast to dangerous dysfunction on international affairs, this quiet, consistent work of key Republicans and Democrats offers hope and help to a hungry world. It is a rare example of principled, bipartisan and moral leadership that others should follow.

**JOHN CARR**

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



What is the true goal of Christian charity?

# Metaphysics and Money

BY GARY A. ANDERSON

**‘W**hat must I do to inherit eternal life?” asked the rich man. Jesus replied: “Go sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.” Though the rich man was taken aback by what was demanded, modern readers are often puzzled by the reward. Why didn’t Jesus simply say, “Sell what you own and give the money to the poor,” and stop there? The promise of a reward compromises a condition of the moral act. Charitable deeds ought to be grounded in a concern for the other, not in self-interest.

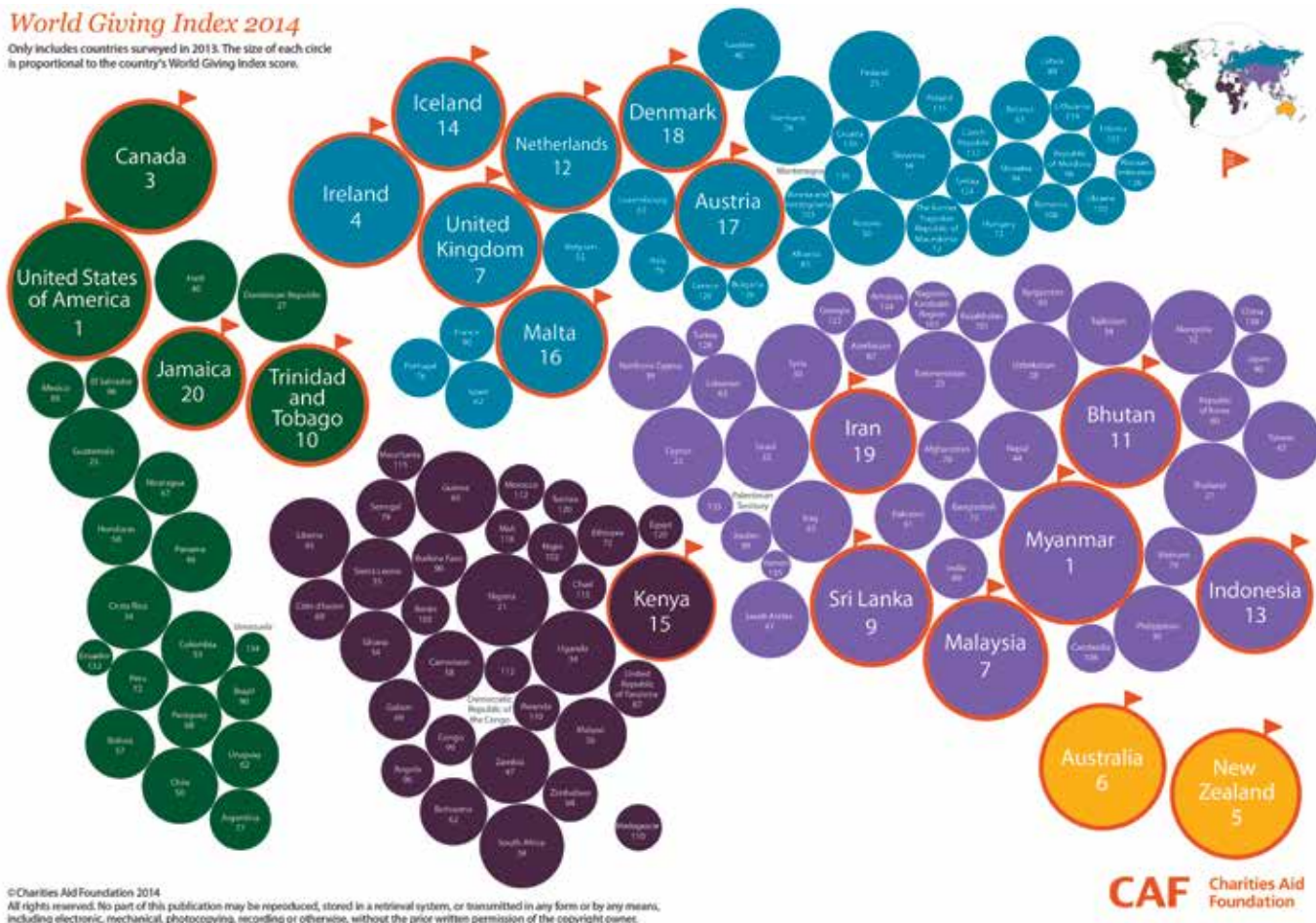
The concern for selfless acts of charity has been at the heart of Christian theology from the very start. But somewhat surprisingly, this text would not have bothered ancient readers. Peter Brown, a professor of history at Princeton University, recently observed that the concept of a heavenly treasury “has caused exquisite embarrassment to modern scholars. In no modern dictionary of the Christian church does the word ‘treasure’ appear!” Brown adds that if we wish to appreciate how the early church understood the virtue of charity “it is important that we overcome a prudery no late Roman Christian would have shared.”

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GARY A. ANDERSON, *Hesburgh Professor of Catholic Theology at the University of Notre Dame*, is the author of *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition* (Yale Univ. Press, 2013).

## World Giving Index 2014

Only includes countries surveyed in 2013. The size of each circle is proportional to the country's World Giving Index score.



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CAF Charities Aid Foundation

The question before us, then, is, “Why has the concept of a treasury in heaven gone from being the central point of the story to a stumbling block?”

One reason is that modern persons view charity in a “horizontal” fashion. In this view only two concerns matter, the motivations of the donor (altruism) and the effectiveness of the donation (social justice). But charity, in early Christian thought, also had a “vertical” axis. In order to recover this vertical dimension, it is useful to turn the Old Testament, where this concept has its origin.

The notion of a treasury in heaven originated from a close reading of Prv 10:2: “Treasuries of wickedness provide no benefit; But righteousness delivers from death.”

Two things must be established right from the start. First, the Hebrew terms for *wickedness* and *righteousness* form a natural antinomy. Second, the Hebrew term for *righteousness* became the technical term for *charity* in Second Temple Judaism. As a result, the contrast between “treasuries of wickedness” and “charity” must turn on the way in which money is understood. The text does not specify why these earthly treasuries are wicked; but since their natural opposite is charity, it is safe to assume that they must be places where money is selfishly hoarded. In other words, the righteous seek opportunities to share wealth with others, while the wicked hoard it for them-

selves. With this in mind we could translate the proverb thus: “The goods you hoard provide no benefit; but the goods you share deliver you from death.”

The key detail in the second half of these poetic lines is the opposition between “provide no benefit” and “delivers from death.” Clearly the worry here is how to avoid some tragic event that might be encountered in the future. We should add that the Book of Proverbs knows nothing of a bodily resurrection. Accordingly, the phrase “delivers from death” refers to an experience of salvation from calamities in this world, like a terrible illness or the infirmity of old age. Indeed, the last example captures the sense of the proverb best and puts a fine point on the radical nature of its teaching. Here is a slightly modern paraphrase: “However confident you might be in your retirement account, it won’t provide you the security you might expect. The only thing that you can really rely on is the love you have shown to those who suffer.”

One more detail remains to be examined. As is frequent in Hebrew poetry, an idea that is expressed in the first line continues into the second line. As we have noted, hoarding and giving to others are natural antonyms. If the former defines one type of treasury, the second probably does as well. Now our proverb reads: “The goods you hoard in earthly treasuries provide no benefit; but heavenly treasuries funded



by charity deliver from death.” The concept of a treasury in heaven has been born.

Note the counterintuitive nature of this proverb. One might have thought that one’s future would be secured by storing wealth. But our proverb contends that true wealth comes from charitable action. The teaching is through and through Christological: financial security requires a renunciation of the goods of this world.

## The Rich Man

With these thoughts in mind, let us return to our Gospel and explore the context of the story of the rich man. Mk 10:17-31 is part of the “travel narrative.” It documents the final trip that Jesus makes from Galilee to Jerusalem and is framed by two stories about Jesus healing blind men. These scenes nicely set up what will be the central theme of the travel narrative: the spiritual blindness of the disciples as to who Jesus is.

The narrative begins with Jesus posing the question: “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answers: “You are the Messiah.” Jesus then informs the disciples about his passion. Peter rejects this teaching and is harshly rebuked. The scene closes with Jesus clarifying what the Gospel really means: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the Gospel, will save it.”

Jesus will repeat this prediction of the passion two more times. The second reads almost like the first (9:31-32), but even on a second hearing the disciples are no wiser. As if to put an exclamation point on the matter, the disciples begin to argue as to who was the greatest. The fact that the disciples are worrying about their own glory shows that they continue to make the same type of mistake Peter had made after the first prediction. The messianic office is not about power over others. The cruciform character of the Gospel is lost on them.

What we see in these three predictions of the passion is a terse summary of Jesus’ understanding of himself and the utter inability of the disciples to grasp the point. True, Peter has attached the right title to Jesus’ person—“you are the Messiah”—but both he and the others are ignorant of its cruciform content.

Let us turn back to the story of the rich man. We have already seen that the concept of a “treasury in heaven” is not a throwaway line. It is grounded in Prv 10:2 and echoes an important Christological theme: If you want to prepare for the exigencies of the future, do not accumulate earthly wealth; give it away.

But the disciples found this teaching difficult as well. After the rich man had left, Jesus said: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is

rich to enter the kingdom of God.” The disciples responded in astonishment, “Who can be saved?”

What is striking about this interchange is that it mirrors what is happening in the larger frame of the travel narrative. The story of the rich man is something of a “play within a larger play.” The dominant theme of the travel narrative is the counterintuitive nature of the Gospel and the inability of the disciples to grasp it. Peter thinks that being the Messiah of Israel is all about power: Jesus will destroy the Roman enemies and the kingdom of God will begin. The disciples have signed on to this mission because they wish to share in the spoils. Try as Jesus might to alert the disciples that future glory will demand the cross, he is not successful.

Similarly for the rich man. He comes to Jesus asking about eternal life. Jesus responds that such a reward requires giving up earthly wealth. The lesson inscribed in Prv 10:2 perfectly suits the context: eternal life will not come from human riches; only divine riches can bestow such a blessing. And the means of acquiring them is cruciform in nature: worldly wealth must be renounced.

## A Moral Act?

Now we are prepared to address the question with which I began. Modern readers have found the story puzzling because of Jesus’ promise of a reward. What about the altruistic nature of the moral act? But this concern about altruism foregrounds the “horizontal” dimension of the charitable act. The shocking demand Jesus makes of the rich man, though, is meant to recall what Jesus has already revealed about his own vocation and that of his disciples: in order to gain their lives they must lose them.

If we can grant that the teaching of Jesus about the cross mirrors his teaching about wealth, then concerns about altruism that seem so natural for the latter should be transferable to the former. If we would prefer that Jesus say, “Give all you have to the poor” and stop there, then shouldn’t we also prefer, “The Son of Man must undergo great suffering... and be killed” and stop there too, with no resurrection as a reward, and say too, “Those who lose their life...will lose it for good!”

Though this might follow logically, I think we would all agree something is amiss. Why this syllogism is wrong is worth thinking about. It is true that the cruciform life will be rewarded. But as every reader intuitively knows, the issue at stake is not the reward but the type of vocation Jesus is proposing. Peter thinks that the way to be the Messiah is to grab what is rightfully yours. But Jesus claims that he must offer his life to God out of love for others.

The issue here is not how I can achieve greatness but what kind of world God has made. Only when we have grasped what type of world we live in can we figure out a strategy for flourishing in it. The teaching is more meta-

physical than moral.

And so we have the answer to the question: the reason Jesus promises a reward is not so much to motivate the potential donor (though an element of that remains) but to make a statement about the nature of the world God has created. What kind of stuff is it made of and how might I profit from the way in which it has been constructed?

All analogies limp, but let me try one more. My wife was once in charge of a swimming class for adults that included a number of individuals who had almost drowned in their younger years. This naturally led to an extraordinary fear of the water. Now, anyone who has done a proper investigation of the physics of water knows that the human body is buoyant enough to float quite naturally on its surface. But in order to exploit this fact, you have to be relaxed and, in turn, must trust the capacity of water to hold your body afloat. The more you fear the water, the more you tense up. And the more you tense up, the more you thrash about. The result? It is nearly impossible to come up for air. Because the students my wife taught had been conditioned to fear the water, they could not trust its natural buoyant capacity. They could grasp the physics of the situation on land without any problem, but entering the water brought a whole host of demons to the fore. Knowing something and acting on that knowledge are often two quite different things.

We might say the same for the treasury in heaven. What

stands behind this idea is a claim about the nature of the world. To the casual observer, the world, like the middle of Lake Michigan, can be a frightening and unstable place. There is a reason that the Romans revered the goddess Fortuna. But at the same time there is a deep desire to affirm that the world was made out of charity. That is why Jesus promises a “treasury in heaven.” In the long run, mercy trumps all its competitors. And with the gift of faith we can learn to see the world this way (see Mk 10:27).

Charity is not simply about making things better on earth. It has an evangelical content. The renunciation of wealth helps the poor, to be sure, but it also reveals something about the shape of the world God has made and how we might flourish in it.

Are the poor short-changed in this view? I do not think so. For the deeper question to be asked is, what funds our thirst for social justice in the first place? Helping the poor was not a virtue in Greco-Roman culture, nor is it esteemed by many libertarians—a philosophy that is alarmingly popular among the young. The sociologist Christian Smith has argued that the concern for the poor that is so prominent in the West had its origins in biblical religion. This raises an alarming possibility: absent the church’s metaphysical claims about wealth, will such concerns continue? Perhaps the story of the rich young man provides the necessary condition for the possibility of social justice. ▲

DIGITAL HIGHLIGHTS

# America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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VIDEO

A profile of Radio Progreso, an independent radio station in Honduras sponsored by the Jesuits.

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ART

Leo J. O’Donovan, S.J., reviews an exhibit at the Neue Galerie on Viennese artist Egon Schiele.

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PODCAST

Jeanne Bishop talks about how she came to forgive her sister’s killer on “America This Week” on SiriusXM.

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WHAT YOU’RE TALKING ABOUT:

“Come on, editors, you can do better than this to open the discussion of the future of women in the church.”

—JACK RAKOSKY, “A Space for Women”

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Gerard O’Connell

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Mary Ann Walsh, R.S.M.

Canción de Jinete: The Grace in Waiting, Rev. Terrance W. Klein

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# The Taxman Cometh

## Why taxes loom large in the American imagination

BY JOSEPH J. DUNN

**T**he day is almost upon us—April 15. For Americans, this is tax day. Yes, we pay taxes throughout the year, every day: property taxes on our homes, sales taxes in most states, excise taxes, gasoline taxes and of course income taxes. A nation's expenditures of public funds, which are inevitably finite, reflect the priorities of its people. How a nation collects revenue—its tax structure—reveals how its people think about motivations and incentives, concerns and fears, about the most effective ways in which private property might promote the common good.

In the months leading up to elections, issues of economy and taxation are presented in 30-second television commercials for our consideration. But taxation is a complex issue, an integral part of the nation's economic and social structure, as Catholic social teaching consistently recognizes. In an encyclical marking the 100th anniversary of "Rerum Novarum," St. John Paul II wrote in "Centesimus Annus" (No. 43):

The church has no models to present; models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations, through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems in all their social, economic, political and cultural aspects, as these interact with each other.

April 15. It is fitting on this particular date that we reflect on our nation's system of taxation. There must be something in our DNA that produces both sensitivity to taxes and a tendency to ignore that sensitivity in others. In 1775 Edmund Burke urged his colleagues in the British Parliament to try to patch things up with the colonies, especially in the matter of taxes. He pointed out this hereditary trait:

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**JOSEPH J. DUNN**, the author of *After One Hundred Years: Corporate Profits, Wealth, and American Society*, from which this article is adapted, writes frequently on economic justice and the role of business in society.

The colonies draw from you, as with their life-blood, these ideas and principles. Their love of liberty, as with you, fixed and attached on this specific point of taxing. Liberty might be safe or might be endangered in twenty other particulars without their being much pleased or alarmed. Here they felt its pulse; and as they found that beat, they thought themselves sick or sound.

**LIVE FREE.** Protesters at a tax day Tea Party rally at the Washington monument.



That was on March 22, 1775. The following day, Patrick Henry, unaware of Burke's speech, told his colleagues in Virginia, "Give me liberty, or give me death." Parliament did nothing. Less than a month later, shots rang out at Lexington and Concord.

The authors of the Constitution acknowledged this sensitivity. Article I provides that all revenue bills (taxes, tariffs, etc.) must originate in the House of Representatives, and House members were the only federal officials directly elected by the people, with two-year terms. If "We the People" did not like the taxes, those responsible could be quickly replaced.

Nonetheless, taxes have always been a sore point. In 1794, years of resistance to an excise tax culminated in the Whiskey Rebellion. Henry David Thoreau went to jail rather than pay a poll tax—not out of any particular complaint, but just to "refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it." By 1913 a desire to move away from tariffs inspired the 16th Amendment, which allowed a direct federal tax on personal incomes. We are still experimenting with that device, vacillating from Franklin D. Roosevelt's "soak the rich" policies to Ronald Reagan's radical tax cuts and everywhere in between. The only constant has been taxpayer vigilance. Numerous studies have documented that Americans at every income level make their decisions about spending, saving, investing, whether or not to work and even where to live with one eye on the tax code. Economists refer to this innate sensitivity as the elasticity of taxable income. That reliable pattern of behavior helps Congress shape public policy. If Congress wants more people to install solar electric panels, a tax credit is enacted. If boosting home sales would promote the common good, then a first-time home buyer's credit is passed. Want people to quit smoking? Raise the tax on cigarettes. Taxation is a powerful tool for change precisely because of our innate sensitivity.

As a sovereign nation, we set our own tax policy as we deem best. Many profess that we should further increase the personal income taxes on upper-income households to be more like Europe. Some want to close loopholes in our corporate taxes. Let us explore the possibilities, with that elasticity of taxable income sensitivity in mind.

## The American Exception

Some important features distinguish the approach of the United States to corporate taxation from those of other developed nations. To remain competitive and ensure the timely delivery of goods in overseas markets many corpora-

tions operate foreign plants. If a German-based corporation operates in, say, Singapore, serving local and regional customers, and earns a profit there, the Singapore government taxes that profit. The remaining profit can be sent back to Germany with no additional tax. So any money not needed for operations in Singapore can be repatriated to Germany for investment there. Every nation in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, also known as the O.E.C.D., allows this tax-free repatriation of for-

foreign-earned profits or imposes only a nominal additional tax—except the United States. A U.S.-based firm that earns a profit in Singapore pays Singapore's income tax and must also pay U.S. income tax, nominally at 35 percent, on profits it brings

back to the United States. Rather than lose additional profits to this second round of taxation, U.S.-based firms leave the money overseas, either invested locally in new plants and equipment or deposited in local banks that invest it in the foreign economy. Our unique approach to taxing foreign-earned profits leaves, at this date, more than two trillion dollars of profits sequestered overseas, producing no investment in America and no tax revenues for our coffers and leaving the United States disadvantaged in a world competing for investment and jobs.

Our corporate tax code has other implications. Many nonprofit organizations enjoy income from endowments that invest in corporate stocks. The endowment receives dividends, which are a distribution of the corporation's after-tax profits. If the corporate income tax were abolished, nonprofits and other shareholders would benefit from the larger amount of corporate profit available for distribution as dividends. The nonprofit enjoys tax-exempt status and does not pay income tax on the dividends received; but in our current tax scheme, the nonprofit organization's income is reduced by the corporate income tax. Any revenue lost by abolishing the corporate tax could be recaptured by increasing the personal tax rate on dividend income.

Robert Reich, who served as Secretary of Labor in President Clinton's administration, points to other benefits of abolishing the corporate income tax in his book *Supercapitalism*. Companies could stop lobbying for tax shelters, preferences, deductions, etc. They could make investment decisions on economic merit, without the distortions produced by the tax code. We have the freedom to ask ourselves: Should we liberate billions of dollars in investment income for the 47 percent of American households and the pension funds, charitable foundations and university en-

## There must be something in our DNA that produces both sensitivity to taxes and a tendency to ignore that sensitivity in others.

dowments that own shares of stock—or cling to a corporate tax structure that leaves us complaining about corporations lobbying too much and paying too little in taxes? Would such a change benefit the unemployed and underemployed by boosting investment in new plants and equipment?

### Unintended Consequences

The personal tax structure in the United States also differs from those of other countries. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found in 2012 that household taxes—broadly defined to include the combined effect of taxes on sales, properties and incomes—are more progressive in the United States than in almost any other O.E.C.D. country. And that was before the expiration of the Bush-era tax cuts for high-income households and the Affordable Care Act’s higher taxes on top-bracket incomes and investment earnings. In contrast, the value-added tax, a form of consumption tax common in many O.E.C.D. countries, is strongly regressive. A brief review of the major turning points in the American experience with the federal income tax will help to illuminate how we got to this point.

President Herbert Hoover signed the Revenue Act of 1932 to boost employment through construction stimulus projects and to provide unemployment relief grants to the states during the Great Depression. The plan was simple: higher rates and reduced exemptions should produce more revenue. But people who were still working, traumatized by the sight of neighbors in bread lines and Hoovervilles, reduced their spending and investing (but not their charitable giving) when faced with an increased tax burden. Nine months later, unemployment had soared to 25 percent and many who still had jobs worked only a few hours a week. Income tax revenues for the fiscal year 1933, with the new tax law in effect, were \$746 million, compared to \$1.1 billion in 1932. The planners had failed to consider the sensitivity that economists call the elasticity of taxable income.

In 1935 Congress raised tax rates on incomes in excess of \$50,000, in response to Franklin Roosevelt’s proposal for a “very sound public policy of encouraging a wider distribution of wealth.” The majority of families that year had incomes of less than \$1,250. A year later, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Public Works Administration and Works Progress Administration were in full operation—programs that were confidently predicted to provide a job for everyone who could work. But the unemployment rate was 17 percent and the federal debt was rising. The Revenue Act of 1936 focused again on corporations and upper incomes. The exemption of dividend income from personal taxation was eliminated, thus beginning the practice of double taxation of dividends, which is still in effect today. Revenues increased, though the annual deficits per-



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sisted and the nation's debt soared. By 1939 the unemployment rate was still 17 percent. The relief rolls had increased by 400,000 people. The massive experiment with redistribution failed to work as planned.

Presidents Truman and Eisenhower maintained this income tax posture after World War II. The economy grew as soldiers returned home, married and bought homes, cars and appliances, and Eisenhower started construction of the interstate highway system. But the limitations of an economy based on housing, highways and high taxes were becoming apparent by the late 1950s. President Kennedy's inauguration took place in the midst of the fourth recession since the end of the war, with the unemployment rate that month at 7.7 percent—the highest rate since the end of World War II. The nation's poverty rate was 22 percent. For African-Americans, it was a staggering 55 percent. The tax cuts that President Kennedy urged were enacted after his assassination. Lower tax rates were followed by faster revenue growth for the government. In the three years prior to these cuts, federal income tax revenues had increased at an annual average rate of 5.3 percent. In the three years following these tax rate cuts, federal income tax revenues increased by 10.4 percent annually. In the same years, the unemployment rate dropped from 4.5 percent to 3.6 percent.

But by 1980, after 45 years of high income tax rates, the former heartland of American industry had become

known as the Rust Belt. Inflation was at 13.5 percent. Unemployment was again at 7 percent and had been stubbornly high for six years. The "golden age" post-war period was long gone and certainly had not been universally enjoyed.

The tax cuts voted by Congress in 1981 and 1986 were a radical change, not the minor tinkering with deductions, exemptions or a few points of tax rate that many members of Congress and presidents offer as tax reform. The top corporate income tax rate dropped from 48 percent to 34 percent. Individuals and households at every income level kept more of their wages. The rate on the top personal bracket fell from 70 percent to 28 percent. The lower rates produced more total income tax revenue, not less. The *Statistical Abstract of the United States* for 1993 shows that from 1986 to 1992, revenue from personal income taxes grew at an average annual rate of 3.3 percent and corporate income tax revenues grew on average 9.8 percent annually. Deficits actually fell until 1989, when Medicare spending started to rise 13 percent annually and other federal health outlays rose 28 percent annually. Even with President Clinton's tax rate increase (the rate on top personal bracket raised to 39 percent, still far lower than the 70 percent rate pre-1981) the country experienced one of its longest periods of economic growth. By 2000, the unemployment rate was 4 percent, and the poverty rate reached a historic low

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of 11 percent, inflation was at 3.4 percent, and the federal budget was balanced.

## We Have Choices

Dr. Christina Romer, professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley, served as chair of President Obama's Council of Economic Advisors during 2009 and 2010. She and her fellow researcher and husband, Dr. David H. Romer, studied all the tax changes passed since the end of World War II. In a paper published in *The American Economic Review* in 2010, they described the powerful impact of taxes on the economy:

In short, tax increases appear to have a very large, sustained, and highly significant negative impact on output.... The key results are that both components [investment and consumption] decline, and that the fall in investment is much greater than the fall in consumption.

Congress has been testing this conclusion in recent years. The top one percent of households incurred a Medicare income tax rate increase and investment income surcharge as part of the Affordable Care Act. An even smaller upper-income group had their marginal tax rates increased again in January 2012, when the Bush tax cuts were extended for most Americans, but not for them. The nonpartisan Tax Foundation recently ranked our overall tax system 32 out of the 34 O.E.C.D. countries on its International Tax Competitiveness Index, which considers more than 40 variables in five categories: corporate taxes, consumption taxes, property taxes, individual taxes and international tax rules, i.e., the home country's taxation of income earned in other countries.

Today the wealth of the rich and the upper-middle class increases as stock prices soar. The real U.S. gross domestic product continues to grow, though more slowly than the average rate that has prevailed since World War II. The Federal Reserve has supported middle-class home prices with a trillion fiat dollars in bond purchases. But millions are without work or underemployed—trapped by slow job growth. Many still employed have lost all momentum in their careers and all bargaining power for their wages.

In the light of our historical experience and the research of economists, how might we best put forward the “decisions, programs, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor” that Pope Francis calls for in “The Joy of the Gospel” (No. 204)? This is difficult work. Warren Buffett wants to adjust the income tax. Bill Gates suggests that we no longer tax labor (wages) but shift to a progressive tax on consumption. What changes do “We the People” want? **A**

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# Why Go to Mass?

To evoke lively conversations, ask why so many Catholics no longer go to Mass. Some people will cite doctrinal issues like birth control, divorce and remarriage, and sexual mores. Others will speak of their experiences of the church as irrelevant to their lives. Others will cite church scandals; and others, the fact that a priest, nun or another parishioner made them feel unwelcome.

Some say they have little time for church. This is a particular problem for families who have two working parents and children involved in organized sports and activities like band and drama. There are elderly parents to visit and care for. Boredom enters the equation in our hyper society. For getting on the family calendar, what pastor can compete with quality drama or the philharmonic, or even self-help groups with immediate and lasting effects?

They look at how the church relates to their lives, perhaps missing that church is also about how people relate to God. Are people looking for too much? A pastor from Maryland reports that “there is a need for people’s experience of the church to be ‘transformative,’ but it is not merely about a euphoric feeling people sometimes look for. If that is what they are looking for, then they will be disappointed and give up on it. I think we have to do a better job of expressing the purpose of our worship.”

All of which challenge the church. The Diocese of Springfield, Ill.,

tackled the question in 2013 and 2014 with Benedictine University’s report “Joy and Grievance in an American Diocese: Results from Online Surveys of Active and Inactive Catholics in Central Illinois.” According to the Georgetown University-based Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, CARA, the two-part survey does not meet scientific sampling standards because it’s a convenience sample, not a true random sample, what is called a “volunteer sample.” Yet the results were interesting.

The survey results provided a summary of views of the 575 inactive and 827 active Catholics who responded. My own casual canvassing found similar rationales.

Some of those surveyed say “they closed my church,” which means some people equate closure of their parish church building as closure of the very church with which they identify, where they experienced their own and their siblings’ and children’s sacraments, like baptism, first Communion, confirmation and marriage, as well as family funerals. It is a narrow understanding of church.

Others say, “I don’t get anything out of going to church.” They were expecting good feelings? The right numbers for the lottery? Feeling all good inside?

“I’m too busy to go to church and I work three jobs,” which may be a paraphrase for “I have better, or at least other things to do.”

People feel marginalized. This can be especially true for women, given their exclusion from one of the seven

sacraments. There also are the separated, the divorced and remarried and the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual Catholics. When they hear homilies against what they are at their very core, they do not feel understood or strengthened by what comes from the pulpit. For people in marriages not recognized by the church, the church’s annulment process doesn’t look encouraging either.

Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel,” highlights the parish’s significance.

The parish is not outdated, he said. He added that “precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and mis-

sionary creativity of the pastor and the community.”

Homilies, said Francis, need to carry a fitting sense of proportion. He added that “this would be seen in the frequency with which certain themes are brought up and in the emphasis given to them in preaching.” He said that “if in the course of the liturgical year a parish priest speaks about temperance 10 times but only mentions charity or justice two or three times, an imbalance results.... The same thing happens when we speak more about law than about grace, more about the church than about Christ, more about the pope than about God’s word.” How to address these matters awaits another day and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Some say,  
‘I don’t  
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out of  
going to  
church.’

MARY ANN WALSH

MARY ANN WALSH, R.S.M., is a member of the Northeast Community of the Sister of Mercy of the Americas and U.S. Church correspondent for *America*.





# Boston Stronger

Hope and healing two years after the marathon tragedy

BY CHRISTOPHER J. WELCH

**A**cts of violence have been much in the news and on our minds lately. In Ferguson, New York City and Paris, deadly shootings have disrupted lives and communities. For Christians, the response to such brokenness ought to reflect and cultivate the theological virtue of hope, a hope that directs us toward that fuller and better future. It is part of the public mission of the church to respond to both the good and evil in the world in ways that orient us toward the fullness of the reign of God.

In the immediate aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombings on April 15, 2013, many Bostonians took up the slogan “Boston Strong.” The yellow and blue ribbon became a symbol of defiance, of solidarity in suffering and in rebuilding for people with a visceral connection to a beloved community event. In a show of support, people around the country and elsewhere bought gear plastered with the slogan and contributed to a fund for victims of the bombings. Clearly, “Boston Strong” tapped into a desire for community, solidarity and hope.

But as the second anniversary of the Boston Marathon bombings approaches and the surviving admitted perpetrator stands trial, it is worth revisiting that appraisal and ask-

ing how the Boston Strong ethos could have better reflected and engendered hope in the aftermath of the tragedy. In particular, we might ask how the virtue of hope can be more confidently promoted over its contrary vices of despair and presumption.

## Not ‘Strong’ Enough

A lack or deficiency of hope can lead to despair. Indeed, despair is not hard to find in contemporary society, and certainly not in the face of tragedy. From a theological perspective, Dominic Doyle, a professor of systemic theology at Boston College, suggests, “In effect, despair says that human sin exceeds God’s mercy.... [I]t destroys the movement to share in God’s goodness.” In the aftermath of the marathon bombings, despair tempts us to constrain our vision of what we can be and become through grace. We cannot imagine being as strong as we have the potential to become.

Despair is not avoided by pretending there is no hurt. Real grief must be voiced and the losses must be lamented. Otherwise, despite all the inspirational success stories from survivors of tragedies like the Boston Marathon bombings, there is a danger of glossing over the real, deep, continuing pain many suffer. The severe depression of amputees and rescuers and the lifetime of anticipated medical expenses can-

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CHRISTOPHER J. WELCH is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in theology and education at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry.

not be overlooked.

Our attention ought to be drawn to the psychological and emotional ramifications of this sort of violence and destruction. It is only if we can voice the fullness of grief that we can seek its transformation. Only if we are to recognize honestly the lingering effects of violence on this scale can we devote resources to preventing and healing this sort of trauma. Despair tempts us to both dwell on and become inured to the damage; hope calls us to see it and to work toward healing the wounds.

Not giving into despair also forces us to look at the perpetrators. Facing the Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev forces us to explore the realities of religious and ethnic violence and the disjunction felt by those who try to escape violence and land on U.S. soil. In the more immediate term, it allows us to grapple with ambiguities as Mr. Tsarnaev faces trial in a capital case. Despair gives up on his humanity. A not fully human person is easy to kill. Despair sees no hope for healing in his continued living. Hope offers the possibility that grace can provide the strength for new life—for victims and perpetrators alike.

### **'Boston' Is Too Small**

Hope may be a grace, a free gift of God, but true hope does not come cheap. The grace that grants hope is, in the words of the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, costly. Presumption as a vice is an excess of hope. Again, Dominic Doyle names the problem well. "Presumption is the expectation of reaching the goal without letting God change one's life in the process.... It expects eternal life without ongoing conversion." Elements of this presumption are visible in certain responses to the marathon bombings that actually minimize the magnitude of what grace can accomplish among us.

One prominent theme in the aftermath of the bombings was that "the terrorists" had only redoubled the running community's resolve. That there was a running community was widely accepted. A large banner at the Boston Public Library read "Lace up your shoes and run for those who can't." The popular pastime of running became "running for unity" or "running for freedom."

Of course, there is nothing inherently harmful in wanting to respond to communal violence with running. At the very least, it can provide an opportunity to join together, to remember, to talk about victims, for the injured to feel empowered in their own lives and for others to feel that they are resuming something that had been interrupted. The problem is if we act as if all of our running efforts are somehow

blessed; as if merely owning gear marketed as commemorating the Boston Marathon substitutes for community; as if running has become in and of itself an act of compassion and solidarity in defiance of hate. Most of the time, distance running is not about world peace and unity; it is about running.

The focus, moreover, on distance runners and their friends and families excluded from our category of "Boston" many Bostonians. Recreational distance running in the U.S. is a sport that skews strongly toward white, upper-middle class, highly educated participants. The community activist Jamarhl Crawford points out that the violence that took place in the space of the Boston Marathon was, rightly, viewed as an affront. The violence that takes place in non-white spaces of Boston, the "regular" violence, does not raise the same sense of

outrage. Similarly, if the physical and psychological trauma endured by victims and witnesses of the gruesome violence rightly moved us to compassion, we have not always been so moved by the same types of trauma affecting victims and witnesses of war.

Presumption allows the "return to normalcy," which we herald as the goal of grieving, to be simply a return to our old way of life. Presumption puts a bandage over the wound without helping it to heal. Presumption lets us maintain a truncated vision of "Boston." Hope makes our definition of who is included in "Boston" broader and more inclusive. It is not that some lives can be returned to what they were before; it is that the life of the whole community can be transformed in hope.

Always we must ask whose interests are supported by current practices and operative ideologies. If our practices of remembrance are really self-serving attempts to fulfill personal marathon dreams, we must lay that self-centeredness bare. If our commemorative "Boston Strong" gear is about strengthening our identities as athletes, having bought all of the proper accoutrements, then we ought to face that fact honestly as well. We must challenge our presumptive practices and ask whose interests they are serving.

### **Highlighting Hope**

There are, though, ways in which memorialization of tragic violence can and does overcome presumption with critical reflexivity and can offer opportunities to both grieve and turn that grief into hope through the imagination of an alternative reality, a prophetic hope. In some instances, the memorialization of the Boston Marathon bombings has provided excellent examples of tutoring in imagination and hope. One has been through highlighting community



responsiveness and self-sacrifice. Tom Grilk, executive director of the Boston Athletic Association, has pointed to the “caring, courage, community, and common purpose” he has seen emerge in the aftermath of the marathon bombings.

This responsiveness was both immediate and sustained. As the bombs went off, finish line volunteers, bystanders and professional first responders rushed into the carnage to find, soothe and treat the wounded. Financial contributions to funds for the care of the injured were instant and generous. The One Fund Boston disbursed more than \$80 million dollars in donations directly to victims and survivors. Moreover, friends and family members sometimes put their own life plans on hold in order to give time and practical support to survivors. Survivors noted their experience of being loved and supported in uniquely graced ways.

Sometimes community responsiveness has been epitomized by those most affected by the violence. The death of the innocent, vivacious 8-year-old Martin Richard is, for many, the embodiment of what makes this bombing senseless and tragic. A great sign of hope, though, is the way that Martin’s family, themselves severely injured, have drawn on the many people who have supported them to create a foundation in Martin’s name. This foundation has already built community by starting a Little League baseball program for children with disabilities and by funding student-led proj-

ects that promote “peace and kindness.”

The reaction to the Boston Marathon bombings undoubtedly brought to light other examples of immediate courage, sustained generosity, solidarity and ingenuity in the face of adversity. We must continue to highlight these stories, for we need these moral exemplars and narratives of healing. What we can add are more opportunities to allow people to practice generosity and solidarity as part of our memorialization. It is essential to note that occasions of remembering the marathon bombing can be linked to the way we envision our best hopes for society. For instance, when we involve ourselves in the life of someone who has lost a limb, we can not only better appreciate the need for long-term supportive services but also enter into a discussion about how we as a society might see ourselves providing them.

Tragic and terrorizing violence stops us in our tracks, as it should, and prompts us to recalibrate time and space. In this recalibration, we have the opportunity to reflect critically on reality and express the genuine grief in this reality. If this grief is a hole in the wall that holds up our psyche, papering over that hole with the presumption that everything will be fine is no more helpful than is the despair of staying in the grief forever. Instead, pointing to, celebrating and building on practices of community-building and meaning-making can engender imagination and hope and truly make Boston stronger. ■

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# The Quality of Mercy

**O**n March 13, Pope Francis surprised the world by proclaiming a year-long Jubilee of Mercy. Since then he has begun to give indications, in homilies and talks, as to what this entails.

As I write, the formal bull of indication has not yet been published. That will be done on April 12, the Second Sunday of Easter, also called Divine Mercy Sunday. But it is already clear that Francis does not want a replay of the Great Jubilee 2000 with mega-events in Rome and lesser initiatives in local churches worldwide.

He wants this jubilee to go much deeper spiritually and to be a far-reaching Christian witness of mercy to the world. There will be a Roman dimension, of course, but for the most part it will involve creative, concrete initiatives of mercy by Catholic churches at parish, diocesan and national levels across the globe.

Visiting Naples on March 21, Francis gave an indication of what he expects during the jubilee. Speaking off the cuff to 2,000 priests, women and men religious, permanent deacons and seminarians, he posed one question: “Can you tell me what are the corporal and spiritual works of mercy?”

Knowing there would be general embarrassment if he asked for a show of hands, he refrained from doing so. The lack of knowledge is hardly surprising, considering that these works are given short shrift in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which simply states (No. 2447):

The works of mercy are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.

Francis, on the other hand, gives powerful expression, almost daily, by word and deed to what is timidly stated in the catechism. He constantly reminds people that we will be judged at the end of life according to the standard—“the protocol”—given by Jesus in the Gospel according to St. Matthew (25:31–46).

For Pope Francis, mercy is the interpretative key to the Gospel of Jesus. Francis had his first profound experience of God’s mercy at age 17, when he went to confession and felt the call to the priesthood. Throughout his priestly ministry, he has sought to give concrete expression to God’s mercy by word and deed because he believes, as he wrote recently: “Mercy is not just a pastoral attitude; it is the very substance of the Gospel message.”

He wants to bring the whole church, starting with the cardinals, bishops, priests and consecrated persons, to

open themselves to God’s mercy and to find concrete, creative ways to put mercy into practice in their areas of ministry.

As pope, Francis is blazing the trail by word and deed, showing what mercy means in relation to the poor, the homeless, prisoners, immigrants, the sick and the persecuted. They are for him “the flesh of Christ.” In this same optic of mercy, he recently called for the abolition of the death penalty and life-imprisonment (“the hidden death penalty”).

Affirming that God always shows mercy to everyone who turns to him with a repentant heart, the pope is exploring ways to reconcile and reinstate Catholics who are excluded from the sacraments by church legislation. But he is meeting

The pope is exploring ways to reconcile and reinstate Catholics.

resistance.

He confronted this resistance in his homily to new cardinals on Feb. 15 by recalling that “the church’s way, from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement.” This means “welcoming the repentant prodigal son; healing the wounds of sin with courage and determination; rolling up our sleeves and not standing by and watching passively the suffering of the world.”

He reminded cardinals and bishops that “the way of the church is not to condemn anyone for eternity”; rather “it is to pour out the balm of God’s mercy on all those who ask for it with a sincere heart.” This is what he wants to happen during the Jubilee of Mercy.

**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: @gerryorome.

# Tied Together by Love

## Adoption and the Christian life

BY HOLLY TAYLOR COOLMAN

**O**n a warm, summer Sunday morning some years ago, I arrived at church with a large group. Accompanying me were my husband and daughter, my mother and both of my husband's parents. We were joined by several people whom we had recently met: a striking young woman, who was a member of that congregation, her parents, former boyfriend and that young man's mother, too. Eleven of us walked carefully through the narrow church door, but actually, we were an even dozen. At the center of it all was a newborn baby, just as beautiful as his young mother. We had come together that morning because months before we had made a plan that my husband and I would adopt him as our son.

In what seemed to me like miraculous self-possession, this new mother, only a teenager herself, had arranged for a blessing to take place during the worship service, a formalized way to note the enormity of what was happening to us all. For her, there was painful loss, just beginning to crash through all of her carefully

laid plans. The older generation among us was smiling, but also blinking back barely suppressed alarm at this odd

Welcoming the stranger, treating as family one who is not biologically related, is a practice honored since before the time of Abraham. The process of making a child one's own is one of the descriptions that St. Paul offers of the act of salvation itself: to be a Christian means to have "received a spirit of adoption," by which we are enabled to call God *abba*, or father.

At the present moment in the United States, though, attitudes toward adoption, and the practice of adoption itself are complicated. There is still a stigma attached to adoption, especially for interracial families. Meanwhile, highly visible celebrity adoptions have made adoption almost a cultural trophy. Yet even when viewed positively, adoption is often overlaid with a veneer of sentimentality

that makes it difficult to grasp the complex, beautiful and sometimes painful reality of it all for those who experience it.

The women (and the often overlooked men) who choose to place a child for adoption are vulnerable in many ways. They and their families can be left with grief that has no script. Children who are adopted



lack of boundaries. The young father was not a regular churchgoer, and, of all of us, it seemed to me, he was perhaps the most displaced, the bravest, at that moment. My job, I felt, was to be gracious and grateful, but in fact, I mostly felt dazed.

Adoption has a venerable place in Christian thought and practice, and also something of a checkered past.

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face complex cultural dynamics as they take up the lifelong task of working out their own stories and identities. And adoptive parents, like me, have their own particular blessings and challenges. Maybe the only way to do all of these forces justice is by focusing on individual stories. A bit more, then, about that Sunday morning.

### **A Larger Story**

My husband and I were startled to find that the pastor was an old acquaintance, a coincidence that made us feel a bit less as if we were on open seas without a map. Even more startling, though, was what we found out later. It was, of course, an emotionally charged morning, but my mother also had a strong sense of *déjà vu*, a feeling that she could not shake. We were in the city where her own mother had grown up, and she wondered if she been in the neighborhood before.

Later, she was able to piece the story together with a phone call to her mother. The neighborhood was changed, the building had been renovated, but the address was one that my grandmother recognized immediately. It was the very church in which she had grown up, the one in which she and my grandfather had been married. My mother had indeed visited as a small child. Now, many decades later, the arrival of this new child by adoption was happening within those same walls.

Such coincidences can sometimes be marshalled to sentimentalize adoption in just the unhelpful way I have described above, to foster a rosy, simplified view that blocks out all complexity or pain. For me, though, this startling coincidence struck me as a sign of something else: although we were all in unfamiliar territory, we were not alone. We were being woven into a story larger than any one of us, a story not entirely of our own making.

Perhaps the best thing we did on that Sunday morning was to promise to give one another time and space.

My husband and I made room, as all parents must do, for this remarkable, demanding new creature in our lives. At the same time, though, we made a commitment to his young parents and to others in their families. Through a stretching process that has been sometimes refreshing and sometimes hard, our circle was widened, and we have slowly come to a fuller understanding of hospitality, grasping the way in which extending generosity sometimes requires vulnerability.

We now have three children who have come to us through adoption, so the circle has widened even farther. Like all large, extended families, ours is a diverse and disorganized bunch. There are natural affinities and pet peeves. We have traditions, and we have ways in which we just make it up as we go along. We love each other, and we drive each other crazy. As the years have passed, though, my husband and I have been especially aware of the gifts we have received.

Our children's birthparents have brought their own gifts, giving the kids advice or a hug, or handily building a playhouse in a single day. We have found unexpected friendships with other members of their families, too. And the children's biological grandparents have reached out to all of our children, sending just the right gift, or marveling in a comfortable and companionable way, when they visit, at how they have grown. How could we have imagined that adoption would mean that hospitality and generosity would be directed to us, too?


### **A Full Range of Experience**

Thinking together about adoption will require attention to the full range of this sort of experience, and to more painful dynamics, as well. The central Pauline parallel between an adopting God and adoptive parents is powerful, but can also be misleading. This metaphor can, for example, allow us to see in the act of adoption a crucial moment of *agape*

love, reaching beyond the usual boundaries to care for the other. On the other hand, it can eclipse the sense of identity found in birth families and cultures. It could be read to suggest that all ties preceding adoption are irrelevant, or even damaging. Recalling the Thomistic dictum that "grace does not destroy nature" is important here.

Our practice of adoption, moreover, must take into account other theological commitments, like the dignity of the person. The experience of adoption can be a powerful one, and yet persons can never be reduced to a single role they play. Birthparents and adoptees, in particular, are well served by both respectful attention to their experience and the recognition that this experience does not exhaust their identity. Attentive listening, careful thinking and courageous love will be required. And a theologically informed practice of adoption will, in turn, inform our understanding of God's adoption of us. In the end, we may well find that through the lens of adoption, we are able to see the whole of the Christian life in more fully life-giving ways.

Not long ago, my grandmother passed away, and a number of friends kindly arranged to have Masses said. Most of these were too far away for me to attend, but in some cases, other friends and family were able to be present. At one, in particular, members of our extended-adoptive-family made arrangements to attend, even though none of them had ever met my grandmother. On that day, I found myself keenly aware of the experience of communion that adoption had brought us, one that crossed over time and space and blood and even death itself.

For our family, adoption has come to mean much more than what we thought it did on that Sunday afternoon. It has meant that, not in spite of loss or ambiguity, but precisely in the midst of them, we are seen and known, and in our particular, ongoing story, we continue to be knit together in mysterious ways. 

TELEVISION | MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY

## A MAN IN FULL

*'Wolf Hall' and the emergence of Thomas Cromwell*

**T**homas Cromwell may have been a conniving, loathsome character in Robert Bolt's "A Man for All Seasons," but the advisor to King Henry VIII was granted redemption by Hilary Mantel in her novels *Wolf Hall* and *Bringing Up the Bodies*. (A third novel, *The Mirror and the Light*, is in the works.) Cromwell is the unlikely hero of these stories, his famous Hans Holbein portrait fully brought to life. Now Cromwell has received perhaps the greatest honor a

British historical figure can be granted: a starring role in a Masterpiece drama. In a rare cultural coincidence, a stage version is also now playing in New York.

Imported from England on the heels of the sixth season of "Downton Abbey," **Wolf Hall** (starting in April on PBS) is a six-part study of the mysterious and brilliant Cromwell, played here by the equally brilliant Mark Rylance. That Cromwell's elevation comes largely at the expense of

Sir Thomas More is no small matter. More (Anton Lesser) is portrayed here as a pious and slippery fellow, a sign perhaps of Mantel's own distaste for the church and her saints. (For a more accurate take on More, see Eamon Duffy's review of "Wolf Hall" in *The Tablet*, Jan. 29.) But it is hard not to be won over by "Wolf Hall," especially with the cast on hand. Jonathan Pryce as Cardinal Wolsey! Sargent Brody as Henry VIII! If you are looking to banish Showtime's "The Tudors" from your pop-historical memory, here is your chance.

Cromwell is a man of few words, but his words are sharp and well chosen. He is the son of a blacksmith, a fact routinely noted by his detractors, but he has studied to become a lawyer



AIMING HIGH. Mark Rylance, with bow, as Thomas Cromwell in "Wolf Hall"

PHOTO: COURTESY OF GILES KEYTE/PLAYGROUND & COMPANY PICTURES FOR MASTERPIECE/BBC

**GOODBYE TO ROME.** Damian Lewis as King Henry VIII and Claire Foy as Anne Boleyn



and makes his way into the employ of Cardinal Wolsey. He is fiercely loyal to Wolsey even when others abandon him. (The story is familiar: Henry wants to annul his marriage, but Wolsey can't obtain the proper approval from Rome.) Yet Cromwell is not a martyr either. He stays true to the cardinal up until the very moment a more powerful patron seeks his services.

In Mantel's books Cromwell possesses a charisma that would seem difficult to translate on screen. He is a whirlwind of activity but not a man who woos women or makes great speeches. As played by Rylance, however, you can see why young students want to study with him and live on his estate. Cromwell is an unusually successful businessman, someone who gets things done. He walks with purpose, and even the way he writes a letter seems imbued with strength and meaning. He does not seem scared of anything.

"Wolf Hall" is, in many ways, an apology for the burgeoning English state. Where else but England could the son of a blacksmith become an advisor to the king? Not France surely, where Henry complains that the king can tax his subjects to kingdom come. (Well, at least until 1789.) King Henry must go through Parliament

to fund his wars. But the democratic impulse that Parliament represents, faint though it may be, is what allows a man like Cromwell to flourish. As one character remarks over drinks by the fire, evaluating the prospect of a Queen Anne Boleyn, "A world where Anne can be queen is a world where Cromwell can be..."

The series also suggests that England was correct to part ways with Rome. In a private conversation with the king, Cromwell offers a damning indictment of monastic life. The monks raise money for the poor and then spend it on themselves, and force their would-be students to serve as their staff. His words, of course, are exactly what the young king wants to hear. Dissolution looms.

These religious controversies emerge from natural human drama. When Cromwell receives a package in the mail, his wife eyes him warily as he opens up a Bible. It is William Tyndale's English translation of Scripture, a document that, if found in Cromwell's possession, could lead to imprisonment or worse. Mantel cannot resist a dig at Rome: "Read it and see how you're misled. No mention of nuns, monks, relics. No mention of popes," Cromwell says. But he is

also a careful man, and when he meets with Thomas More for dinner, he does not admit to reading Tyndale. When he hears, at one point, that Tyndale is in Hamburg, he does not want to acknowledge it, knowing that he is a fugitive. Cromwell is torn between the demands of the state and his own conscience. "Wolf Hall" is in part the story of his own carefully calibrated attempts to reconcile those two impulses.

It is difficult not to contrast "Wolf Hall" with "A Man for All Seasons." They are almost diametrically opposed takes on the same historical events. But what unites them is a love for language. In the film Paul Scofield's Thomas More was granted line after line of smoothly polished dialogue. He may not have often seemed very human, but boy, was he eloquent. ("Why Richard, it profits a man nothing to give his soul for the whole world...but for Wales?") Cromwell shares a flare for *bons mots*. "Are her teeth good?" Cromwell's maid asks after he visits with Anne Boleyn. "When she sinks her teeth into me I'll let you know," Cromwell snaps. When one of Wolsey's aides prays to God for justice for the wronged cardinal, Cromwell answers, "No need to trouble God. I'll take it in hand."

What form justice will take is unclear at the end of the first two installments of "Wolf Hall." (The final four were not made available to the press.) Aside from historical intrigue, "Wolf Hall" offers something else worth contemplating. In one of the book's most telling bits of dialogue, replayed here, the Duke of Norfolk complains, "Cromwell, why are you such a person?" The actor, Bernard Hill, spits out that last word in disgust. "It is not as if you can afford to be," he says. "Wolf Hall" is at its heart the celebration of a single individual. You may not always agree with Thomas Cromwell, but it is impossible to deny his right to exist.

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



# NOT-SO-SPECIAL SPIRITUALITY

Some of my Franciscan sisters and brothers will not like what I'm about to tell you. And what I'm about to say can easily be misunderstood, so I will try my best to be clear.

Contrary to popular belief, there is nothing particularly special about Franciscan spirituality!

I confess this perspective frequently when I'm speaking to groups that have invited me to share insights about the Franciscan tradition, groups I imagine are eagerly anticipating the "sell," the "hook," the "distinctive feature" of Franciscan prayer and life. Often, these same groups at first appear disappointed when I share that, at its core, Franciscan spirituality isn't so special.

The Jesuits have their Ignatian Exercises and examen, the Benedictines have their structured life of *Ora et Labora*, the Trappists have their silence and contemplation, the Dominicans have their learned preaching, and so on, but what do the Franciscans have?

The Gospel. That is all.

This isn't to suggest that the members of the Society of Jesus or the Order of St. Benedict or the Order of Preachers do not have the Gospel. Of course they do. But the Franciscan tradition advances only the Gospel in a way that is at the same time shockingly simple and incredibly difficult. Francis of Assisi began his Rule or "way of life" for the Franciscan friars with the line: "The Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Sounds simple enough.

Francis went on to say that the so-called first order (the Franciscan friars) is to do this "by living in obedience,

without anything of one's own, and in chastity." But this mandate to live according to the pattern of the Gospel is not unique to the friars. In fact, the respective rules of each of the different branches of the Franciscan family begin similarly. The beginning and end of the way of life that Francis envisioned was just to live the Gospel.

This helps explain why there is absolutely no particular ministry or apostolate associated with the Franciscan charism. Nowhere in the Rule did Francis explain that it is the priority of those who would come after him to minister in hospitals or staff local parishes or serve as missionaries or lead retreats or teach at the great universities. All Francis said is that the friars are to work and receive in return "whatever is necessary for the bodily support of themselves and their brothers."

The vision that Francis had for his community was that the brothers would live together, pray together, support one another like a family and work in the world among and alongside ordinary members of society. There was no special commission apart from what Christ tells all his followers to do in the Gospels. In other words, the core of so-called Franciscan spirituality is the universal call to holiness that all women and men receive at baptism. To be a good Franciscan means to be a good Christian.

It is my experience that the simplicity of this message oftentimes seems

just too difficult to accept. There is a temptation to complicate it, to qualify it, to repackage it and make it palatable. In its truest form, Franciscan spirituality cannot be reduced to any one thing or even a series of bullet points, which is why I believe that Franciscan spirituality is simultaneously attractive to so many people and also nearly impossible to articulate in terms of distinctiveness.

Pope Francis, now two years since taking his name after the saint from Assisi, seems to exemplify the concurrent simplicity and challenge of Franciscan spirituality. That he is a Jesuit doesn't conflict with the Franciscan outlook, because, as already stated, the core of this spirituality is the baptismal vocation. His gestures and statements are simple in the best

sense. They are clear and direct reminders of the Gospel life. Whether Pope Francis is preaching at a weekday Mass or connecting with strangers in an impromptu visit, one sees a man trying to be open to all relationships in a way that reflects St. Francis' vision.

Though we may not all formally profess to follow Francis of Assisi's way of life, it seems to me that we can all cultivate "Franciscan hearts" open to what Pope Francis calls the joy of the Gospel. This not-so-special spirituality is an invitation to relationship with all people, working with our brothers and sisters in everyday life and following in the footprints of Christ.

**DANIEL P. HORAN**

The way of life that Francis envisioned was just to live the Gospel.



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

## A SCHOLAR'S PORTRAIT

### JESUS

#### Word Made Flesh

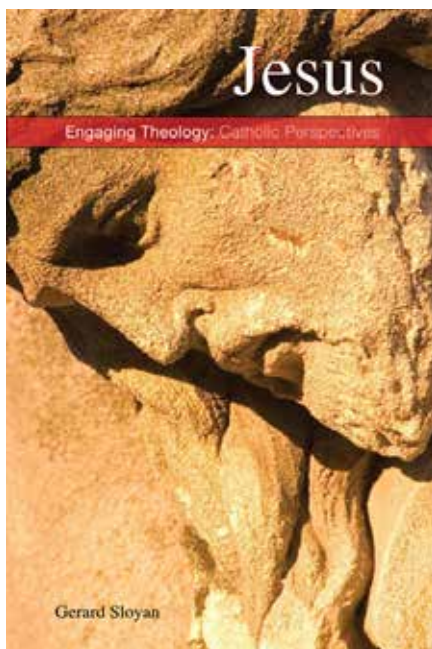
By Gerard S. Sloyan  
Liturgical Press. 200p \$19.95

This is the latest work of one of America's most extraordinary and prolific Catholic theologians. Gerard Sloyan, a priest of the Diocese of Trenton, is a prominent Catholic scholar whose years of service have stretched beyond the biblical warrant of "four score and ten" and yet has not missed a beat, as the quality of this book on Jesus attests. He was a leader in Catholic religious education in the formative years prior to the Second Vatican Council, particularly in his leadership role in the department of religious studies at The Catholic University of America, and served after the council and until today as an eloquent and informed voice interpreting and amplifying the work of the council, particularly in the areas of Scripture, liturgy, religious education and interreligious dialogue.

This volume was originally intended to be part of a series of college textbooks, but the series itself never came to fruition. Fortunately, this work can easily stand on its own. Sloyan's goal is to offer his readers a grasp of the person and mission of the Jesus portrayed in the Gospels, the Pauline letters and other New Testament books. He begins with a firm assertion that holds throughout the book: Christian faith is centered not as such on Jesus but on God, to whom all worship and praise is due. The Jesus of Christian faith, however, enters the heart of this God-centered faith as the one in whom the very presence of God is fully embodied. As the testimonies of all the New Testament literature agree, it is the death and resurrection of Jesus (which

Sloyan prefers to refer to as the "uprising" of Jesus) that both confirms and reveals the astounding identity of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

This fundamental Christian faith in Jesus' victory over death, affirmed by the testimony of multiple apostolic witnesses, including key disciples and



ultimately Paul himself, is the starting point and ending point of the New Testament portrayal of Jesus. Paul's letters focus unerringly on this central mystery and, somewhat inexplicably in Sloyan's view, forgo much interest in the activity of the earthly Jesus. Paul, however, develops in profound ways the meaning of the Christian's union with the risen Christ and the implications of this for the character of Christian life and worship.

Mark's Gospel, the first to be composed and one that serves as a primary source for Matthew and Luke, is, in a sense, a "homiletic" narrative reflection on the life of Jesus, but it, too, focuses

on the climax of the Jesus story in his total self-giving and in his being raised from the dead, vindicating his mission and revealing Jesus' identity as the triumphant Son of Man and the unique Son of God.

Matthew and Luke accept and absorb the fundamental portrayal of Jesus found in Mark's Gospel but also provide their early Christian readers with examples of Jesus' moral teaching and his compassionate healing and exorcisms, as well as his extraordinary power over nature—traditions that serve as instruction for Christian discipleship while confirming Jesus' unique identity and mission.

John's Gospel moves in a different key, while retaining the same fundamental melody: Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, reveals the true face of God through his words and deeds and, especially, through his death as an act of friendship, love and his vindication through resurrection and exaltation.

Reflecting Sloyan's own deep knowledge of Jewish tradition, he notes that most of the teaching of Jesus fits clearly within the religious heritage of Judaism and finds coherence in the backdrop of the Hebrew Scriptures. Neither Jesus nor early Christianity can be properly understood apart from their Jewish matrix.

Sloyan concludes his portrayal of Jesus by demonstrating how the New Testament assertions about Jesus carry over into the post-New Testament period, including the writings of the Apostolic Fathers and the early councils.

It took me a while to realize that Sloyan's eloquent and erudite summation of the New Testament faith in Jesus has virtually no footnotes or explicit engagement with other scholars. He writes what seems to be a personal synthesis of a lifetime of study and reflection on his subject. It is clear that he is well acquainted with contemporary as well as classic literature on this subject, and he does provide a brief list

of suggested “Further Reading.” But his engagement with alternate approaches to Jesus is dealt with in clumps. It is clear that he has no time for the rationalistic approach of those who question the very existence of the Jesus of history. (Sloyan cites with relish the book of Richard Whately, an English clergyman who wrote a spoof directed at such rationalists entitled *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte*—a book written two years before Bonaparte’s actual death.) He also refutes those who portray the Christian faith in Jesus as Son of God and Savior in an evolutionary manner—departing from the actual Jesus as an ordinary, if remarkable, rabbi and religious personage to being transformed over time by early Christian interpreters into a Hellenistic-type divine figure.

As he rightly emphasizes, Christian faith in the profound identity of Jesus began almost instantly with the experience of him as risen that prompted thoughtful Jewish Christians to re-interpret their Old Testament Scriptures in the light of this experienced reality. And he vigorously critiques the attempts of those who consider the New Testament portrayals as masking the reality of the Jesus of history (the Jesus Seminar is a prime culprit) and seek in vain to reconstruct a “Jesus of history” apart from or even in contradiction to the overall portrayal of Jesus in the New Testament.

As noted above, this work of Gerard Sloyan was intended to be part of a series of college textbooks. I think only an undergraduate who is a star and an informed theology major would be able to absorb this book without being overwhelmed. Its density, assumptions and its somewhat circular organization pose challenges for the novice reader. On the other hand, college teachers and scholar colleagues will find here a beautiful example of the contribution of a scholar who is in sure command of his subject, who has put together a compelling restatement and helpful analysis of

the New Testament belief in Jesus the Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of the world. As Fr. Sloyan notes at the outset of his work, this is the fifth book on Jesus he has written, the first being a religious education aid written in 1960.

SEAN SALAI

## A FICTION THAT DOES JUSTICE

### WAYFARING STRANGER

By James Lee Burke  
Simon and Schuster. 448p \$27.99

As the United States evolves into a multicultural society, few Americans are now old enough to recall the Great Depression and postwar economic boom that shaped our nation’s WASP elite. But James Lee Burke’s 24th novel, *Wayfaring Stranger*, revives the world of “traditional America” with a passionate aim to comfort all who were marginalized by this period of unparalleled prosperity arising from Hollywood and the oil fields of Texas.

The Louisiana-bred Burke, a rare winner of two Edgar Awards who is best known for his Dave Robicheaux crime novels, reaches deep into his own biography for this foray into historical fiction. A former oil pipeliner and Sinclair landman, this 78-year-old Catholic Southerner mixes personal experience with colorful characters based on family and public figures to paint a vivid portrait of postwar hope tainted by corruption. The result is a rollicking, passionate and surreal exercise in justice-oriented fiction that gives the lie to American exceptionalism.

Burke’s story revolves around a

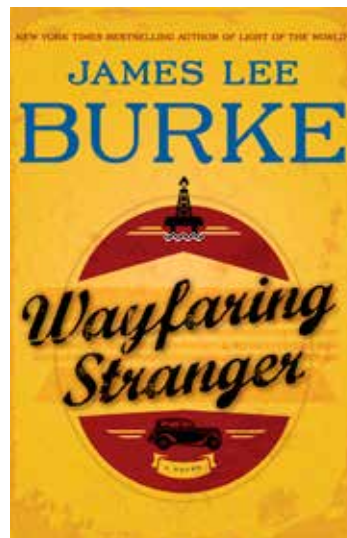
This latest work, written nearly 50 years later, is his best so far.

**DONALD SENIOR, C.P.**, is emeritus professor of theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

young man from South Texas who serves heroically in World War II, only to return home to a more sinister battle with home-grown fascism and greed. Yet the interactions between this novel’s vivid characters—including an indomitable Texas grandfather and a sensual Louisiana country girl-turned-Hollywood-starlet—overshadow the plot. Righteous anger, unexpected violence, romantic mythologizing and moments of deep compassion drive the poignant narrative to an unexpected conclusion.

Merging fact with fiction, romanticism permeates and often mythologizes the plot. Burke has stated that his protagonist, Weldon Avery Holland, is a modern-day version of Chaucer’s knight modeled on a real-life cousin who served in World War II. He accordingly laces the book with frequent references to sources like the “Song of Roland” and Sir Thomas Malory, blurring his narrative with bursts of surreal romanticism that remind us we are reading about a time period—the 1930s to 1940s—now fading into the same realm of mythology as the warriors of Roncesvalles.

The plot picks up after Lieutenant Holland helps liberate a Nazi concen-





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tration camp and returns home with a Jewish war bride. Starting an oil pipeline business with his former platoon sergeant Hershel Pine, he patents an airtight welding technique using technology from German Tiger tanks.

Unfortunately, their success at drilling offshore wells in Louisiana and Texas soon brings Weldon and Herschel into conflict with some of the wealthiest oil and film tycoons in America, who persecute Weldon's wife as a Spanish-born Communist when the partners refuse to sell their company. As bodies pile up and Weldon suffers deepening injustices, the reader wonders how far he'll go to protect his wife, and whether he'll suffer the same fate as Roland or King Arthur.

Longtime Burke fans will detect a familiarity of style in these classical overtones. In a telephone interview on July 24 for *America's* website, Burke emphasized the classical sources of his writing, noting that all the crimes in his stories go back to three sources: the Bible, Greek tragedy and Elizabethan theater. Rooted in these populist inspirations, he said his fiction seeks to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, doing justice to the ordinary heroes in our midst who have been overshadowed by the robber barons of official texts.

"My feeling is that the real saints, the gladiators of our time, are standing right next to us in the grocery line," Burke said in the interview.

Nevertheless, vivid realism grounds Burke's hagiographical flourishes in *Wayfaring Stranger*, as instances of racism and anti-Semitism punctuate the novel's events with uncomfortable detail. Burke generates a particularly strong cognitive dissonance in passages where anti-Communist fear, anti-black racism and anti-Semitic bigotry coexist with unimaginable wealth in idyllic Norman Rockwell settings that are scrupulously accurate in their details of everyday life.

America's so-called Golden Age

was a blessing for some, but not for everyone.

A recovered alcoholic and 12-step veteran, Burke's compassion for suffering humanity is ever present to readers.

Burke stated that his faith in God, while not explicitly visible on the printed page, drives his effort to comfort readers in their own struggles with the powers of this world. "What I try to do as a Catholic is give voice to those who have been denied voice, to give recognition to those souls who have been forgotten," Burke said.

The ultimate irony of *Wayfaring Stranger*, likewise, might be the story's underlying insinuation that American history tends to turn reality into myth and vice versa. When we believe in the goodness of America's self-made mil-

lionaires, recalling self-interested men like the Rockefellers as heroes, Burke suggests we are choosing to accept myth over reality.

By contrast, Burke's work challenges readers to accept the goodness of deeply flawed ordinary people, thereby choosing the one myth about humanity that is also real. A throwaway line in *Wayfaring Stranger* gives some hint of this agenda. As Weldon considers whether to trust a hospital receptionist with information that might help him rescue his wife from a fate worse than death, Burke describes the woman as follows:

She was one of those people who remind us that decency and courage and charity are found most often among the humblest

members of the human family, and most of them get credit for nothing.

Opening a book by James Lee Burke, the last of the great Catholic Southern novelists, is like rediscovering that the spirits of Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy still walk the earth. Sometimes the prose is a bit messy and the narrative overly complicated, but it's hard to find much of comparable human feeling on our fiction shelves nowadays. The mists of Avalon might be closing over the waters, but here is one author still rowing in the other direction.

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## CLASSIFIED

### Positions

**PARISH EDUCATION DIRECTOR.** St. Peter Catholic Church, a dynamic and growing 1,700-plus household parish in Charlotte, N.C., is seeking a Parish Education Director. St. Peter is the oldest Catholic parish in Charlotte and has been served by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) since 1986. We are located in the heart of beautiful downtown Charlotte.

The Parish Education Director will be responsible for faith education from birth to death. A minimum of three to five years of administrative experience in education/parish setting is required. The candidate should be a practicing Catholic, familiar with Ignatian spirituality, with a degree in education/theology or pastoral ministry.

This individual should be a forward-thinking, big-picture visionary with hands-on parish education experience. The ideal candidate has experience in education/curriculum development as well as the neighborhood/community-based catechesis model. Candidate needs to be an extremely organized administrator, technologically savvy and possess strong communication skills. This is an evolving role and department, so flexibility, the ability to take risks and tolerance for ambiguity are required.

Send résumé cover letter and any questions to [parisheddirjob@stpeterscatholic.org](mailto:parisheddirjob@stpeterscatholic.org).

### CHRISTIAN BROTHERS CONFERENCE

Office for Lasallian Education ([www.lasallian.info](http://www.lasallian.info)) is seeking an EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR to promote the Lasallian educational mission and assume a leadership role in representing Lasallian education at the national and international levels. This dynamic leader

will oversee the staff and operations of the Office for Lasallian Education in Washington, D.C., and provide a variety of services designed to promote Lasallian education to ministries in the U.S., Canada and Jamaica. The Executive Director serves as a key representative of the Lasallian network to the Catholic Church, to educational, civic and governmental entities, and to business and philanthropic organizations.

Primary responsibilities include serving as chief executive and advocate for the Lasallian Education Council, overseeing the development of programs that provide current and future leaders with formation in Lasallian ministry, establishing relationships to secure funding from national and regional foundations and other funding entities, and designing and implementing a strategic plan. The Executive Director reports to the Lasallian Education Council and manages staff responsible for programs, communications, advancement and financial operations.

A successful candidate will be a practicing member of the Catholic faith who has a master's degree and five-plus years of administrative leadership experience, preferably in Catholic, Lasallian schools or colleges, and is able to translate vision into effective action to advance the Lasallian mission. This person must be able to serve as principal spokesperson for Lasallian education, work collaboratively with brothers and lay partners in a shared leadership role and demonstrate success securing large-scale philanthropic gifts. Requirements include the ability to maintain an extensive travel schedule and exceptional interpersonal and communication skills in order to market the values and mission of an educational institution and establish strong internal and external relationships. Salary is negotiable and commensurate with experience.

Candidates must submit electronically a letter of

introduction, résumé and names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses of five professional references to: Executive Director for Lasallian Education Search, Catholic School Management, Attn: Jennifer C. Kensel, at [office@catholicschoolmgmt.com](mailto:office@catholicschoolmgmt.com). Application deadline is April 30, 2015.

### Sabbatical

**SUMMER SABBATICAL AT SAT.** Come for a month or a week to the San Francisco Bay area. The Summer Sabbatical program at the School of Applied Theology runs from May 30 to June 25, 2015. Topics include: "The Liberated Heart: Becoming Who We Truly Are," with Joyce Rupp; "Praying with Beauty," with Bro. Mickey O'Neill McGrath; "The Path of Desire: Adventures in Spirituality," with Lisa Fullam; and "Mysticism and the Future of Christianity," with Michael Crosby, O.F.M.Cap. For more information go to [www.satgtu.org/summer2015](http://www.satgtu.org/summer2015) or contact Celeste Crine, O.S.F., Associate Director, at (510) 652-1651.

### Summer Institute

**OBLATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY** 2015 Summer Institute: "Is Anyone Ever Really Single? The Call to Authentic Sexuality," with keynote speakers Richard Gaillardetz, Ph.D., Donna Freitas, Ph.D., and Rev. Ron Rolheiser, O.M.I., June 15-17, 2015. Whitley Theological Center, San Antonio, TX 78216. Information: Brenda at (210) 341-1366 ext. 212; [www.ost.edu](http://www.ost.edu).

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# Our Witnesses

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), APRIL 19, 2015

Readings: Acts 3:13-19; Ps 4: 2-9; 1 Jn 2:1-5; Lk 24:35-48

*“You are witnesses of these things” (Lk 24:48)*

To what do the apostles and the other disciples witness when they are called to be witnesses to Jesus Christ? On the one hand, they bear witness to his death: “but you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life.” Yet, even here, the witness to the crucifixion is tied intimately to the resurrection, for the verse continues, “whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.” The importance of being witnesses to the resurrection is stressed also at the end of the Gospel of Luke.

After the events on the road to Emmaus, the disciples were gathered and witnessed Jesus walking, talking and eating among them. While initially “they were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost,” they were soon convinced that Jesus was alive: “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.’ And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.”

Luke tells us that “in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering.” What a terrific description! It evokes a sense of someone holding a newborn for the first time, a team winning an improbable victory or finding out you

got the job. Is this real, or is it just a dream?

Then Jesus did the most human of things to ground them:

“Have you anything here to eat?” The Greek of the NRSV seems too formal. I would opt for “What do you guys have to eat here?” They gave Jesus “a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.”

Things just got real.

Jesus once again explained his death, its necessity and its connection to the resurrection. “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” That makes sense. They actually were witnesses to these things, they actually saw him die, ate with him, talked to him, felt the giddy excitement of his presence.

But to what are we witnesses today? None of us saw him die on the cross, or watched him eat that piece of broiled fish, feeling faint with joy and amazement as we saw him alive in our midst. We are witness to two things: the authenticity and trustworthiness of the witnesses; and the authenticity and trustworthiness of our lives.

In our lives, we have choices each day. And as John says, “my little chil-

dren, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.” Not to sin would be the best path, but our weaknesses lead us astray. Still, because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, “if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” Whenever we struggle with sin—so often the same old boring sins; so dull and stupid—“we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments.” We can turn back to the commandments and we must turn back to the commandments and live them out in our lives. If we do not, John tells us, each



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

In your imagination, gather with the disciples after the experience on the road to Emmaus. How do you bear witness to the risen Lord?

of us becomes “a liar” but we have the ability to show the world the reality of the risen Lord through our love, our obedience, our tenderness, our mercy, our gentleness, our desire to live out and witness to Christ’s victory through our daily choices.

And we bear witness to the one who was raised from the dead when we believe the words the apostles passed on to us. We believe in their trustworthiness about Jesus because we live out their love for Jesus. When we live as Jesus asked us to, passed on to us by the tradition, “by this we may be sure that we are in him.” How we live makes us witnesses to Jesus Christ. It is our task today to bear witness.

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

# The Shepherd's Love

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (B), APRIL 26, 2015

Readings: Acts 4:8-12; Ps 118: 1-29; 1 Jn 3:1-2; Jn 10:11-18

*"The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep" (Jn 10:13)*

In 4 Ezra 5:18, a Jewish apocalyptic text of the first century A.D., Ezra is asked by "Phaltiel, a chief of the people" whether he knows "that Israel has been entrusted to you in the land of their exile? Rise therefore and eat some bread, and do not forsake us, like a shepherd who leaves the flock in the power of savage wolves." The image is similar to that found in the Gospel of John, in which Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep."

In *Let the Little Children Come to Me*, Cornelia Horn and I wrote that "the account of the Good Shepherd in John 10 offers a theological image of Jesus' love for his people, but its relevance as a metaphor for Jesus' love derives from the ability to connect the image to everyday instances taken from life. Jesus is not a 'hired worker' (*misthōtos*), but rather someone who cares for the sheep, who will lay down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11-15). What, in contrast, will the hired worker do when the wolf comes? He (or she) will run" (pg. 178).

But the hired hands also function quite clearly on a metaphoric level, which Jesus draws out explicitly. If he

is the Good Shepherd, who are the hired hands? They are synonymous, as in 4 Ezra, with Jewish religious authorities who do not care for the sheep as a good shepherd. Based in an actual agricultural image, which ordinary people knew intimately, the condemnation of these hired hands is grounded in day-to-day life.

Jesus cares for the people, the sheep, because they are his sheep and will protect them. This much is clear, yet the extension of the image seems bizarre, when Jesus says, "And I lay down my life for the sheep." Are the sheep worth it? Are the sheep worth dying for? And if the shepherd dies for his sheep, who will protect them? This image shines a light on the absurdity of Jesus' sacrifice for humanity. For this sacrifice makes sense only if through it the flock will be better protected.

And this is the case as Jesus speaks of his death, which will lead to bringing in "other sheep that do not belong to this fold.... So there will be one flock, one shepherd." Jesus does speak of laying down his life, but it is "in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father." At first blush, dying for the sheep seems to run counter to the goal of caring for the sheep, but it is the reason for the flock's flourishing today

all over the world.

The results are seen when the "rulers of the people and elders" question Peter as to how a lame man was healed; he answers that his restoration to wholeness was "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

Not only has the Good Shepherd saved the sheep through giving his

## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on these images: What does it mean to be a part of Jesus' flock? What does it mean to be a child of God?

life up for them, he has emboldened the flock itself, no longer to be sheep, but "that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are... beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is." We have been saved to become children, but our final goal, which we cannot yet fully imagine, is to become like the Good Shepherd.

JOHN W. MARTENS

# Mariandale Retreat & Conference CENTER

# Summer Retreats 2015

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#### Artists' Contemplative Retreat

Facilitator: Rose Amodeo Petronella

**Thursday, June 4 –  
Thursday, June 11**

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#### On Becoming Who We Are: Embracing Our Faith as Adult Christians

Presenters: Barbara Fiand, SNDdeN

**Sunday, June 7 – Friday, June 12**

Fee: \$425 - \$450 (as you are able)

#### The Sacred Journey: Encountering God in the Second Half of Life

Presenter: Jack Rathschmidt, OFM,  
Cap. and Gaynell Cronin

**Sunday, June 14 –  
Friday, June 19**

Fee: \$425 - \$450 (as you are able)

#### Who Do You Say I Am for You and Your World Today?

Presenter: Mary Schneiders, OP

**Sunday, June 21 –  
Thursday, June 25**

Fee: \$350 - \$375 (as you are able)

#### Overcoming Our Resistance to Joy

Presenter: Don Bisson, FMS

**Thursday, June 25 –  
Sunday, June 28**

Fee: \$350 - \$375 (as you are able);  
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(as you are able)

#### Directed Retreat

Directors: Aedan McKeon, OP,  
Nancy Erts, OP, and Judy Schiavo

**Sunday, June 28 –  
Saturday, July 4**

Fee: \$500 - \$525 (as you are able)

### JULY

#### Called to Deeper Intimacy

Presenter: Janet E. Corso

**Sunday, July 5 – Friday, July 10**

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#### Crafters' and Quilters' Retreat: Silly Summer Times

Prayer Facilitator: Nancy Erts, OP  
Craft Instructor: Patricia Werner

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Fee: \$375 - \$400 (as you are able);  
Commuters: \$275 - \$300  
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#### Women's Retreat: Women Relating as Soul Sisters

Sunday evening: Gathering Prayer  
Monday: Sue Monk Kidd  
Tuesday: Elizabeth Johnson  
Wednesday: Judy Cannato  
Thursday: Jan Phillips  
Friday: Illia Delio  
Saturday: Closing Celebration

Presenter: Nancy Erts, OP

**Sunday, July 12 –  
Saturday, July 18**

Fee: \$450 - \$475 (as you are able)  
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#### Be a Beholder of Grace

Presenter: Beverly Musgrave, Ph.D

**Sunday, July 12 –  
Friday, July 17**

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#### Dominican Guided/Preached Retreat: In the Beginning Was the Word

Retreat Team: Jim Barnett, OP;  
Rebecca Ann Gemma, OP;  
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**Sunday, July 19 –  
Saturday, July 25**

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nessy, RSCJ; and Kathy McGrath, RSCJ

**Sunday, July 26 –  
Sunday, August 2**

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### AUGUST

#### God's Reconciling Love: The Bread and Wine of Life

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Saturday, August 8**

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#### Nurturing an Evolving Spiritual Consciousness

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