America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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One Church, Many Charisms

GAVIN D'COSTA ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF 'LUMEN GENTIUM'

MICHAEL F. BURBIDGE ON THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

OF MANY THINGS

Last month I attended the 2014 Erasmus Lecture sponsored by First Things, the journal of opinion founded by the late Rev. Richard John Neuhaus. The lecture was given by Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Philadelphia; his theme was "Strangers in a Strange Land," a thought-provoking account of the current state of the church in the United States. **America**'s readers will know that this journal has expressed different opinions from those held by Archbishop Chaput on some matters of prudential judgment. I had some critical questions about his talk, but there was also much to commend it.

You would not know that, however, from some of the media coverage. Some commentators, for example, thought that the archbishop had denounced the recently concluded Synod of Bishops and had even criticized the pope himself. Yet Archbishop Chaput did neither of those things. His critique of the synod was in fact a critique of the media coverage of the synod. "I wasn't there," the archbishop said when asked about the synod, which was not a topic he addressed in his prepared remarks. "That's very significant, because to claim you know what really happened when you weren't there is foolish.... I don't think the press deliberately distorts, they just don't have any background to evaluate things."

Now one can disagree with the archbishop's view here, but when he was addressing the "confusion" around the synod, he was speaking of the public perception and media coverage, not the proceedings themselves. Such distinctions matter, precisely because this hopeful time in the life of the church is also one fraught with anxiety. At a minimum, the media have an obligation not to add to the anxiety. The Catholic media, in other words, which have "the background to be able to evaluate things," cannot afford to fall into patterns of reporting that are indistinguishable from those in the secular media. **America**, of course, is not perfect. We don't always get it right either, and the frenzy of the 24-hour news cycle and ever-expanding digital technologies make it harder to get it right.

But there are other forces at work. In addition to its more noble motivations, the press in the United States exists in order to build mass markets for advertisers. In the past this was done, especially in television news, by appealing to as wide a demographic as possible. Back in the day, Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater both watched Walter Cronkite. With the advent of the 24-hour news cycle and the proliferation of television news outlets, media organizations now create markets for advertisers by slicing and dicing demographic groups, crafting their coverage for audiences of like-minded people. Thus Fox News appeals to one group and MSNBC appeals to another by producing content that pits one faction against another and then groups them into winners and losers.

It is important that we in the Catholic media not allow this to happen to us. The reporters I know are hardworking professionals with the right motives; more often than not they get the story right. Yet this is not an ordinary time. Pope Francis, in his most recent address for World Communications Day, called for the Catholic media to reflect carefully on our unique mission, which, in the present national media environment, is profoundly countercultural. All of us—bishops, priests, laypeople and reporters—would do well to heed his words: "We are challenged to be people of depth, attentive to what is happening around us and spiritually alert. To dialogue means to believe that the 'other' has something worthwhile to say, and to entertain his or her point of view and perspective. Engaging in dialogue does not mean renouncing our own ideas and traditions, but the claim that they alone are valid or absolute."

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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Cover: Blessed Paul VI's beatification Mass at St. Peter's Basilica on Oct. 19. The Mass also concluded the Synod of Bishops on the Family. CNS photo/Paul Haring

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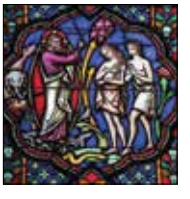


Lessons From Nisour Square

Many Iraqis had come to doubt that anyone would ever be held accountable for a senseless slaughter in Baghdad in September 2007. Fourteen unarmed Iraqis were killed when private military contractors went on a rampage at a traffic circle in Nisour Square. It has taken more than seven years, but three men were convicted on Oct. 22 of manslaughter and a fourth of murder. The men had been employees of Blackwater Worldwide, a well-paid and well-connected private security force hired to ride shotgun for U.S. diplomats. (The firm rebranded as Academi in 2011, its second name change since the notorious incident.) The verdict will no doubt be chased by appeals; nevertheless, it a strong signal that the era of impunity for U.S. military contractors is over.

The decision offers an opportunity to revisit the privatization of responsibilities previously reserved for U.S. military and intelligence forces—a trend that accelerated after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Since then, hired guns have at times proved costly embarrassments for both the Pentagon and the intelligence community, yet the role of private contractors remains prominent. A report from the Congressional Research Service in May 2013 found that there were nearly 18,000 security contractors in Afghanistan, compared with 65,700 U.S. troops. Over the last six years, the defense department doled out $160 billion to private contractors (most of which are not involved in security operations), a figure that "exceeded total contract obligations of any other U.S. federal agency." A major finding of the same report was that the Pentagon was not up to the job of supervising its casual-wear military.

A dangerous dependency on private security has evolved. Until adequate oversight and compliance with international norms can be assured, the Pentagon should be seeking to reverse this trend and cease the outsourcing of defense.

The Catholic Press Shines

This year two American Catholic publications celebrated their anniversaries following long, faithful service to the church. Both are mostly lay-run operations, although Commonweal has had two non-lay editors and The National Catholic Reporter has priests and women religious on their board and staff. N.C.R. enjoyed its 50th anniversary in the Kansas City Visitation parish hall. Commonweal celebrated, at Chelsea Piers in Manhattan, its 90th year by honoring former Senator George Mitchell with its Catholic in the Public Square Award.

Founded shortly after World War I, Commonweal's guiding principle was that democracy and Catholicism must be partners, not antagonists. Early contributors included G. K. Chesterton and Jacques Maritain. In 1967 it called for an escalation of civil disobedience to oppose the Vietnam War. That same year N.C.R.'s founding editor, Robert Hoyt, wrote that the "mid-sixties offered the best opportunity in history to bring the traditions and professional techniques of secular journalism fully into the service of the church." With the future editor Thomas Fox working as their correspondent in Vietnam, N.C.R. relentlessly covered the war, opposing it on moral grounds.

Addressing the anniversary dinner, Mr. Fox said, "Good journalism gives voice to the voiceless." Today that characterizes not only Commonweal and N.C.R. but **America** and other Catholic publications that reach out to today's young journalists, inviting them to raise their voices too for faith and justice.

Catholicism in Mongolia

That Catholicism is universal is borne out in the unlikeliest of places. One of them is Mongolia, where Catholics have a tiny but growing presence. As Buddhism has historically been (and still is) the predominant religion in the landlocked Asian country, it may be news to some that there are Catholics there at all. But since the demise of Communism in the 1990s Catholic missionaries have been planting the seeds of faith in this nomadic land.

Thanks to Vietnamese and Filipino missionaries, Catholicism has been gaining converts ever since a post-Communist democratic government signaled that church ministries would be welcomed to help combat the alcoholism, domestic abuse and pervasive poverty that plague the country. Within three years, people began to join the Catholic Church at the rate of 20 to 50 per year; the Catholic population now stands at about 850. In 2003, in recognition of this achievement, a Filipino missionary, Wenceslao Padilla, was named the country's first bishop.

Catholicism in Mongolia has also seen challenges. Restrictions on religious education and practice prompted the Rev. Kuafa Hervé, a 36-year-old priest of the Cathedral of Saint Peter and Paul in Ulan Bator, to describe the Mongolian church as "beleaguered." Despite the obstacles, Catholicism holds on in Mongolia. The members of the Gantulga family, for example, converted in the hope of living better lives. Their faith can be summed up in a simple song Mr. Gantulga composed for the church's 20th anniversary in 2012: "Jesus Christ has saved us."

EDITORIAL

Encountering Islam

Pope Francis' trip to Turkey at the end of November comes at a critical time and place in the history of Christian-Muslim relations. Bordering Iraq and Syria, Turkey has in recent months been inundated with refugees fleeing the advance of Islamic State militants. The Christian presence in the Middle East has been on the decline for decades, but today civil war and the rise of extremist groups threaten to expel the tiny minority that remains.

The plight of persecuted Christians is an issue close to Pope Francis' heart, and at a gathering of cardinals on Oct. 20 denounced "terrorism of previously unimaginable proportions" and the perpetrators on whom "the value of human life has been lost." Nowhere in his remarks, however, does he draw a connection between this violence and the religion of Islam. His careful use of language reflects his belief, expressed a year ago in his apostolic exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel," that "authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Quran are opposed to every form of violence." For that reason, he writes, Catholics must avoid "hateful generalizations" in the face of violent fundamentalism.

Such nuance often is lost on American commentators. In September the talk show host Bill Maher said the "Muslim world…has too much in common with ISIS"; his guest, the author Sam Harris, conceded that there are certainly "nominal Muslims who don't take the faith seriously, who don't want to kill apostates, who are horrified by ISIS." As there were no Muslims present in this exchange, the source of religious authority cited was the Pew Research Center, which found that 86 percent of Egyptians support the death penalty for apostates.

That is a troubling statistic, but religions are not defined by opinion polls. Those who wish to make sweeping generalizations about Muslims have their work cut out for them. There is no equivalent to the pope in Islam, no single catechism or hierarchy to consult for definitive interpretations of religious texts. Any sentence that begins "All Muslims" and does not end with "believe there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" probably paints an incomplete or inaccurate picture of a faith held by over 1.5 billion people from every region of the world. In Afghanistan 99 percent of Muslims favor making Sharia law the law of the land; in Azerbaijan just 8 percent favor this. Factors other than faith are at play here.

This is not to say that the Muslim faith in its diversity of expressions should not be engaged with critically. Groups like ISIS and Boko Haram commit horrific acts of violence in the name of Islam, and it is not enough to simply say, "They are not true Muslims." But neither should their actions be used to perpetuate what the theologian William T. Cavanaugh calls "the myth of religious violence," the idea that religion is "more inclined toward violence than secular ideologies and institutions."

What, then, can Catholics do to elevate the conversation around Islam? First, we must recognize that narratives matter. According to a poll by the Public Religion Research Institute in 2011, only about a third of Americans personally know a Muslim, and 86 percent report knowing little or nothing about Islam. If what most Americans know about Islam is what they see in the headlines—rebels beheading journalists in Syria and kidnapping school girls in Nigeria—it is easy to understand why a Pew poll in 2014 found 50 percent, the highest share since 2002, believe Islam is more likely to encourage violence than other religions. These stories deserve our attention; but so too does the fact that Malala Yousufzai, who recently won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work promoting girls' education, is Muslim, as were four others among the past 12 peace laureates.

Catholics can also follow Pope Francis' lead by creating a "culture of encounter" with Muslims. This fall Bishop Arthur Serratelli of the Diocese of Paterson, N.J., attended an *iftar*, the evening meal at which Muslims break their Ramadan fast. At the dinner the bishop joined Imam Mohammad Qatanani in a discussion about volunteerism, another fruitful ground for interfaith engagement. The Interfaith Youth Corps, for example, fosters cooperation among faith and secular communities through service work on over 100 campuses nationwide. Catholic high schools and universities could also incorporate introductory classes on Islam into their curriculum and welcome imams as campus chaplains, as Georgetown University has done since 1999.

In a world where senseless terror threatens Muslim and Christians alike, we must take up the call of the Second Vatican Council, in the "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," "to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom."

REPLY ALL

Our Neighbors

Re "Listening to Ebola" (Editorial, 10/27): If people want to know what America is all about, here it is. Sadly, greed still triumphs in health care. And too often fighting abortion overshadows caring for the millions of children who die every year for lack of basic necessities. That reality has been in the background. The Ebola outbreak will have a positive outcome if it makes us recognize we are our neighbor's keeper. And our neighbors are also in Africa.

Meanwhile, no one is showing us what it means to love our neighbors more than the doctors, like Dr. Steven Hatch, recently profiled in The New York Times, and nurses who are treating Ebola patients in Africa at risk to their own health. Likewise the pastor who died next to Dr. Hatch, but insisted, as he lay dying, on praying for the doctor. The greed of the world is softened by such shining, inspiring examples.

BILL MAZZELLA
Online Comment

Inclusive Education

Re "Learning Curve," by Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan (10/20): I am glad that change is occurring in our Catholic schools and agree that they are worth fighting for. I am proud to say that both of my older sons attended Catholic school here in Arizona. It is also heartbreaking for my husband and me that our youngest son with Down Syndrome was not welcomed into that same Catholic school. Many public schools and districts are now adopting a policy that eschews special education classes and are instead including all children into general education classrooms. It is sad that the Catholic Church is behind in seeing all the abilities of all children. I hope **America** will lend its voice to inspire a wave of inclusion in dioceses across the country.

MICHELLE TETSCHNER
Gilbert, Ariz.

Bombs to Nowhere

"Proceed With Caution" (Editorial, 10/13) seeks to address the threat of ISIS. The editors set out the many complexities of the situation, but cannot bring themselves to condemn the bombing campaign that the United States has undertaken. Yet in the same issue there are two full pages devoted to the terrible plight of Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Turkey ("Refugees, Fleeing ISIS, Threaten to Overwhelm Turkish Resources"). On the next page, the caption for a picture accompanying a report on the opinion of the leadership of International Pax Christi reads: "Air Strikes Will Aid ISIS."

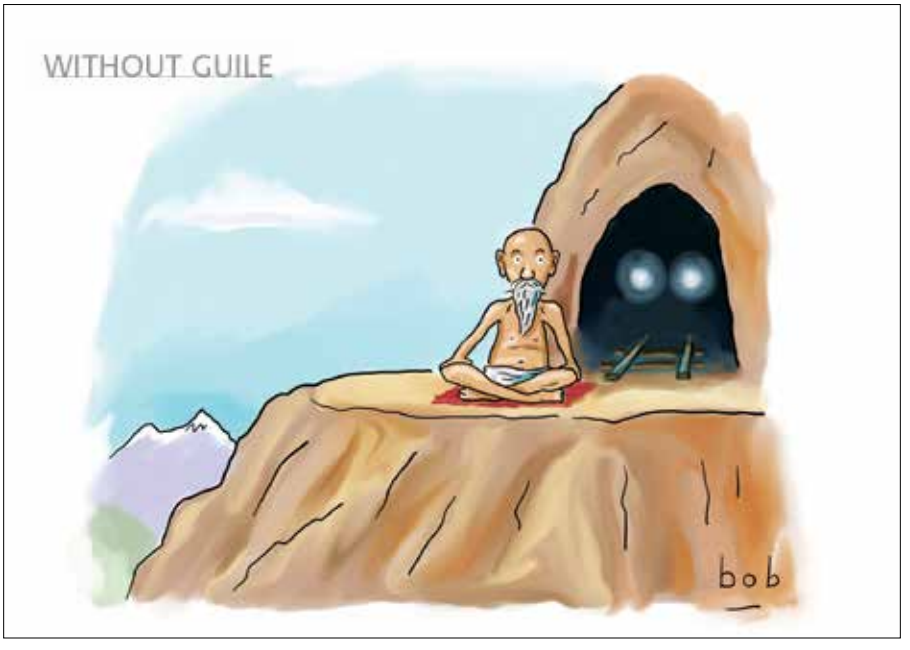
I urge the editors to deeply consider the alternatives to U.S. military action offered by 65 national religious organizations, academics and ministers. They state, "There are better, more effective, more healthy and more humanizing ways to protect civilians and to engage this conflict." They offer a compelling menu of "ways the United States and others can not only help save lives in Iraq and the region, but also begin to transform the conflict and break the cycle of violent intervention." It is time and past time for the fallacy of redemptive violence to be rejected, and to lay to rest the notion that one more bombing campaign, however regrettable, will somehow bring peace.

MARY BETH MOORE, S.C.
Wantagh, N.Y.

Talk Local

I welcome Paul Ryan's contribution to the discussion of poverty in "Preferential Options" (10/13). There was much that I liked in what I hear about his "Opportunity Grants." Mr. Ryan mentions that subsidiarity is crucial to his plan. **America** has previously published a good definition, by Vincent Miller, which seems close to what I learned in the seminary: "Subsidiarity envisions not a small government, but a strong, limited one that encourages intermediate bodies and organizations (families, community groups, unions, businesses) to contribute to the common good" ("Saving Subsidiarity" 7/30/12).

I have also heard this stated thus: the smallest group of individuals should have a say over their destiny. For me in Texas that means that Texas billionaires should not have the only say over the problems people experience in the Fifth Ward.



CARTOON: BOB ECKSTEIN

I envision asking people in poverty to describe what they would like their community to be. This may reveal great differences of opinion between rural and urban residents, or between different ethnic groups. Some of the suggestions would be impractical or contradictory. Some people might say, "I don't know how but here is what I would like to see." Regardless, it would be a very interesting and fruitful enterprise

MIKE VAN CLEVE
Online Comment

Compassionate Change

Joan's story in "Remain Here With Me"(10/13) moved me to tears. Our daughter was brutally assaulted and raped by an ex-boyfriend several years ago and was met with similar apathy from most of her college community, though a strong group of victim advocates did provide love and support. What she needed, however, was additional spiritual care and concern.

As a Catholic lay minister myself, I found few established resources on the scope and order of those provided for post-abortion spiritual healing, probably reflecting the focus our church had placed on that particular issue at the time.

I am grateful to the author for sharing her beautiful reflection about how through her recovery she was able to connect to Jesus. Please know there are many women and men working toward developing a broader and more compassionate response from our church, and I am among them.

DEBORAH ZANE
Online Comment

Mary's Model

I found Sidney Callahan's review of *In Quest of the Jewish Mary*, by Mary Christine Athans, fascinating, though perhaps somewhat misleading ("Woman Of All Seasons," 10/13). While Mary no doubt enjoyed "a rich religious heritage" and participated fully in ritual celebrations, she was a woman of her times, subjugated in the broader social sphere and in the political world of her day; so Mary's strength lay in the spiritual realm.

Because of this, I found confusing Ms. Callahan's portrayal of Mary as a feminist. Certainly Mary remains a unique role model for women (and men), but her greatness was not in pursuing gender equality or self-assertion. If anything it was in self-effacement. We hear in the Gospels, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" and "The Lord has looked upon his lowly servant." Mary's true strength emanated from her awareness of her status as a creature whose fulfillment lay in compliance with the will of her almighty creator.

There is no conflict between possessing humility and exercising one's God-given gifts, even if this encompasses greatness in the secular sphere. The example of Mary, however, shows us that the core value of any greatness is service—to God and man. If this is what Mary's feminism comprises, she is the supreme role model for feminists and non-feminists alike. In this she is truly a woman for all seasons.

CHARLES BUTERA
East Northport, N.Y.

TWITTER TALK

On Oct. 16 Matt Malone, S.J., joined Catholic media leaders at Georgetown University to discuss the common good in a time of religious and political polarization. The following are tweets posted during the event.

America editor: Catholic journals must be edgy, countercultural. Mass media slices us into ideological camps.
ALTMUSLIMAH
@AltMuslimah

America editor: Church has to remember our public identity, not just on Sunday morning but Monday morning.
JOHN GEHRING
@gehringdc

@americamag: Young people aren't interested in the kind of ideology they hear on cable news.
MEGAN BUCHHEIT
@meg_buch

Catholic Church does not possess the truth. We hope He possesses us. Editor of @americamag
EMILY ROSTKOWSKI
@EmilyRostkowski

Great final words from @Americaeditor of @americamag: Teaching of church is only credible to extent that love is credible
CACG
@CathInAlliance

Follow us on Twitter @americamag.

Able to Love

In "Raise Up the Roof" (10/6), Maria Cataldo-Cunniff discusses the unique gifts families with disabilities bring to the church. Persons with disabilities and those facing serious, debilitating illness are much-needed witnesses to the need people and families have for one another and our universal human vulnerability, especially in our individualistic and success-oriented society.

My husband was diagnosed with cancer when we were engaged. Almost six years later, after one wedding, two babies, three surgeries and God knows how many targeted treatments and their awful side effects, each day is a leap of faith. We've discovered both our ability to love more deeply than we thought possible, but also our ability to "be not afraid" in the face of our own vulnerability. We've learned the humbling lesson that we are not as self-sufficient as we once thought we were, and how much we depend on family, community, empathy from our employers and God's mercy. It's humbling; it's painful; but in a way, the lessons learned are liberating, too.

ABIGAIL WOODS-FERREIRA
Online Comment

SIERRA LEONE

C.R.S. Undertakes 'Safe and Dignified' Burials for Ebola Victims

Burials that are dignified and safe are urgently needed for Ebola victims in West Africa, where corpses are frequently left unattended for days and then thrown into graves without ceremony, a U.S. church aid official said.

"So many people are dying that there has not been the capacity to respond" to burial needs in an appropriate way, and "we are now making this a priority," Michael Stulman, regional information officer for the U.S. bishops' Catholic Relief Services, said in a telephone interview from Freetown, Sierra Leone. Nearly 5,000 people have died in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia during the worst Ebola outbreak on record; many people have contracted the disease by touching the highly infectious dead bodies of victims.

"The ritual of the family washing the body of the deceased has been taken away, and this can't be changed because of the health risks; but we can bring dignity back to the burial process," Stulman said.

C.R.S. has taken responsibility for managing burials in the Port Loko district in northern Sierra Leone, he said. The agency will ensure that graves are marked, so that families know where their loved ones are buried, and that there is "one body in one grave," he said, noting that in the current crisis "this is not always the case."

Stulman, who is based in Dakar, Senegal, visited a cemetery in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, where laborers "are digging 40 graves a day," he said.

"We need to create ways for people to visit the graves of their loved ones and still be safe," he explained, noting that currently no funeral services are held in Sierra Leone and visits to cemeteries are not allowed.

Ebola is spread through contact with bodily fluids of an infected person and is not an airborne disease. "We will work closely with local religious leaders in putting in place burial procedures," Stulman said. "There needs to be some ceremony for the loved one who has died," he added.

The Rev. Paul Morana Sandi, general secretary of the Inter-territorial Catholic Bishops' Conference of The Gambia and Sierra Leone, told Catholic News Agency for Africa that a meeting with President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone had led to a decision that religious leaders can be at burial sites "to pray, but from a distance, with some of the relatives present."

The removal of all rituals associated with death "has had negative influences on our own cultural practices and way of behaving," Father Sandi said.

"A sacred ritual has been taken away" in the wake of Ebola, Stulman said, noting that health teams in protective gear now remove corpses from homes.

When someone dies of Ebola in Sierra Leone, households "wait between one and seven days for a burial team to collect the body," he said, noting that this is often caused by "difficult roads or a car breaking down."

C.R.S. aims to enable burial teams to respond to calls "quickly and safely, with the resources to protect themselves from danger of infection," Stulman said.

Two vehicles are needed to collecting bodies from homes or clinics for burial, "one for the team and the other to transport the body," he said. "The team should spray the body with disinfectant and put it in a bag and also spray the house," he said. Noting that deaths from Ebola can be "sudden and unexpected" and that there is little help at hand for grieving families, Stulman said C.R.S. will start providing counseling services.

WORK OF MERCY. Health workers at a burial in northern Sierra Leone.

EUROPE

Abandoned On the Mediterranean?

Catholic bishops and aid agencies criticized a move by European nations to scale down the rescue of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean Sea, where hundreds drown each month attempting to reach Europe.

"What we're seeing is almost a night-

mare vision. Any policy which causes people to die must be considered immoral," said Auxiliary Bishop William Kenney of Birmingham, England, president of the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions. "The theology here is quite simple. Everyone is created in the image of God, so we cannot let them die if we can save them. To do so will lead us into an impossible ethical situation," he said on Oct. 30.

The bishop's comments came after the British government confirmed on Oct. 29 that it would no longer support search-and-rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea. The Italian government said it also was ending its program. The British decision reflects a "growing xenophobia," Bishop Kenney said, suggesting that European citizens must better understand "what war and poverty really mean."

A spokesman for Caritas Internationalis said rescue programs had been launched "because women and children were dying at sea." Patrick Nicholson, communications director for the umbrella organization for Catholic charities around the world, urged the European Union to find "common solutions" rather than "unfairly leaving the problem to Italy."

"With or without these programs, people will continue to place themselves in danger by crossing the Mediterranean, and we'll have a responsibility to save their lives," said Nicholson. "It's impossible for us to countenance hundreds of people being left to die at sea, particularly when there doesn't seem to be any Plan B apart from building a Fortress Europe," he said.

Up to 150,000 refugees have been rescued by Italian naval ships since January, compared with 65,000 in 2013, and about 3,000 migrants have drowned this year, according to refugee agencies. Italy's operation, Mare Nostrum (Our Sea), was launched in 2013 after more than 360 refugees drowned in a boat disaster off the island of Lampedusa.

The government of Premier Matteo Renzi reported on Oct. 29 that it was closing down the operation because it was unsustainable and would be replaced on Nov. 1 by the new Operation Triton. That effort will be run through Europe's border agency, Frontex, but it will have just one-third of the budget of Mare Nostrum and maintain patrols only within 30 miles of the Italian coast.

The plight of refugees has frequently been noted by Pope Francis. He urged Europeans to "open the doors of their hearts" by welcoming those "who risk their lives at sea to flee war and poverty" during a private meeting on Oct. 1 with survivors of the Lampedusa disaster.

Joyce Anelay, of Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said in a statement that her country would not support future rescue missions and believed it was better to "focus attention on countries of origin and transit" and "fight the people-smugglers who willfully put lives at risk by packing migrants into unseaworthy boats."

The general secretary of the ecumenical Commission for Migrants in Europe, Doris Peschke, said that the rapid increase in "despairing refugees" had been caused by crises in the Middle East and North Africa rather by the E.U.'s rescue missions, adding that other routes would be found if the Mediterranean became too dangerous. She said she believed most Europeans were ready to help refugees and that government policies should reflect those views, rather than "the racist arguments of populist organizations."

"To imply we should simply leave people to die is a dreadful, cynical response. It has nothing to do with European values, which uphold human rights, including the right to life," Peschke said.

LOST AT SEA. Sub-Saharan migrants greet a Spanish rescue boat at Tarifa, Spain.

Iran-Catholic Dialogue Dividends

Seven months after a delegation of U.S. bishops quietly met with Iranian religious leaders, their efforts appear to be on track. At a program on Oct. 29 on the dialogue and the relevance of moral questions about nuclear weapons, Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, who met with Iranian ayatollahs in March, said Iranians "feel profoundly misunderstood by Americans." Bishop Pates said the Muslim leaders said images like those of crowds waving signs carrying messages like "Death to America" are not representative of the thinking of most Iranians and have skewed impressions of the country in Western nations. According to Bishop Pates, the Iranian clerics noted that the majority of terrorist acts carried out by people who say they're acting in the name of Islam are not in the Shiite branch of Islam but are Sunni Muslims. He added the clerics wanted to know why the United States continues to engage with countries like Saudi Arabia, which they described as home to extremists, while continuing to have a contentious relationship with Iran.

Maronite Bishop Urges 'Profound Defiance'

Maronite Bishop Gregory J. Mansour of Brooklyn, N.Y., spoke in Nashville, Tenn., to Belmont University students on Oct. 22 about the need for all Christians to respond to persecution with "profound defiance," which is markedly different from vengeful retaliation or submissive inaction. "Jesus was not a passive victim," Bishop Mansour said. "Christians are not just asked to be nice people and doormats." Bishop Mansour told the students that they are called to stand in solidarity with the persecuted Christians in the Middle East and to join forces with people of goodwill to raise a voice against "the worst injustice you can imagine," that is currently taking place at the hands of Islamic State militants. Bishop Mansour noted the historical divisions among Christians but said that "amazing unity is happening today" because of the threat to Middle East Christians. He championed the art of nonviolent resistance. This requires "much prayer, much fasting, much building of solidarity," he said. "Peace is possible, but it takes a lot of hard work."

Poverty Among Synod's Concerns

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila said the Synod of Bishops on the Family was more than a series of discussions on divorce and same-sex unions and that the impact of poverty on families, especially in Asia, was a major concern of participants. "Poverty is really affecting the Filipino family in a dramatic way," Cardinal Tagle told reporters on Oct. 30. While he was in Italy, a number of contract workers from the Philippines approached him in tears. Cardinal Tagle said one worker told him, "If it weren't for hardship, I would never have left my wife and children behind." More than nine million Filipinos, about 10 percent of the population of the Philippines, live overseas and about half of these migrated for work. Cardinal Tagle said such migration was a major concern in synod discussions. "Couples separate not because they're mad at each other," the cardinal said. "They separate because they love their family and they bear the pain of separation just to find jobs elsewhere. So we ask, 'What kind of pastoral care can we give for the [contract] workers to remain faithful to their families...and what can we do for those left behind?'"

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

A refugee from Kobani, Syria

The Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference called on the Confederation of African Football to **postpone the Africa Cup** of Nations 2015 soccer tournament, scheduled for Jan. 17 to Feb. 8, because of the Ebola threat. ✦ **New light is shining** on the Sistine Chapel after a state of the art LED lighting system donated by Osram, a German lighting company, was inaugurated on Oct. 29. ✦ More than 50 members of the British Parliament have written to Pakistani authorities **asking for an urgent review** in the case of Asia Bibi, a Christian mother of five whose death sentence on blasphemy charges was recently reinstated by Pakistan's high court. ✦ The Catholic Bishops of Syria called on the international community on Oct. 29 to **end the arms trade** that fuels the civil war that is destroying their country and forcing thousands of Christians to flee. ✦ The Archdiocese of New York announced on Nov. 2 that **112 parishes will be merged** to create 55 new parishes and that by August in 31 of the new parishes one of the churches will no longer be used for regular services but will in effect be closed.

DISPATCH | BEIJING

From Protest to Movement?

Large-scale protests in Hong Kong, known as Occupy Central, reached a one-month milestone on Oct. 28. The continuing demonstrations are a response to moves by the Chinese government to limit civil participation in future Hong Kong elections. Thousands of protesters have remained in the streets focused on this single issue of electoral reform. But because this is the largest and most sustained protest in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's 17-year history, observers, opponents and participants know there is more on the line than just universal suffrage for the city's seven million people.

At the heart of Occupy Central are conflicting interpretations of the Basic Law, an ersatz constitution intended to govern Hong Kong for 50 years through its transition as a Special Administrative Region of China until its return to full Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 2047. The Basic Law guarantees Hong Kong a high degree of autonomy, including freedom of assembly, speech and religion.

Beijing may be more commonly associated in the Western mind with political protests because of the brutal suppression of the 1989 demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, but it is Hong Kong that has seen the most people consistently in the street in recent years. In 2003, as many as 700,000 people marched to protest the proposed enforcement of provisions of Article 23 of the Basic Law, which would have expanded police search-and-seizure practices.

But while the national security and now democratic process components of the Basic Law have been tested by protest, the agreement's stipulations on freedom of religion have not. Even the cult Falun Dafa (better known to Westerners as Falun Gong), banned in 1999 by Beijing on the mainland, operates openly in Hong Kong.

Playing too visible a role could ultimately be harmful to the protests and to the church.

Unlike the church in the rest of China, which is tightly supervised by the Chinese Communist Party, the Catholic Church in Hong Kong is still openly loyal to the Vatican, and its two Cardinals, Cardinal John Tong Hon and the retired Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, S.D.B., were appointed by Rome. That relationship has not been interfered with or questioned since the handover, even though Cardinal Zen in particular has been an outspoken critic of the Chinese government.

The Catholic Church has been more evident in the protest than other churches. The Justice and Peace Commission of the Diocese of Hong Kong has been involved since the planning stage of Occupy Central, and Cardinal Zen has been a presence at the demonstrations themselves.

But playing too visible a role could ultimately be harmful to the protests and to the church. The Chinese government is quick to dismiss political demonstrations as the work of "foreign forces." Too much prominence would reduce the focus on possible electoral reform and could also lead to pressure on Christian and other religious groups. With 21 world leaders, including President Obama, due in Beijing for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit beginning Nov. 7, it is unclear whether China's leadership will tolerate continuing protests in Hong Kong that might draw attention away from this marquee event.

While the Occupy Central movement may be about who answers to Beijing and who speaks for Hong Kong, members of the Hong Kong government and the protest leaders have more in common than they may care to acknowledge. The student protest organizer Joshua Wong is known to be a Christian, and, as The Wall Street Journal pointed out, so are some of Hong Kong's Beijing-friendly leaders, "including number two official Carrie Lam and former Chief Executive Donald Tsang, who are Catholic."

Although the protesters in Hong Kong have generated headlines around the world, the message has been slow to cross the S.A.R. border. State-run media are not covering the demonstrations, and the print media make only oblique references to what is happening in Hong Kong.

But thousands of Chinese visitors to Hong Kong during the Oct. 1 national holiday saw the protests in progress. Some were perturbed by the inconvenience and their inability to shop at some stores. But the protests continue, if for no other reason than to show that there may still be only one China, but there are also most certainly two systems.

STEVEN SCHWANKERT

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.*

NATHAN SCHNEIDER

Co-opting Catholics

Marcia Lee plants community everywhere she goes. During the hours I spent driving around half-abandoned neighborhoods of Detroit with her, she stopped at her church to plan a new environmental program and take the parish dog for a walk; visited her mentor, the 99-year-old activist-philosopher Grace Lee Boggs; attended Mass with the friars she works with as a co-director of the Capuchin Franciscan Volunteer Corps's Midwest branch; dropped off a falafel platter at the meeting of her Asian-American empowerment group; and, finally, brought a pumpkin pie from the collective house where she lives to Holy Thursday, her interfaith supper club.

During the decade she has lived in Detroit, the Capuchin friars' common life has been her buoy. "I might not still be Catholic without the Capuchins," Lee, 31, told me. And she wants more. She wants to live and work in stronger communities outside the friary, as the early Christians did in the Book of Acts. Lately she has been meeting with a group—mostly fellow women of color—that is discussing how to build cooperatives.

A co-op can take many forms. It can be made up of producers, consumers, workers or neighbors practicing participant ownership and democratic governance. Cooperative enterprises can operate as living alternatives in, but not of, an economic system that thrives on ruthless profit-seeking and inequality. Marcia Lee is part of a long legacy of Catholics who have led the global co-op movement.

In May I visited the mountain town of Salinas, Ecuador, where the textile mill, chocolate factory and dairy are cooperatively financed through the villagers' credit union—only to find that the whole system began with a Salesian priest. How about the Mondragon Corporation, the world's largest web of cooperative industries, employing more than 70,000 people in Basque country? The work of another priest. The oldest credit union in the United States is St. Mary's Bank, founded by a pastor of Franco-American mill workers in New Hampshire; north of the border, Catholics have nourished Quebec's rich cooperative tradition and the Antigonish co-ops of the Maritime Provinces. Today, many of the most vibrant U.S. co-ops are emerging among Latin-American immigrants. An **America** editorial in 1944 describes an Iowa parish's farming cooperative as reflecting "the Catholic ideal of truly social worship."

Msgr. John A. Ryan, once a prominent economist and moral theologian, praised cooperativism at length in his book *Distributive Justice* (1916). He saw it as an amalgam of the best impulses of socialism and capitalism, minus the worst. In the co-ops among poor farmers and workers that Ryan examined, he saw an antidote to the exploitation rampant under capitalism then and now. Subsidiarity and solidarity are written into the business model. But what attracted him most about co-ops was their capacity for moral pedagogy—"the mechanism and the atmosphere," Ryan wrote, "for a greater development of the altruistic spirit than is possible under any other economic system." Spirituality, also, has often been the glue binding strong co-ops together; the monastic tradition reflects with particular clarity how communal prayer helps us practice communal ownership.

> What if Catholics recognized the imperative to build the economy cooperatively?

As today's worsening inequality comes to resemble Msgr. Ryan's Gilded Age, there is a co-op renaissance going on in the United States and around the world. People are moving their money from too-big-to-fail banks to local credit unions, and young entrepreneurs are building open-source online tools that help them cooperate in new ways. In places like Marcia Lee's Detroit, the flight of capital makes co-ops a particular necessity. These so-called "new economy" initiatives are largely secular; and without church communities as a foundation, they face an uphill struggle in a culture of rogue individualists. In this latest surge, U.S. Catholics largely have been missing in action.

What if Catholics were to recognize, once again, the moral imperative to build the economy cooperatively? Parishes could incubate new co-op credit unions, enterprises and housing developments. Catholic legislators could pass laws to make co-op incorporation less onerous. Business leaders could restructure their institutions to spread ownership among workers and customers. The result would surely be, in Peter Maurin's words, "a society in which it is easier to be good."

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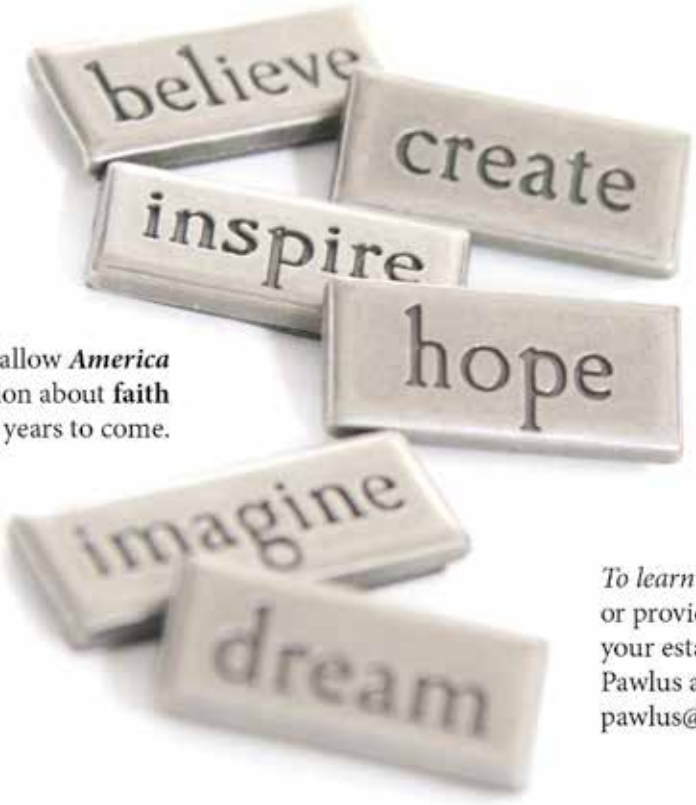

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Retiring With Dignity

Every December Catholics vote with their wallet and not just at the mall. They do it when they give to the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection, a 26-year-old venture to help support retired sisters, brothers and religious order priests in the United States. This year the national collection will be taken up in parishes on the weekend of Dec. 13-14.

In 1986 Catholics learned from The Wall Street Journal that religious orders faced a crisis because they did not foresee how rising health care costs and changing demographics would affect them. For decades, even centuries, the religious orders had invested in ministries, like education, health care and social services. They built alternative school, hospital and social-services systems. They did not, however, build retirement programs. They found satisfaction in what they did for the kingdom of heaven but not solvency for any kingdom on earth.

With sensitive consciences, beneficiaries of their systems, like alumni and former patients, took on the challenge as their own and worked with bishops and parishes to create the most successful annual collection the U.S. church had ever seen.

In the last 26 years Catholic and other donors have given $726 million to the Retirement Fund for Religious. They have been there in good times and in bad. When national finances were flush, as in 1999, the collection drew $33,050,206. In the economic downturn in 2010, it still drew in $26,774,226.

Religious orders became eligible for Social Security long after it was established by the United States. They bought in at a rate they could afford, which was not much. Today the annual benefit for a religious is $5,123.23, about a third of the amount received by the average beneficiary.

Catholics are smart givers too. With the retirement collection, they see 93 percent of what they donate go right to the retired religious. Compare that to the telephone solicitors, who reportedly give as little as 15 percent (15 is not a typo) of what they collect in the name of veterans' groups, cancer victims, local police and firefighters.

> U.S. religious built schools and hospitals but not retirement programs.

Collection organizers are smart too. They recognize that smart planning is one solution to the crisis.

The Benedictines of Subiaco Abbey in Arkansas, in 2009, asked the National Religious Retirement Office, which operates the collection, for an elevator. They then heeded advice to consider the elevator as part of long-term retirement needs and the ongoing viability of their order and ministries.

The Benedictines opted for a capital campaign, and an N.R.R.O. Implementation Assistance award of $300,000 let them hire a development firm to execute it. Before the campaign, the Benedictines were expected to deplete their operating budget in a matter of years. Today, they are just shy of completing an $8 million capital campaign that will ensure ongoing care of their senior members and long-term viability for their ministries and Benedictine way of life.

The Congregation of Divine Providence in Melbourne, Ky., faced the situation of costly, outdated facilities that no longer met the sisters' needs. The greatest challenge was to find the best use of St. Anne Convent, a massive but underutilized motherhouse.

With help from the N.R.R.O., the community sold St. Anne Convent and erected a cost-efficient provincial headquarters. The Diocese of Covington, Ky., needed a new retreat center and purchased the building. The community reduced its unfunded retirement liability from over 50 percent in 2008 to 15.95 percent today.

In Wisconsin, N.R.R.O. support helped the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province, and the School Sisters of St. Francis, U.S. Province, to erect a collaborative care facility. By joining forces, the two groups were able to decrease costs and reduce redundancies. In the future, the center is expected to be able to accommodate other religious and even diocesan priests.

Occasionally someone suggests that the annual collection, which has been backed by the U.S. bishops, should sunset, though why is not clear. The urgent need still exists. To put it proverbially, when something is not broken, why fix it?

Religious orders are "financially autonomous" and "solely responsible for the support and care of all members," N.R.R.O. reports. Despite such autonomy, however, given the generosity of Catholic laity and others, sisters, brothers and priests in religious orders do not walk alone. **MARY ANN WALSH**

MARY ANN WALSH, R.S.M., *is* ***America****'s U.S. Church correspondent.*

CNS PHOTO/TYLER ORSBURN)

ALL TOGETHER NOW. Catholic officials at a news conference in Washington D.C. to discuss initiatives for bringing together laypeople and religious.

Celebrating the Year of Consecrated Life

The Ongoing Call

BY MICHAEL F. BURBIDGE

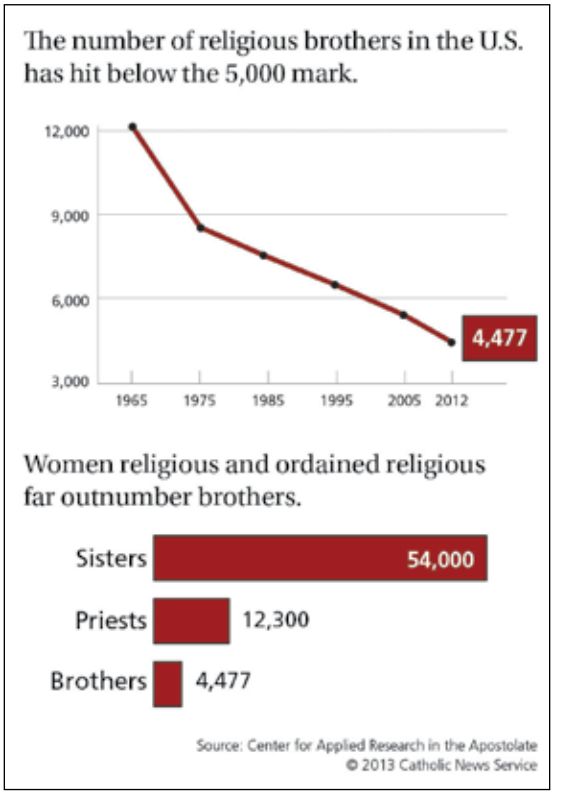
People are surprised when I tell them that for seven years of my priesthood, I lived with 80 women. I had the great privilege of being a chaplain at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Mercy. Each day, I would celebrate the morning Mass. It was humbling and inspiring to look out into the pews and see, represented in the sisters, a countless number of years of faithful and generous service to the church. They ministered as Catholic educators, nurses, social workers, counselors and in a variety of other ways. I was blessed to learn of their remarkable stories and to witness their joy and serenity.

Because women and men in consecrated life are true gems in the life and mission of the church, we have honored and prayed for them each year on a Day for Consecrated Life. Now Pope Francis has asked us to expand our attention for a whole year to the witness of those in

MOST REV. MICHAEL F. BURBIDGE *is the bishop of Raleigh, N.C., and chairman of the Committee on Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.*

consecrated life and in doing so "to deepen awareness of the diverse charisms and spiritualities" of the various religious institutes. This celebratory year begins on the weekend of the First Sunday of Advent, Nov. 29-30, and will conclude 14 months later with the World Day for Consecrated Life on Feb. 2, 2016.

It is fitting for the church to celebrate as we approach the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council's "Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life." Still inspiring to this day, the decree reminds us that "from the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical counsels" of chaste self-dedication to God, poverty and obedience. Over the centuries the church exhibits a wide array of forms of consecrated life: from contemplative to apostolic, from consecrated virgins to secular institutes, from hermits to those drawn to community life. Men and women in consecrated life teach in schools, care for the poor and needy, bring hope and healing in hospitals, pray in contemplation for the world and serve in a vast diversity of other ministries which again and again demonstratesthe abundance of Christ's love for his church and the world.



Perhaps most famously, the decree on religious life also called for the renewal of religious life not only through a more profound discipleship but by retrieving the "proper character" or charism of each order. The acceptance of this invitation to renewal has brought many blessings and not a few challenges. In many ways, religious orders continue to discern healthy paths to be true to the vision of their founders and, in the words of the decree, "share in the life of the church."

The Graces and Challenges

The face of consecrated life in the United States is very different now than it was 50 years ago. The trends evidence great graces. Among them are the following:

Newer Vocations. Currently, there are thousands of men and women in religious formation in the United States. These men and women believe that religious life will continue to persevere in the future. It is also encouraging that in a recent study by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops of never-married Catholics ages 14 to 35, approximately 350,000 men have seriously considered being a priest or a brother and 250,000 women have seriously considered being a sister or nun.

Increased diversity. Among the graces and blessings is the tremendous growth in racial and ethnic diversity within consecrated life. A 2009 study showed that 94 percent of women in perpetual vows were white. Among those in initial formation that same year, only 58 percent were white. The remainders were Hispanic/Latina (21 percent), Asian/Pacific Islander (14 percent) and Black/African American (6 percent). Religious men are also becoming more diverse. Of those men who were full members of their communities, 92 were percent white. However, of those in initial formation, 59 percent were white, 23 percent were Hispanic/Latino, 11 percent were Asian/Pacific Islander and 6 percent were Black/African American. (See charts.)

Desire for community. Among the youngest generation of new members, there is a great interest in lives lived in community with others. As one vocation director noted: "We're finding young women who are already geared into service and social justice issues, but are hungry for communal and prayer life." In a culture that seems increasingly individualistic and relativistic, some young people are attracted to what Catholic religious orders offer—a sense of belonging, of meaning, of truth.

Contentment in newer entrants. Some of the most rewarding and satisfying aspects of religious life identified by newer entrants in the 2009 study include a sense of peace in following God's call and a deepening of their relationship with God and Jesus Christ through personal and communal prayer. Being of service in ministry and being a witness of God to others also scored high in the survey.

But despite these many blessings, there are also tremendous challenges and pressures on consecrated life today. Among them are:

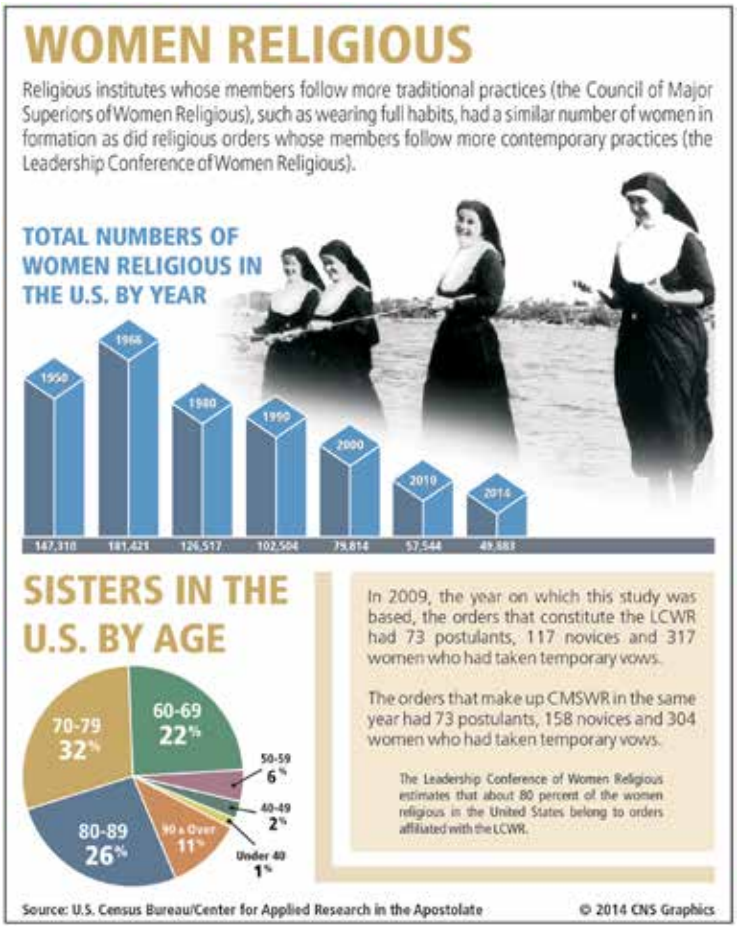
Changing demographics. The decline in the number of women and men in religious life in the United States is well known. While it is true that the influx of religious vocations

after World War II was exceptional, the precipitous decline over the last few decades is of concern. Since 2000, for example, the number of sisters has dropped by 38 percent (from 79,814 to 49,883), brothers by 24 percent (5,662 to 4,318) and religious priests by 20 percent (15,092 to 12,010).

Some communities have merged with others, while other congregations have discerned that their life and mission is completed. Although such movement is not new in the history of religious life, nevertheless it poses challenges to individual communities, their members, and the church as a whole.

Aging population. According to the most recent study (2009), the median age of men religious is 66 and of women religious 73. Ninety percent of women religious in the United States are at least 60 years old. Men are slightly younger: 75 percent are 60 years old or older. (See chart.) This means that consecrated life as we know it in the United States is changing significantly.

Obstacles to Vocations. On the vocational front, there have been some notable success stories. However, while there are several thousand currently in formation, the overall challenge remains formidable. More recently, educational debt has become an issue. From 2002 to 2012, seven out of 10 institutes have turned away someone because the community could not afford to assume student debt. Among women, one-third who enter have at least $20,000 of educational debt.



Accommodating international members. While greater demographic diversity is certainly a blessing, as noted above, it presents religious communities and individuals in consecrated life with some significant challenges as well. In a recent study commissioned by the National Religious Vocation Conference, candidates born outside the United States are accepted by more than nine out of 10 institutes. Just over half of these institutes, however, have policies and procedures in place for accepting such candidates.

The same study found that many vocation directors, formation personnel and institute leaders were very open to welcoming those from different cultures into initial formation. But among the same group of community leaders, this openness drops when it comes to accommodating the customs and practices of new members in community life. Furthermore, the level of welcoming and accommodation drops even further among the general membership of the community.

Congregations are currently striving for better integration of cultural diversity into their communities as they recognize it is essential for their future. Communities that successfully integrate members from multiple cultures have discovered certain strategies that are helpful. Some communities use music, for example, or display art from different cultures in prayer, sponsor mission trips to different cultures and share traditions during holiday celebrations. Also, new members from other cultures are encouraged to have contact with others from their culture outside the community. These simple efforts encourage diversity and do much to welcome and incorporate those from different cultures.

The wider culture. We live in a culture in which the call to the religious life is often repressed or even silenced. The studies are sobering in this regard. Dr. Christian Smith of the University of Notre Dame has found that the concerns and worldview among emerging adults in the United States ages 18 to 23 are remarkably parochial: "Get a good job, become financially secure, have a nice family, buy what you want, enjoy a few of the finer things in life, avoid the troubles of the world, retire with ease. That's it," Dr. Smith writes. And sadly, the same study shows that there is nothing to indicate that this will dramatically change once these emerging adults transition in life.

This should not surprise us; our culture has become more secularized. The 2012 Pew Study was telling. It found that one-fifth of the American public—and one-third of adults under 30—are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling. In addition, with few exceptions, the unaffiliated say they are not

looking for a religion that would be right for them.

And yet, in the face of many challenges, there is great hope in consecrated life. God is still calling, and men and women are continuing to say yes to this call. Studies show that despite negative societal pressures, there is an increase in the number of Catholics who have considered a religious vocation. Many young people are hungry for something more meaningful and transcendent. They are hungry for God.

A Culture of Vocations

A vocation director for a community of religious sisters, responding to a question about who is coming forward to express interest in religious life today, responded, "Those who are most interested are those whose faith has been nurtured in their family, school and parish and who have felt the Lord tugging at their hearts in moments of silent prayer." A culture of vocations is built on precisely these two pillars: nurturing relationships and deep prayer.

Prayer is always at the heart of vocational discernment and a culture of vocations. A vocation starts and is built within the quiet of a human heart where the "tiny whispering sound" of God's voice is heard. Yet the involvement of others in our spiritual journeys is essential. In a study of never-married Catholic youth and young adults in 2012, four factors emerged that moved individuals to a serious consideration of religious life: attendance in a Catholic school, participation in a parish youth group, personal encouragement and personally knowing a priest, seminarian or religious. Of particular interest is the personal encouragement factor. If just one person encourages another to consider a religious vocation, he or she is twice as likely to do so; if three people encourage, the potential candidate is more than five times as likely to do so. The recent research confirms what we instinctively know: relationships are the key.

Many religious orders recognize the need to do more to make their members available and visible where vocations are nurtured—most especially in parishes and educational institutions. In my life, the sisters who taught me in first and seventh grades were the first to whisper in my ear the possibility of being a priest. And these women have remained a great source of inspiration to me.

I am encouraged that many religious communities are planning to take advantage of the upcoming Year of Consecrated Life. Of particular promise is the idea for a religious community to invite the faithful to three separate days of observance: one for religious communities to host an open house, another to serve with religious sisters and brothers in their apostolate and a third to pray with them in their communities.

In addition, dioceses and parishes can do their part. Simple initiatives take very little time or investment but can have a powerful impact. Some possibilities include inviting a woman or a man in consecrated life to be introduced to the congregation and to greet parishioners at the door of the church after Mass on days celebrating religious life, like the World Day for Consecrated Life or the World Day of Prayer for Vocations; encouraging members of the church to pray for vocations to religious life during Mass at the Prayer of the Faithful; highlighting religious profession of vows and jubilees in diocesan media; and providing space in diocesan newspapers, parish bulletins and on websites for regular columns by religious about their ministries.

As I began my ministry as the bishop of Raleigh, I began to experience the tremendous unity of the religious and diocesan priests. This unity allowed diocesan priests to appreciate the history and charisms of the religious communities represented in the diocese. Likewise, the religious had a clear understanding of the blessings and challenges of the diocesan priests and their ministries. Thus, both have a greater ability to speak effectively with those discerning a vocation, whether to serve as a diocesan priest or to enter religious life. One thing is clear: the church at all levels must be renewed in the commitment to highlight the role of religious and to encourage vocations.

The Inspiration of Pope Francis

With the exception of mercy, perhaps the most frequent theme of Pope Francis' pontificate to this point has been "encounter." And Pope Francis believes this theology of encounter has important implications for consecrated life. "Consecrated life [is] an encounter with Christ," the pope says. "It is he who comes to us...and we go toward him guided by the Holy Spirit. He is at the center. He moves everything." Furthermore, this encounter with the Lord seeks expression; it moves outward towards mission and bearing witness to Christ in the world. This is precisely the heart of the new evangelization.

In a particularly inspired section of his apostolic exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis writes: "True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness." The Year of Consecrated Life provides a wonderful opportunity to gratefully remember how women and men in consecrated life have, over the years, done just that. They have given of themselves in community to serve in many varied ways the church's ministry of reconciliation. God continues to draw close to his people in the rich variety of consecrated life. As they faithfully witness to the good news of Jesus, consecrated persons help us to look to the future with hope. It is the responsibility of the entire church to ensure that this unique form of discipleship continues to provide similar hope to future generations. A

CONVERSATION STARTERS. Pope Francis leads a meeting with interfaith religious leaders at the Vatican, March 20, 2013.

CNS PHOTO/L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO VIA REUTERS

A Prophetic Vision

'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' 50 years later

BY GAVIN D'COSTA

Imagine going to a performance of Mozart's great opera "Don Giovanni"—and hearing it minus the Don. Imagine the baritone fell ill a minute before the curtains went up and there was no stand-in. The music would still be undeniably beautiful, the drama tense, the resolution disturbing, but it might be hard to follow the plot. The missing backbone of the whole would make the parts flop. The "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" is the Don of the Second Vatican Council. Without it, the council, in nearly all its aspects, cannot be properly appreciated or implemented. The 1985 Synod of Bishops taught that the constitutions of the council should always be used to interpret the decrees and declarations. Fifty years after the council, the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" has not lost its prophetic baritone voice or commanding role. Some would argue its greatest performance is yet to be enacted.

However, the light of the constitution (known in Latin as "Lumen Gentium") has sometimes been hidden. Some have ignored it when looking at a theme of the council. An example: the Catholic Truth Society of England and Wales published a valuable booklet, "The Gift of Dialogue," in 2014. It included the full text of Pope Paul VI's dialogue encyclical, "Ecclesiam Suam" (1964); the "Decree on Ecumenism"; and, least in rank but high in impact, the "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions." But it left out Nos. 14 to 16 of the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," which can be called the orchestral director of the included decree and declaration. Some quipped uncharitably

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that the publisher should be called the Catholic Half-Truth Society. Such an oversight is not untypical.

The other diminishing is done by from those who emphasize parts rather than the whole. This happens among Catholics of a variety of political leanings within the church. What causes one group to party causes the other group to leave early.

For example, Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., noted in an essay in 2008 that Gregory Baum hailed the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" as a "'Blondelian shift' away from extrinsicism toward human experience and immanence" and that the Rev. Richard P. McBrien spoke of a Copernican revolution that "overcame the unhealthy ecclesiocentrism" (we could also call it churchiness) of the past. John W. O'Malley, S.J., has also described the teachings of the constitution as a revolution rather than a development, and Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre would have agreed. All are rightly picking up on important melodies in the document. It movingly emphasizes the central goal of the Catholic life, the call to holiness and charity—but mediated through the sacramental life of the church.

The "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" speaks of the deep inner conversion to Christ that is required, but that conversion is achieved through faithful adherence to the teachings and practices of the church. The word "revolution" rhetorically and rightly reflects the impact of the teachings of the constitution but it hides the doctrinal continuity. These half-truths obscure the balance of conservative and radical within the document hiding its proper dynamic.

The constitution talks about almost everything: the nature of the church, the people, the hierarchy, the laity, the universal call to holiness, the religious, the eschatological pilgrimage and the Marian church. To test my possibly tendentious claims above, I will pick one theme and its implications.

The Path to Salvation

A central theme in the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" is that the Catholic Church was founded by Christ as the path to salvation for all women and men—an ancient teaching, but now developed. In 1949, the Holy Office, in a letter censoring the anti-Semitic American priest Leonard Feeney, S.J., clarified that the concept "no salvation outside the church" could not be applied literally to every person or community who was not Catholic. Due attention should be paid to their state of knowledge or ignorance of the Catholic Church. Many peoples had never heard of the church, and their destiny could not depend on this geographical and historical contingency. The Holy Office added that there can be an implicit desire for the church that would suffice as the primary pre-condition for salvation for an adult.

Many argue that the constitution finally overthrew the archaic teaching of "no salvation outside the church" after the chink in the armor of 1949. They note that No. 15 acknowledges the validity of non-Catholic Christian "churches or ecclesiastical communities" and positively promotes ecumenism. No. 16 acknowledges that non-Christians can be saved outside of the Catholic Church and emphasizes the new importance of interfaith dialogue. Changes of doctrine? Certainly changes in practice.

It is correct to see the council as engaging with the modern world in these passages, but the council did so by drawing on earlier doctrinal teachings, playing old notes in a fresh context that allowed new tunes to emerge. "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" did not renounce the core: that the Catholic Church still visibly represents the way God chose for all women and men to be saved. Rather, it built on that core outward, sometimes drawing on the best thinking in theological circles at the time and sometimes being prophetic in its vision.

"Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" No. 15 acknowledges valid baptism and participation in Christ by non-Catholic Christians, drawing upon a rich patristic inheritance on this matter. It also affirms the special and different gifts such Christians enjoy, including prayer, the episcopate and several of the sacraments. It affirms the importance of ecumenism for Catholics, following Christ's command to be "one flock under one shepherd." The "Decree on Ecumenism" goes on to unfold this profound insight in further detail. Immediately after the council, serious and innovative bilateral ecumenical conversations were opened up with different Christian churches. In Europe and the United States, the Reformation began to thaw. In the East and elsewhere, dialogue with the Orthodox moved (with a few bumps along the way) slightly nearer to full unity. The lifting of the mutual excommunication at the close of the council was a gigantic step to begin that long journey.

The achievements of ecumenism are plentiful, not least the church's learning from the blessings and gifts found in other churches or ecclesial communities. Pope Francis says of the Orthodox: "We Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and their experience of synodality" ("The Joy of the Gospel," No. 246). He has already struck a deep chord with some evangelicals with his biblical and personalist concerns, just as St. John Paul II had done. The learning and growth together have yet to unfold and flower fully.

This ecumenical legacy has been supported by every post-conciliar pope. But these popes have also recalled, with varying emphases, the balance in "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" No. 15, which recognizes that many non-Catholic Christians "do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve the unity of communion under the successor of Peter."

This is a complex yet clear claim. It was not born from a triumphalist mentality, but one that sought to confirm that

Christ prayed for the visible unity of all his disciples. That unity, for Catholics, had to be signified under the Petrine office. Hence, the most ecumenical of all postconciliar popes, St. John Paul II, saw the heart of ecumenism as requiring different Christian churches to reflect on how they might construe living "under one shepherd" so that "they may be one" ("That They May Be One," 1995). Pope Francis has renewed this call for conversation and conversion about the Petrine nature of visible communion in "The Joy of the Gospel," recognizing that new energy must go into this task that has only just begun. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI had prophetically allowed for an Anglican ordinariate, affirming the patrimony of differing Christian spiritualities and liturgies becoming part of the wealth of the Catholic tradition. Sadly, in part because of the politics of this move, a remarkable ecumenical gesture was sometimes received as an ecumenical insult. Public relations on these fronts are always fraught and complex, and the Vatican has not always been on top of this game.

Many of the disappointments and hurts felt in ecumenical dialogues might have been avoided if the church's careful balancing act had been integrated into ecumenism. After the 1990s, that integration slowly began to take place, but often, sadly, at the price of dampening ecumenical initiatives. Fifty years is a very short time. Every council has had ups and downs in its reception. Ecumenism is here to stay and has only just begun. Full visible unity is the goal.

Something similar happened in interreligious dialogue. The "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" and sections of the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" No. 16 nourished and gave birth to many rich dialogues all over the world. These happened at the village level—for example, with monastic communities sharing the life of the poor in Algeria. They also took place at the intergovernmental level, as when the Vatican and major Muslim governments acted in concord at the United Nations conferences in Rio de Janeiro (1992) and Cairo (1994) with respect to family and reproduction. To some, this felt like an unholy alliance.

There has also been high-level cooperation with Hindus and Muslims to counter sectarianism and violence in India. In the United States and Europe, good relations with the Jewish people have moved forward rapidly, despite controversies like the Williamson Affair (involving a British-born bishop convicted of Holocaust denial by a German court) and the ambiguities of "Reflections on Covenant and Mission," a document by Catholic and Jewish scholars published by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on its website in 2002. Any real, enduring relationship must weather the pangs of growing up together, but trust is a precarious reality. The church must seek what it has in common, not what divides, to work together and find fellowship.

Elements of the Tradition

Were these ecumenical initiatives doctrinally novel? The truths in Judaism and in Islam, long acknowledged in elements of the tradition but obscured by deeply negative views of Jews and Muslims, were suddenly able to take center stage. For example, the Jewish people shared the same ancient revelatory book and fed from the spiritual root upon which the Gentile church was grafted. This positive common root had been eclipsed by blame attributed to the Jewish people for the death of Christ and the notion that they had willfully rejected their own messiah. Thus, Catholic culture was generally anti-Jewish. Muslims did worship the same God, but the Koranic views of Jesus and the Trinity had created deep mutual misunderstandings. No theologian of stature ever questioned the true monotheism at the heart of Islam. They questioned the Koran and the teachings of the Prophet. They had to.

But none of the positive truths had been denied by the magisterium. What is striking about "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" is the magisterium's teaching of these truths. Real and ancient bridges had existed. The smoke of battles and fires had hidden the paths to these bridges. After the council, Catholics could now cross these bridges to discover the riches and truths and profound challenges to be found in other religions. There can be no turning back. The fruits are

plenty, and the process has only just begun.

But not all of the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" No. 16 has been emphasized, and this has led to discordance. Ralph Martin recently pointed out that most commentaries consistently ignore the last sentence of No. 16: "More often, however, deceived by the evil one, people have gone astray in their thinking and exchanged the truth about God for a lie...." He showed that the council fathers envisaged dialogue in the context of mission and witness, and not dialogue for its own sake.

This was also the vision of Pope Paul VI's encyclical "Ecclesiam Suam" (1964). The missionary context is rarely mentioned, even though No. 16 of the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" formed the bridge to No. 17, devoted to the necessity of mission. The decline of Catholic missionary efforts has been part of a much wider and more complex crisis, and whether the new evangelization will help renew missionary zeal remains to be seen. Martin might have also mentioned the neglect of the first sentence of No. 16, where St. Thomas Aquinas's term *ordinantur* is used to denote non-Christian religions. This captures the truth that they are all properly oriented to Christ and no one is excluded from the plan of salvation. But No. 16 has often been read as pointing to objective elements in other religions that are salvific in themselves.

Together the first and last sentences of No. 16 keep a genuine affirmation of these religions in close tension with the recognition of their objective incompleteness and insufficiency in the absence of Christ. Nothing derogatory is ever said about the personal piety, integrity and holiness of those from other religions. Without Christ, however, there is a lack. Some of this dynamic and dramatic tension was lost after the council. In the effort to redress this imbalance, there is a painful danger that non-Christian communities will be offended. Some Muslims and Jews have claimed that the council teachings are being reversed. Negotiating these difficulties is fraught with difficulty. Pope Benedict tried to shift interreligious dialogue into the wider political sphere to counter the spiritualizing of "religion." Pope Francis seems to be keeping to this path and also draws deeply from his own personal Jewish friendships. In his dramatic gesture of bringing together the Jewish and Palestinian leaders to pray for peace, he welded the spiritual and political without reducing either.

This pattern of growth, imbalance and struggle can be seen in other areas regarding collegiality, the role of the bishops, the call to holiness and the role of the laity. Sometimes the imbalance has been a result of disarray in an over-centralized Vatican. One of the greatest fruits of the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" will be to redress that imbalance. The music of the Don singing with the entire opera, so that parts and whole are in harmony, is a performance to be savored. A

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ A7880S/AMERICA

Don't Feed the Bear

Crafting an effective response to a newly assertive Russia

BY LISA A. BAGLIONE

Over the course of this year, Russia's international behavior reached new heights of aggressiveness, and talk of the return of the Cold War is on the lips of knowledgeable analysts. Perhaps the most egregious act was Russia's response to the loss of MH17, the Malaysia Airlines jet that was shot out of the sky in eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014, killing everyone on board—close to 300 passengers and crew. Some hoped that this disaster would have a sobering impact on the Russian leadership, but the boldness and extent of its recent support for Ukrainian separatists unequivocally demonstrate that Russia has intentionally chosen a course of confrontation in world politics today. This must be countered.

How to match the Russian threat most effectively, however, is the big question. Observers of Russian foreign policy have been suggesting strategies in response to that state's actions during the last several months, particularly regarding Ukraine and the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union, a new international body with Russia as its de facto leader. Russia's continuing provocations in eastern Ukraine suggest to some that it is an emboldened state; its power is on the rise. The West, it is argued, must respond decisively. While those analysts are correct in noting the importance of checking aggression, they are mistaken in seeing Russian behavior as driven by confidence and a sense of power. In fact, Russia is responding aggressively to multiple internal weaknesses, but this strategy will not resolve its fundamental problems, and President Vladimir Putin's chosen approach will only exacerbate the country's challenges.

Russia's concerns about Ukraine's changing allegiances became headline news in November 2013, when under pressure from Mr. Putin, that country reversed its plans to enhance its relationship with the European Union. The Russian Federation was establishing its own supranational economic body, and for Mr. Putin, Ukraine's membership in his Eurasian Union was essential. While the two international organizations have similar sounding names, the European project was originally an effort to overcome the violent Franco-German past, which dragged the rest of the continent into conflicts, and promoting economic development and liberal democracy in Western Europe, thereby

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shielding member states from Communist ideological and military encroachment.

Today, the European Union is an entity that undergirds peace and liberalism across much of the continent, as well as enhancing socioeconomic equality through market mechanisms and specific policies. Although Mr. Putin's parallel creation is also rooted in history, his aim is less to squelch previous state rivalries than to address what he called, in a speech to the Russian Federal Assembly in April 2005, the "major geopolitical disaster of the century," the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. That historic upheaval left nearly 20 million Russians outside the territory of the Russian Federation. Moreover, the values of the Eurasian Union are far from liberal. Although this E.U. integrates members' economies and reduces barriers to cross-border commerce, it lacks a commitment to political liberalism and unites deeply authoritarian polities. In fact, Mr. Putin aims to bring more like-minded states into the fold.

TOUGH TALK. Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin in the Cabinet of Ministers, in 2010 in Kiev, Ukraine.

Regarding the origins of Mr. Putin's union back in 2005, the Russian president was not worried only about the Russian diaspora; he also had concerns about (and had already benefited from) internal ethnic conflict within the states of the diverse post-Soviet space. During the Communist era, part of the U.S.S.R.'s method for maintaining unity among its many nationalities and diffusing hostility toward Russia was to create autonomous, ethnic enclaves in the union republics (like Tran-Dniester in Moldavia or South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia). This allowed those less numerous but geographically concentrated peoples to see the Soviet center as a protector against the titular nationality. After the end of the U.S.S.R., conflicts over authority, governance and sovereignty led to violence as well as Russian intervention in some places. Ethnic clashes emerged in the Russian Federation, too—most violently in Chechnya; therefore, Mr. Putin's allusion in that same speech to the "drama for the Russian nation" was not simply a reference to developments beyond his state's borders.

Power Plays

Thus, Mr. Putin's effort to integrate former Soviet states emerged in response to both external and internal challenges. This strategy has evolved over time, but key considerations remain Russia's continuing economic weakness, military strategic vulnerabilities, frustration with its treatment by the United States and concerns about the regime's legitimacy in the aftermath of democratic upheaval in unexpected places. Beyond question, Mr. Putin's first two terms as president ushered in the revival of the Russian economy. While the reforms of the early post-Communist years established a capitalist system in the Russian Federation, the 1990s were an unmitigated economic disaster for a large proportion of the population.

In the 2000s, with the help of high energy prices (fueled by the American-led conflicts in the Middle East), Russia was able to improve living standards. The world financial crisis, however, had negative impacts, as did the failure of the government to institute effective structural economic reforms. The Eurasian Union, then, is in part an effort to respond to Russia's fiscal challenges by creating a larger open market and uniting the economies of its members. Ukraine, with its 45 million citizens, was always considered a necessary participant, but currently the union has only three members: Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. Now the economic benefits to Russia of integration seem relatively small and the bargain costly because of the fuel subsidies Russia has guaranteed to secure its partnerships.

Consequently, many outside observers view the Eurasian Union as a military-strategic, not economic effort and a first step in reconstituting and expanding the Russian-dominated post-Soviet space. Despite its desires and its nuclear arsenal, Russia is no longer a superpower, as it lacks both a high quality economy and military. These weaknesses, however, do not mean that the Russian Federation—like any other regional power—cannot cause trouble in its own backyard, as the annexation of Crimea, active support for

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/ MARK III PHOTONICS

separatists in eastern Ukraine and previous efforts aiding ethnic minorities in other post-Soviet states demonstrate. By undermining independently minded former parts of the Soviet Union and increasing the areas with allegiance to the Russian Federation, Mr. Putin is seeking to rebuild Russia's power in the region and make it a credible strategic rival to the European Union and China, as well as the United States.

In addition to reconstituting Russian influence and geographic span, Mr. Putin's Eurasian Union responds to the grievances that he and other elites feel about how Russia has been treated since the fall of the Soviet Union. The president believes that while his country was observing post-Cold War norms of cooperation and problem-solving, the United States was weakening and challenging Russia by advising former Soviet states regarding economic reform, moving to expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, acting against Serbia in Kosovo, withdrawing from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, intervening in Iraq and using force in Libya. Repeatedly, the United States acted unilaterally and without consideration of Russian interests or status.

A Cornered Bear

In addition, American efforts to promote democracy have been perceived as having encouraged the color revolutions (the 2003 "rose revolution" in Georgia, the 2004 "orange revolution" in Ukraine, and in 2005 the "cedar revolution" in Lebanon and the "tulip revolution" in Kyrgyzstan). Russia viewed the effort as undermining its friends and regional influence. Perhaps most galling was American encouragement of activists who protested the irregularities of the 2011-12 Russian elections and demanded changes in Mr. Putin's system.

Russian leaders also blamed American and European money and organizations for the movement that ultimately brought down the Ukrainian president in 2014. In sum, then, Russians are tired of what they see as a double standard in world politics, by which the United States can repudiate international law and promote its brand of political change wherever it seeks while rejecting the Russian Federation's right to behave similarly.

Global concerns are not the only factors influencing Russian policy here, however. Important, too, are domestic political considerations. In today's Russia national assertiveness and anti-Americanism play well among the populace. A decade ago, Russians were happy to trust Mr. Putin's leadership, trading freewheeling politics (with more than 40 parties competing in relatively fair elections), a vibrant media scene and human rights protections for improvements in living standards and a perception of restored international status. Today, however, fiscal challenges threaten one element—economic conditions—in the president's formula for legitimacy; so Mr. Putin has emphasized the other part of his legitimacy equation—global reputation—and added

another one—traditional values.

By embracing Russian Orthodoxy and positions against what he sees as tolerance run amok (including but not limited to homosexuality and feminism), which he identifies with Western decadence, Mr. Putin puts forward a conservative-values agenda that plays well with his core constituency at home. These are citizens who have not benefited much from the nation's recent economic successes and were also not out in public squares protesting against the regime a few years ago. These positions also resonate with the extreme right wing in Europe, with their anti-Semitic, anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant views.

Although Mr. Putin has railed against fascists in Ukraine, he has found Western European far rightists to be politically expedient. They seek to weaken the European Union and Europe's ties to the United States. Thus, Mr. Putin earns extra bang for his "values" buck: he woos supporters at home and promotes a foreign policy goal of hurting his Western rivals. Weakening European unity could undermine the economies of some former East Bloc states (like the Baltics and Poland, for instance). Eroding the Atlantic Alliance would further undercut central and eastern European opponents as well as significantly reduce American influence throughout the region.

Mr. Putin's behavior brings him back full circle to the Eurasian Union, a creation made to place the Russian Federation in a privileged position among friendly integrated economies and whose membership he hopes to expand. These wishes, for now, appear misplaced. Russia's economic problems, authoritarianism and ham-fistedness regarding the organization itself have driven potential members away. Russia's insistence that Ukraine join its union to the exclusion of association with the European Union launched the crisis that provoked the revolution and toppled President Yanukovych.

That abdication opened the door for the rise of separatists and more Russian meddling, which ultimately brought about the annexation of Crimea and conflict in eastern Ukraine. While Russia and some in the Western media have trumpeted these developments as a sign of American impotence, a more accurate read is that Russia took advantage of an opportunity in its backyard with the help of sympathetic local extremists, its propaganda machine, a belief in this part of Ukraine that it must remain economically linked to the Russian Federation to survive and the infiltration of Russian special forces.

In seizing this chance, however, Mr. Putin will exacerbate his legitimacy problems. In the short-run, the Crimean annexation along with the success of the Sochi Olympics revived his personal popularity to a stratospheric 80 percent level. But integrating Crimea will be very costly (even without calculating the impact of Western Crimea-provoked sanctions), and taking more Ukrainian territory will also be fiscally difficult.

All Kennanesque Now?

Territorial expansion will require Russia to devote more of its increasingly scarce funds to these new areas to the detriment of regions in Russia that are also struggling and whose loyalty has been bought by resource transfers, as in Chechnya. Thus, Mr. Putin's path will feed into a cycle: he will seek more nationalist victories to maintain domestic political support, since he will not be able to establish legitimacy through Russian economic performance. That approach will worsen economic conditions and complicate Russia's internal cohesion. Thus, we can expect in the short term more Russian assertiveness to boost the president's approval ratings, which will create increased economic challenges for typical Russian citizens. It will also cause non-Russian ethnics within the Russian Federation to become both more concerned about Mr. Putin's calls for reconstituting Russian ethnic pride and angry about their declining living conditions, additionally threatening the formula for rule. Thus, the Eurasian Union and Mr. Putin's recent foreign policy aggressiveness are not signs of an empowered Russia. They are emblems of weakness, reflecting Russia's poor economy, military-strategic inability and difficulty in satisfying its diverse peoples.

Managing relationships with Russia during this period will be complex because Mr. Putin will behave provocatively, and the West will be under pressure to respond in ways that insult Russia's status, resulting in more aggressive behavior. The West's recognition of the sources of Russian assertiveness can help it address these challenges.

A return to Kennanesque policies of focusing on building the West's internal strengths, meeting threats effectively and illuminating the truth about Mr. Putin's rule is the best approach to counter Russia's new assertions of power. As in the 1980s, change in the Moscow regime can most effectively emerge from internal sources, and demand for transformation will develop as more citizens and elites come to realize that a vibrant economy and stable society are more likely to follow from a system that is governed by the rule of law and in which state power is limited.

Back in December of 2011, Russians in 95 cities across the federation realized this truth and took to the streets. Harsh measures sent them home, and nationalist pride has temporarily drowned those voices out, but Mr. Putin's recent policies provide the seeds for the opposition's return and perhaps his downfall. The challenge for the West is to behave in a manner that is consistent with its liberal principles and those of international law (eschewing intervention and power grabs for its own purposes) while holding off challenges and watching patiently as Russia's transformation unfolds.

Behind the Headlines

Ebola and the magnifying power of poverty

BY MICHAEL ROZIER

A disease outbreak is a story we can really get into. The invisible micro-organism lodges itself inside a human host and travels undetected among the teeming masses—until it decides to reveal itself and bring humanity to its knees. The narrative is powerful. Other people, who should be sources of support, are suddenly threats. Scientists must bring to bear every ounce of expertise to achieve a narrow victory over their diminutive foe.

This is the case with the current outbreak of Ebola. What started as largely ignored cases this past March in Guinea has now captured the world's attention. Previous epidemics (like SARS in 2003 or H5N1 in 2004) had much lower fatality rates than Ebola, yet created similar global concern. The rapid propagation of illness, the exotic disease profile and the parry and riposte with an opponent as skilled at survival as a virus is can be intoxicating for the news media. And although we must marshal resources to stem the tide of Ebola in West Africa, the story we now know so well might not be the most important one to tell.

Ebola is killing people, but its true power comes from poverty and political instability. There have been nearly a dozen outbreaks of Ebola since it was first identified in 1976. In the current instance, however, the virus has made its way to the urban areas of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. When the virus stays isolated in rural outposts, it is easier to contain. But once it makes its way to the cities, with their greater population density and more movement, the complexity of isolation and quarantine grows considerably.

With more people at risk, greater public cooperation is necessary. Yet the public in these countries has been conditioned to fear instruction from the government. Those in Liberia grew up under Charles Taylor, a convicted war criminal responsible for unspeakable crimes against Liberian citizens that verged on genocide. Those in Sierra Leone grew up during decades of coups and civil war, led by wannabe dictators who conscripted child soldiers. Survival required distrusting and evading the government. So when health workers in official uniforms want to round up family members and friends who are "sick," it is easy to see why the public is not as cooperative as one would like. The virus thrives while the people live in fear. But we cannot ignore that it was people, not the virus, who originally sowed distrust.

Health workers in Spain transfer an Ebola patient into an ambulance on Sept. 22.

PHOTO: CNS PHOTO/REUTERS HANDOUT VIA MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

There is another very simple reason why the outbreak in West Africa is more complicated than it ought to be. In the United States, we have about 24 physicians for every 10,000 people. In Guinea, there is one physician for the same number. In Sierra Leone, one physician must care for 50,000 people. And in Liberia, there are a few dozen doctors for the

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entire country of 4.4 million people. While in the United States epidemiologists track at-risk patients and set aside isolation rooms for those infected, the West African nations struggle to procure latex gloves for their health workers or bleach to disinfect beds upon which victims have died. Yes, the virus is deadly. But we cannot ignore the ways poverty magnifies its power.

In the United States, we isolate those who are sick, quarantine those who are at risk and practice "social distancing" when it is called for (as when schools or workplaces close for flu outbreaks). But what can be done when people live cheek-by-jowl in urban slums? Thousands are crammed onto the same hillside in corrugated tin structures, bumping against one another in every small act of life. Governments find it hard to access the areas to collect dead bodies, and families do not have anywhere to put them. Water and sanitation are not in place, so the necessary disinfection is a fantasy. A virus thrives in these conditions. But we cannot forget that we created them.

The Media Piles On

The media's coverage of the Ebola outbreak has received criticism from all sides. I sympathize with them all. One critique decries the disproportional emphasis on the few Americans and Europeans who have the disease while treating the tens of thousands of West Africans as mere side stories. Another compares the few thousand deaths from Ebola against the millions who die from cardiovascular disease, diarrhea or H.I.V-AIDS. This argument suggests that if we lessen the coverage of Ebola, we will pay more attention to diseases that kill more people. But it is naïve to think this is a zero-sum game. If we talk less about Ebola, the gap will be filled with the escapades of Justin Bieber instead of ways to reduce hypertension.

There are also some myths about Ebola that will not die. For example, although it is deadly, it is not highly contagious. Epidemiologists give infectious diseases a number called an R0 ("r nought," or basic reproduction number). It indicates how many people, on average, a person with the disease will subsequently infect. The number for measles can be as high as 18. For polio it is about 6, for influenza 2 or 3. But for Ebola the R0 is at most a 2. So while Ebola is deadly, it is not highly contagious.

In public health we often describe five determinants of health: genetics, personal behavior, medical care, physical environment and socioeconomic factors. The first three get most of the attention in health care, but the last two are far more powerful than we realize. In the United States, for example, zip code is a better predictor of your health status than your genetic code. That is because of the pervasive influence of social determinants on health. Your education level, employment status, social networks and neighborhood

all shape your ability to realize a healthier life.

What if a child wants to exercise, for example, but the sidewalks are cracked, her shoes are falling apart and the parks are filled with broken equipment? Our instinct is to overlook the social and environmental influences on health and focus on personal behavior and medical care. We like to blame either the individual (typically for chronic diseases like diabetes or obesity) or the micro-organism (tuberculosis or Ebola). But we fail to appreciate how involved we all are—how responsible we all are—for the social conditions that foster disease along the way.

In the case of Ebola, it is impossible to imagine thousands of deaths in places where governments can be trusted, where living conditions are decent and where health systems are strong. I am not suggesting that every case of Ebola could be prevented if we rid the world of poverty (the new cases in well-equipped U.S. hospitals are proof enough of that). But it is disingenuous to ignore the humanly constructed social and physical environment when speaking of the ravages of Ebola.

By paying attention to these things, we can see the fault no longer rests solely with the virus. We are no longer just the victims. We also become responsible for its devastating toll on human life. This is much more difficult to accept. Suddenly the outbreak narrative becomes much less attractive, because it no longer has a tricky, microscopic virus as the villain. Humans become co-conspirators.

The outbreak of Ebola eventually will be stopped. It will extend for months longer than our attention span, but like previous instances of the disease, it will be extinguished. Yet the social conditions that allowed its spread will continue in every corner of the world. If we learn anything from Ebola, the lesson should not be related only to this particular disease, because another infectious disease is going to emerge in short order. Perhaps instead we can grow in appreciation for the many things that we can control and predict, the social conditions that we build and perpetuate as a human community.

If we are truly interested in stopping Ebola and other contagious diseases, we will look to more enduring yet uncomfortable truths about our responsibility for these events. Over the past century, human life expectancy has increased by over 30 years, primarily due to improving social determinants of health (less than 20 percent of the gain is due to better medical care). But the gains have been unevenly distributed. We have the ability to achieve even greater improvements in health and the widespread attention to Ebola presents an opportunity to do just that.

The real story is not about Ebola. It is about us. The sooner we admit that, the sooner we will realize our true power to stop these outbreaks before they begin. It might not make for a good news story, but it would lead to a happier ending for us all. A

Who's Afraid of the Synod?

The Extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family that concluded in Rome on Oct. 19, has not only sparked great interest and expectations throughout the Catholic Church but also raised fears and anxieties in small but influential sectors at leadership and lay intellectual levels.

I wish to examine such fears here and ask: Why do some fear this two-stage synod process, which will conclude a year from now on Oct. 25 2015? What really underlines these fears and the incredible charges that Pope Francis, the guarantor of unity in the church, may not be safeguarding Catholic doctrine or even be much concerned about it; or the allegations by a few that he has unleashed a synod process that's "more Protestant than Catholic," which is creating "confusion" or "a mess" and undermining Catholic doctrine?

Reflecting on these fears, and speaking with cardinals and bishops at the synod, I began to understand that perhaps there could be deeper concerns at work here. The first relates to a possible shift from the prevailing theological understanding of the place and role of the sacraments in the life of the people of God to a somewhat different pastoral one, and the consequences of this. Second, there is perplexity about how to present mercy and inclusion in a way that does not undermine moral doctrine. Third, there is uneasiness among some about the understanding of primacy, collegiality and synodality and about the way of exercising authority in the church that Francis, inspired by the Second Vatican Council, is promoting, which is opening a new style of governance in the church.

In this context, I came to read in a different light some things Francis said in his homily at the synod's closing Mass, during which he beatified Paul VI, who in response to Vatican II's wishes established this organ of collegiality in 1965.

On that occasion, Francis actually spoke about fear when commenting on the Gospel text, "Render to God the things that are God's." He said: "This calls for acknowledging and professing—in the face of any sort of power—that God alone is master, that there is no other. This is the perennial newness to be discovered each day, and it requires mastering the fear we often feel at God's surprises."

> 'When the church expresses herself in communion, she cannot err.'

"God is not afraid of new things! That is why he is continually surprising us, opening our hearts and guiding us in unexpected ways," the pope stated.

At the synod, he said, "pastors and lay people from every part of the world have come to Rome, bringing the voice of their particular churches in order to help today's families walk the path of the Gospel with their gaze fixed on Jesus."

That synod has been "a great experience, in which we have lived synodality and collegiality and felt the power of the Holy Spirit, who constantly renews and guides the church. For the church is called to waste no time in seeking to bind up open wounds and to kindle hopes in so many people who have lost hope," the pope stated.

In an impressive speech the previous evening, after the synod fathers had voted on the synod's final report, Pope Francis confirmed that the Holy Spirit had been truly at work in the synod in spite of various temptations (by the devil). He reminded the synod fathers that they were working "cum Petro et sub Petro" ("with Peter and under Peter")—that is, the pope, who is the final guarantor of unity and orthodoxy in the church.

He made clear that there should be no reason for fear or confusion in the church after such an extraordinary synod, in which not only had the traditional doctrine on the nature and indissolubility of marriage been confirmed, but also important pastoral questions relating to the family—including those related to the church's approach to the divorced and remarried and to homosexual persons—remain on the table for the 2015 synod.

"When the church, in the variety of her charisms, expresses herself in communion, she cannot err: it is the beauty and the strength of the *sensus fidei*, of that supernatural sense of the faith that is bestowed by the Holy Spirit so that together we can all enter into the heart of the Gospel and learn to follow Jesus in our life. And this should never be seen as a source of confusion and discord," the pope stated.

When Pope Francis finished speaking, the synod fathers all stood in a spontaneous gesture and gave him a five-minute ovation. That said everything; it is the best answer to any fears.

GERARD O'CONNELL

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Pope Paul VI: 1963-1978

Each pope in the history of the church has brought to the special challenges of his era his own special gifts of intellect and spirit. The historical character of his tenure in the chair of Peter is then determined in the dialectic of the person and the time. In many instances, the institution of the papacy itself has been redefined, subtly or radically, as a result. This recurrent interplay of individual, institution and historical moment was never, in the history of the modern papacy, more forcefully and dramatically at work than during the papacy of Paul VI.

Has any pope reigned over a more volatile age than Giovanni Battista Montini?

On June 21, 1963, when the then Archbishop of Milan was elected by the College of Cardinals to head the Roman Catholic Church as the Bishop of Rome, few realized the convulsions that would wrench both church and world in the next decade. In less than five years, John XXIII had humanized the papacy and launched an ecumenical council that captured the imaginations and raised the hopes of many outside the Roman Catholic Church, as well as within. The public ordeal of John's final passion and death had evoked an extraordinary wave of affection toward the man and, inevitably, sympathy for his church. The process of *aggiornamento*—bringing the church up to date, opening its windows and transforming its face—promised a newer, more vital and more positive relationship between the church and the modern world. And that world, though surely not without its dangers, seemed an inviting place; its memories and its fears of war were for the moment dimmed, its economy steadily expanding in the industrialized nations, its confidence in itself and its own rationality typified by the attractive American, also named John, who brought to the White House and the leadership of the Western world the buoyancy of hope.

President John F. Kennedy with Pope Paul VI at the Vatican on July 2, 1963.

CNS FILE PHOTO

Yet, only a few months later, the young president of the United States was murdered, the first in a series of political assassinations that would be succeeded by an epidemic of terrorism that mocked the rationality of the political process. A distant struggle in Vietnam became a global preoccupation, and the proclaimed end of colonialism seemed illusory when the realities of world poverty were faced. In a time, then, of pervasive social change, in a time of violence and protest, Paul VI was asked to lead his church through the final sessions of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and into the years that followed, when it would be his responsibility to implement the reforms that embodied the principal theme of the council: the church in the modern world.

The council document that dealt most explicitly with this central theme began with the words "joy and hope," but that joy and hope could never be unthinking or uncritical. The church was being called to express its solidarity with the world, but never its conformity to the world. The church would change and yet remain itself. The Gospel would be incarnated in different cultures and in different times, but it would always be the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Throughout his papacy, Paul VI was caught at the center of these tensions that are the very nerves of Christian faith. Inevitably, he would be criticized by those tugged more by one current than another. Unfairly, he would be

Following the beatification of Pope Paul VI, we reprint this editorial on his life and legacy that originally appeared in ***America*** *on Aug. 19, 1978.*

characterized as ambivalent and indecisive by those less sensitive to, or even oblivious of, the paradoxes of the Incarnation.

During the sessions of the council and in the years immediately following, Paul VI overcame the resistance of reactionaries and implemented the reforms established by the council in the areas of liturgy, church governance and the attitudes of Catholics toward other religions. Liturgical reform was not always and in all places executed with the greatest grace, but it was clear as the years moved on that Catholic spirituality was being enriched by a greater sense of Word and Sacrament. The Italian dominance of Vatican bureaucracy was tempered by the presence of more cardinals and bishops from the international church. To pursue the council's accent on episcopal collegiality, national conferences of bishops were established, and Paul VI would preside over five synods of bishops from around the world. The pope's highly personal encounters with other religious leaders dramatized a new openness of the Roman Catholic Church to other faiths.

But the most important of Paul's achievements as he sought to extend the inspiration of the council to an increasingly troubled world was his campaign for world justice and peace. It was a campaign waged by personal witness as well as by written document. He broke all precedent by traveling to distant parts of the world to urge his message of human rights and human development. He listened to the voices and saw the faces of the forgotten poor of the world in places like Calcutta and Manila and Medellin. And he urged his message on the most powerful leaders of the world, traveling to the great halls of the United Nations to issue his plea that there would be "never again war." In his 1967 encyclical, "The Development of Peoples" ("Populorum Progressio"), he employed modern methods of social and economic analysis to underscore the injustice of a world where material resources were so unevenly distributed that they failed to serve the purpose of human development. It was a message that disturbed many in the wealthy nations of the world, but its ring of truth still echoes 11 years later as the debate over a new world economic order continues. As the wealthier nations begin to take that debate more seriously, whether they realize it or not, they are at last responding to the message of Paul VI.

It was another encyclical, however, that proved to be the most controversial of Paul's tenure. In 1968, he rejected the majority report of a special commission appointed to study the question of Catholic teaching on artificial contraception and, in the encyclical "Of Human Life" ("Humanae Vitae"), the pope condemned the use of any artificial contraceptive, a prohibition that provoked widespread dissent and disaffection among Catholics. The pope lived just long enough to celebrate the 10th anniversary of this famous document, and he reaffirmed its content on that occasion and expressed his appreciation for those who continued to uphold its teaching.

Some of those supporters point today to the phenomena of permissive abortion, homosexual campaigns and widespread promiscuity and insist that these are the inevitable consequences of an acceptance of artificial methods of contraception. In certain quarters, acceptance of the encyclical's teaching on this particular point is even proposed as the litmus test of Catholic orthodoxy, something that the encyclical's author, Paul VI, consistently refused to do. But 10 years is too short a time to assess the ultimate impact of "Humanae Vitae" on church and world. The encyclical's condemnation of the "contraceptive mentality" does have prophetic echoes at a time of popular disregard of the deeply human linkage of sexuality and family life. Yet many thoughtful theolo-

gians and committed Christians continue to believe that the "contraceptive mentality" cannot be defined in simply biological terms. In other words, the Christian meaning of sexuality as both love-giving and life-giving is not contradicted because every act of conjugal love is not open to the possibility of conception, and family bonds and conjugal intimacy can even be supported at times by a more deliberate control of these possibilities.

Precisely because marital fidelity and family responsibilities are so often ignored and even derided among those who most influence our popular culture, it is regrettable that the controversy over methods of contraception has obscured the real advances made in "Humanae Vitae" in presenting a personalist understanding of Catholic sexual ethics. Whatever differences may exist on the question of contraceptive methods, a compelling vision of the relationship of sexuality, marriage and family can be developed from the encyclical, and it is a vision desperately needed by an eroticized culture that has come to accept the dehumanization of sex.

It is also unfortunate that the argument over contraceptive methods has obscured the significant differences in the pastoral approach adopted by Paul VI toward the crisis of modern marriage. The abstract strictures of the past were replaced by an attitude of compassion, sympathy and greater respect for the individual conscience. These differences in style have encouraged the development of a more mature Catholic moral conscience and a clearer concept of the role of the church and the pope as a moral teacher. A new understanding of the relation of moral authority and personal conscience may, in time, prove to be the most significant legacy of "Humanae Vitae."

In the final years of his life, Paul VI often spoke of the burdens of age and the imminence of death. Yet these shadows did not paralyze his spirit or cause him to shrink from the challenges of a dangerous world. He condemned the increasing violence of the age and sought repeatedly to strike a responsive chord in the moral conscience of his contemporaries. He was saddened by the contempt for human life that seems to characterize our time, and his sadness was sharpened because he saw the possibilities of human life transfigured by the glory of the risen Jesus. There was an ironic beauty, then, to the timing of his death. Paul VI, who had waged so valiant a campaign for a world of justice and peace, died on August 6, the day on which the first atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, and an age began when the capacity to darken all life assumed awesome proportions. Yet August 6 is also the feast of the Transfiguration of Jesus, and the terrible searing flash of Hiroshima is in the end overcome by the light of the glorified Lord. After 80 years of pilgrimage, Paul VI found his own transfiguration in that Light. A

God's Architecture

Seeing his work in all things

BY CHRIS FIORE

The park buzzes with activity as the Mediterranean sun bathes throngs of tourists in warmth. I am leaning against a tree, staring up at the spreading branches. They remind me that I always feel close to God when I examine his creation, and as breathtaking as man-made skyscrapers may be, no human architect could have produced the Alps or the Rockies, or even the winding boughs shading me on this November afternoon. I have often sensed God's presence strongly in the natural world he designed.

I am preparing to visit a church, a popular pastime for the American student in Europe, especially the Catholic American student. After all, the cathedrals and basilicas across the continent are more magnificent than any in the world, and they far outshine the churches of the United States in grandeur. When I arrived in Italy at the start of my study abroad program with the University of Dallas, I enthusiastically began my tour of European churches with a stop at St. Peter's Basilica—and I never looked back.

Now, three months later, I have experienced grandiose churches throughout Italy, from St. Mark's in Venice to the Duomo in Florence and the major basilicas of Rome. My architecture class has educated me on Baroque and Romanesque styles; I can distinguish a transept from a triumphal arch and identify a side aisle or a colonnade. On a good day, I may even remember how to define an ambulatory.

But now, in Barcelona, every bit of neat and orderly classification, every lofty vocabulary word my professor has imparted and every past perception of a European church is about to be rendered immaterial. The ideals of Baroque and Romanesque styles will vanish from my mind, forever supplanted by the most unusual style of this unique building. I remain, for a moment, staring up at the tree branches, feeling close to God, yet I am increasingly curious about the structure across the street.

I walk toward the entrance, glancing upward, gazing at the sculpted facade and the elongated, dark spires. This is the strangest church I have ever seen. Where did the architect get the inspiration for this? What was he thinking?

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PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/VOVAN

Have I just wasted 10 euros on the entry fee? The hum of construction equipment answers me with indifference. Tourists are pouring through the doors ahead. Is it worth it? At least if I go in, no one will scold me for having missed out on one of Barcelona's primary attractions. I shuffle toward the door.

God, the Muse

As I look up, just before entering, I notice a sculpture of the Passion. The starkness of the carved stone conveys the Lord's suffering to me more than any other of the Passion depictions ubiquitous throughout Italy. These are not the colorful strokes of a Baroque chapel in Florence or the mosaic of a classical Roman church. This scene is something alien, bare and plain, yet more vivid with its sharply chiseled statues than any of the vibrant paintings I had seen. The earth tones of the stone give the structure a natural quality, a blunt contrast to the otherworldly whiteness of the marble sculptures in most Baroque churches. I quickly realize there must be something to this building. I step inside.

I am staring upward at spreading branches of stone, stretching to the ceiling from perfectly carved trunks. Colors are pouring through magnificent panes of glass as the November sunlight is translated into a man-made rainbow. I pause in awe. Have I really stepped inside a building, or is the whole church some ancient forest with mighty limbs supporting the central nave? The architect, Antoni Gaudí, drew his inspiration from God's creation when he designed this building, La Sagrada Familia. In a way, the Lord himself crafted the plans for the basilica.

As I look around the beautiful interior, I feel the nearness to God that I usually associate with being in nature. A part of me still believes I'm back in the park across the street, daydreaming as I lean against a tree. I kneel down to say a prayer near the main altar, my routine whenever I enter a church. But I have never prayed in any church quite like this. What can I say? I simply thank God for creating the natural world that served as the basis for La Sagrada Familia.

I leave the building several minutes later. As I enter into the sunlight once again, it occurs to me that we don't always take the time to recognize the presence of God in the natural world he created. And yet God's touch is in the mountains, rivers and even seemingly rudimentary plants and trees. There is so much there that can inspire us. Recognizing God's magnificence in nature reminds us that he is not distant or disconnected from the world, but truly omnipresent. Antoni Gaudí recognized that and designed a church that only the Creator and Architect of the world could inspire. I continue on my journey knowing that we, too, must always look to God's creation for inspiration, in the hope that with God's help we can build a world infused with his grace.

Requiem for Jackson

It happened again.

I was talking with the Toronto editor working on my forthcoming book on Jansenism. She asked me how I had developed such an interest in French literature. I answered that I had an uncle. Uncle Jackson learned French through Berlitz and always returned from Paris "a new man," having seen the latest Monet exhibit or heard Messiaen playing the organ at the Sainte-Trinité.

I was watching a basketball game at Madison Square Garden. I remarked to a friend that it wasn't nearly as exciting as the Big Five games I had attended as a child. My friend—obviously not a Philadelphian—asked me what the Big Five was. I explained that five Philly teams—Penn, Temple, Villanova, Saint Joseph's, La Salle—would play each other at Penn's cavernous arena, the Palestra. Uncle Jackson would buy the tickets for a Saturday night double-header and analyze team strategy between baskets. Still tribal, we would yell for the Catholic teams and boo the pagans from Penn or Temple. Jackson would often take us on a pre-game tour of the Penn campus. He explained the new computer at the Engineering School. "I read in Fortune we'll all have one of those in a few years." He praised Robert Venturi's new coffee shop with a sculpted, bisected coffee cup dangling above the entrance. "It's about time we demolished those awful glass boxes."

The Baltimore playwrights group to which I belong took a break from a rehearsal for a cycle of plays we were presenting at Washington's Kennedy Center. A new member asked me, "How did a priest end up writing plays?" Well, I had this uncle. Jackson loved the theater and carefully planned my introduction to it. We had center orchestra seats in Philly's old Forrest Theater as the curtain rose on John Gielgud and Vivien Leigh playing Chekhov. I'm still under the spell. Classical music was the same. My first concert was an all-Russian program with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. No "easy stuff"—Glinka and Rimsky-Korsakov. The Shostakovich Symphony no. 5 would "make it interesting."

Traveling with Uncle Jackson always had a targeted quality. In our many trips to New York City, we spent little time at the Empire State Building. His favorite spots were quieter fare. When I first saw the Reading Room of the New York Public Library, I asked who all these people quietly reading books under the blue lamps were. He explained that they were writers. He pointed out a Time reporter and a novelist who had just won the Pulitzer Prize. "They're dreaming about their next great book."

Even during our summer vacations with our beloved Connecticut cousins, Jackson was still the connoisseur. He had no interest in amusement parks, but he would always take us to the Flying Horse Carousel over in Rhode Island. The hand-carved wooden horses, with their agate eyes still intact, dated from 1876. "Now, that's when craftsmen still had pride in their work."

Although my uncle had an ecstatic worldliness, there was another side. Like many Irishmen of his generation, he lived his faith in Stoic silence. It was too private to discuss. One Saturday during my undergrad years, I ducked into Saint John's, the downtown Philadelphia church where shoppers take a spiritual break from their rounds. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed in a golden monstrance on the altar. I noticed that my uncle was kneeling before it. Predictably, his pew was front center orchestra. My instinct was to tap him on the shoulder and say hello, but interrupting such private prayer seemed crass. I waited several minutes at the door. He didn't budge. I left.

I will thank God for the love and encouragement my uncle always gave us.

November is the month of the Holy Souls. During my annual trek to Camden's Calvary Cemetery, I will kneel at my uncle's tomb and pray a rosary. November is also the month of our national feast, Thanksgiving. As I pray, I will thank God for the love and encouragement my uncle always gave us. But he gave us more than that: a vision. He taught us to see that the world was far richer for the rare artist, scientist or athlete of genius who had ennobled it. The vision went beyond aesthetic humanism. On that afternoon in Saint John's, he quietly pointed to the eternal adoration which is our final destiny in Christ.

Thanks, Jackson.

JOHN J. CONLEY

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ART | KAREN SUE SMITH

MATISSE IN ECSTASY

The artist's lively, hope-filled cut-outs

Walk into the exhibition Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs, and you find yourself surrounded by more than a hundred images that dance and sing, swim and squirm—not to mention the lithe contortions of the acrobats and the antics of the circus performers. Composed of paper shapes set out in ravishing color combinations, Matisse's cut-outs, on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City through Feb. 8, 2015, are stunningly lyrical and uplifting. If you add to your experience an understanding of the circumstances that prompted Matisse to make the cut-outs, you will find this entire body of work not merely decorative, but inspirational.

"Cut-outs" is the term used to describe both the method and the new art form Henri Matisse (1869-1954) developed and perfected toward the end of his long life. To make cut-outs his assistants painted sheets of paper in vivid colors of gouache, an opaque water-based paint, which Matisse cut into myriad shapes. Then they pinned the shapes into place at his direction on a paper or burlap background, where he could re-arrange them at will until he deemed the entire composition finished.

The adaptability of the pinning process encouraged experimentation and fueled Matisse's creativity. Gradually, the artist realized that the cut-out could be a new art form, not merely a preparatory step. After that, he made large-scale works, some as large as the wall of a house, others wide enough to wrap like a frieze around an entire room.

"Pale Blue Window" ("Vitrail Bleu Pâle"), November 1948–January 1949. Second maquette for the apse window for the Chapel of the Rosary, Vence.

PHOTO: © 2014 SUCCESSION H. MATISSE / ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK

"The Cut-Outs" is a once-in-a-lifetime show. The curators borrowed from around the world fragile, paper cut-outs over 60 years old, and an exhibition of this scale has not been seen in New York since 1961. The exhibition includes favorites like "The Parrot and the Mermaid," original compositions (called *maquettes*) for *Jazz*, the book printed in 1947 from cut-outs Matisse had made three years earlier. You will find all four of the "Blue Nudes," rarely shown together. "The Swimming Pool," which belongs to the MOMA, is on view for the first time in decades, as its previous, discolored backing has just been painstakingly replaced.

Most important, though, is the cumulative effect of rooms filled top to bottom with cut-outs. You can experience for yourself the new world Matisse made of paper. It is as though he illustrated Genesis (or a version of it), complete with oceans and animals, gardens and people, lights, colors and seasons. While Matisse's creation relies on memories of the circus and a trip to Tahiti, his world invites us in.

Matisse surrounded himself with these very cut-outs for more than a decade, pinning them to the walls of his three homes in Paris, Nice and Vence. Why? That is the backstory. The reasons are rooted in sheer gratitude. In

1941 Matisse underwent colon surgery and nearly died. His recovery was so unexpected that the nursing sisters at the hospital described him as a man "resurrected." He had hoped for three more years, but he received more than a decade. Matisse called it his "second life" and expressed his joy in the exuberant cut-outs.

As irony would have it, however, Matisse's ecstasy began amid family breakdown and Nazi terror. His wife Amèlie sued for divorce, enraged at having lost her place as the indispensable organizer of her husband's work to a young Russian, Lydia Delectorskaya. It tore the family apart. The timing could not have been worse: Amèlie and Henri were in Paris, dickering over how to divide their cache of art, when Hitler's troops invaded the city. As the Nazis occupied France, the Matisse family went their separate ways. Henri returned to Nice, but as the bombs neared, he retreated to Vence.

Matisse never regained his health. Confined to a wheelchair, he suffered from a weak heart, bouts of pneumonia, abscessed teeth, poor eyesight and stomach pains. He could neither paint nor sculpt, nor could he stop working. Having habitually pinned works in progress to his walls, Matisse began to construct life-giving, alternative environments for himself.

Born of gratitude, the cut-outs also served as a coping device. Matisse literally papered over the darkness of world war with a regenerative world full of beauty and color. With cut-outs Matisse crafted a visual rebuttal to the Nazi war on civilization. He expressed publicly the vitality, joy and music of life, lest anyone give up hope.

The Chapel of the Holy Rosary

Two rooms of the exhibition focus on Matisse's designs for the Benedictine Chapel of the Holy Rosary in Vence, France. After devoting three years to the project, Matisse proclaimed the chapel "his masterpiece." In a sample stained-glass window, a full-size paper chasuble design and tile sketches, you can see how cut-outs have been translated into glass, fabric and ceramic. Unfortunately the works fail to convince viewers of the luminous beauty of Matisse's chapel, especially the play of colored glass reflected on the white tile walls. Excerpts from Barbara F. Freed's documentary film, "A Model for Matisse" could have filled in the gap.

You will not find much about Matisse's spiritual side in this exhibition. Yet in the room of pages from *Jazz*, there is an English translation in which Matisse compares an artist's approach to art with a communicant's approach to the Eucharist. Writes Matisse: "...you must present yourself with the greatest humility, completely blank, pure, candid, your brain seeming empty in the spiritual state of a communicant approaching the Lord's Table."

He also asks and addresses the question, *Do I believe in God?*

> Yes, when I work. When I am submissive and modest, I sense myself helped immensely by someone who makes me do things that surprise myself. Still, I feel no gratitude toward Him because it is as if I were watching a conjurer...whose tricks I cannot see through. I then find myself thwarted of the profit of the experience that should be the reward for my effort. I am ungrateful without remorse.

Apparently, Matisse refuses to credit God with his own artistic powers. He claims fully the creative part of his humanity made in the image of God. Still, he seems to recognize "Him" at work and never disputes God's role as creator of the cosmos.

Matisse's cut-outs, born of suffering and pain, still pulsate with life. They may look like child's play, but are instead hard-earned artistic developments, the achievement of a lifetime of distillation and paring down to essentials—profundity in cut-out forms.

KAREN SUE SMITH *is a former editorial director of* ***America****.*

Mantis

A large cream colored mantis
captured me today
by a wisp of my hair
near the nape of my neck.

I flitted it like a leaf
that fell from the aspen tree
beneath which I read,
not knowing the mystery

that found me. Unfazed
by my flitting, it regrouped
to catch me again
by the bridge of my glasses.

Clearly, this was no common bug.
Still, I had no idea, 'till it landed
on the front of my shirt, resting
—a mystical pin to hold me

with its praying hands
and heart shaped head,
with its cream colored body
rocking, and its poise.

BY DIANE SOLIS

Diane Solis *has published poems in About Place Journal, Ardor and elsewhere. Her poem "Thirsting" is a Pushcart Prize nominee.*

INSIDE SACRED TEXTS

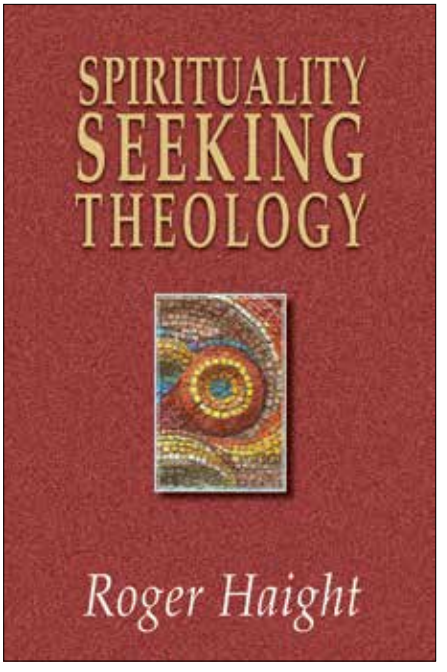
SPIRITUALITY SEEKING THEOLOGY

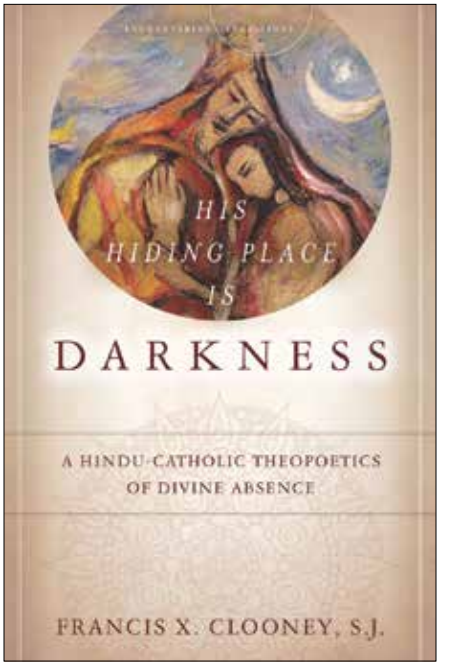
By Roger Haight, S.J.
Orbis Books. 224p $26

HIS HIDING PLACE IS DARKNESS

A Hindu-Catholic Theopoetics of Divine Absence

By Francis X. Clooney, S.J.
Stanford University Press. 208p $24.95





These two books have at first sight little in common, other than the fact that they are written by two prominent Jesuit theologians. In *Spirituality Seeking Theology*, Roger Haight, S.J., attempts to reach behind or beneath established Christian doctrines of creation, incarnation, trinity and eschatology to bring out the original and enduring spiritual meaning and intention of such doctrinal formulations. The book is not, as one might think, an attempt to discover a generic spirituality which would be distinct from or opposed to "religion."

On the contrary, Haight's focus is on a distinctly Christian spirituality, or on a spirituality shaped by faith in Jesus Christ; and his understanding of religion is strong, involving social, institutional, doctrinal ritual and spiritual dimensions. Moreover, his understanding of spirituality is not limited to the experiential dimension, but includes a way of life and relating to the world and others. He in fact defines spirituality as "the playing out of one's faith in action" and Christian spirituality as simply "following Jesus." Haight's account of Christian spirituality is profoundly orthodox or faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church. He acknowledges the different interpretations of the meaning of Jesus' divinity in the early church, but his intention is to point to the deeper spiritual meaning and logic of the final creedal statements. By focusing on spirituality, he offers a fresh perspective on traditional Christian doctrines. And more than many other theologians, he also emphasizes the essential missionary orientation of the church or the "priority of mission to the identity of the Church."

This quintessentially Christian approach to spirituality raises a question regarding his bifurcation of spirituality and doctrine, or spirituality and the church. Haight regards spirituality as "prior to the church" and "prior to and the basis of the theology and the doctrines of the church." While he defines spirituality as "the sum total of a person's actions as he or she moves along in life," he approaches theology as "the academic discipline of understanding reality critically through the symbols of Christian faith."

However, all Christian faith and spirituality contains a basic theology, or an elementary understanding and conceptualization of faith. Moreover, throughout the book, Haight seeks recourse and inspiration from important theologians (Rahner, Schillebeeckx, Sobrino, Moltmann, etc.) to help him interpret Christian doctrines. This points to the inseparability of Christian spirituality and doctrine, or to their essential interconnection in the Christian experience of faith. This critical comment in no way takes away from the value of this book. At a time when indeed "Christian doctrine has lost traction with the faithful" the church can use all of the spiritual inspiration and creative theological reflection available to break open and bring to new light the enduring meaning of traditional doctrines.

Francis Clooney, S.J.'s *His Hiding Place is Darkness* takes us into an entirely different world of experience and expression of divine absence in a biblical and in a Hindu sacred text. Comparing the *Song of Songs* through some of its Christian commentors (Bernard of Clairvaux, Gilbert of Hoyland and John of Ford) with the *Holy Word of Mouth* through some of its medieval Hindu

interpreters (Nanjiyar, Nampillai and Periyavacchan), he brings out some of the analogous poetic themes or tropes present in the two texts. This points to the extraordinary scholarly erudition required to engage in this type of comparative theological exercise. However, in addition to the Hindu and Christian texts, Clooney also draws from the poetry of Gerald Manley Hopkins and Jorie Graham in order to further bring out the complexity of speaking and writing about an experience that is ever fleeting and beyond words. The book thus contains various layers: a juxtaposition of two sacred texts dealing with the feelings of ecstasy and pain at the experiences of union with and separation from the beloved divine reality, a discussion on the place of poetry in theological discourse and finally, reflections on the implications of all this for theology of religions and for comparative theology.

As with Clooney's other works, the goal of reading sacred texts from two different religions side by side is that of "intensifying" the meaning and depth of a particular text and tradition. In this case, Clooney suggests that the reading may bring a Christian to "intensify her desire for Jesus" even while "images and scenes from Hindu poetry flood our imaginations." The comparison of the two texts indeed broaden one's religious imagination while also raising certain challenging theological questions, such as "does God have more than one love?" With regard to the second layer, Clooney turns to Hans Urs von Balthasar to point to the important role of poetry and drama in theological discourse. The dynamic relationship between the three, Clooney states, "does not undercut the possibility of theological assertion or a community's desire for doctrinal certainty, but it does cast a harsher light on theologies that have become stagnant." His attempt at a comparative theo-poetics thus opens the door to new images and shades of experience that cannot but enrich Christian theological reflection.

While Clooney states modestly that "my book is no work of poetry, but it devotes itself to the reading of poetry," it is beautifully written in a style flowing with the texts he reads. With regard to the third layer of the book, while Clooney does not develop a systematic theology of religions, he interjects passing comments or reflections on the implications of his work for the faith of the comparative theologian. For example, in a passage that reads like a personal testimony, Clooney writes that "If we manage some empathy with each and both [of the women protagonists in the poems], we will not be able to finish off any neat comparison and then move on.

In this poetic and dramatic realm, we find—to our pleasure or dismay—that our beloved is not only in hiding but that he is also more than we had imagined, he goes to places we do not visit, and may even be known by names we have not heard before. He has other lovers too. This admission need not make impossible a commitment to one true love. . . this is about more love, not less." This passage contains a rich theology of religions which Clooney—as in his other works—prefers to evoke, rather than to elaborate.

While the two books reviewed in this essay are thus fundamentally different in their respective subject matter and orientation, they both attach great importance to the imagination, a richly Jesuit theme. Haight repeatedly returns to this theme as a necessary condition for understanding Jesus' life and message and for reimagining it in our times. Clooney refers to the essential role of the imagination in entering into the depth of poetic meaning of not only one's own, but also the other's sacred text. In both books, the imagination also serves the function of bringing about a certain freedom and detachment from fixed doctrinal formulations and of bringing new life and meaning into Christian faith. In that respect, *His Hiding Place is Darkness* and *Spirituality Seeking Theology* are texts that take seriously the challenges and the possibilities facing Christian theology today and propose new and creative avenues for advancing Christian spiritual life.

CATHERINE CORNILLE *is chairperson of the theology department at Boston College.*

DAVID LEIGH

GREAT SCOTT

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S FICTION

"An Almost Theatrical Innocence"

By John T. Irwin
Johns Hopkins University Press. 248p
$39.95

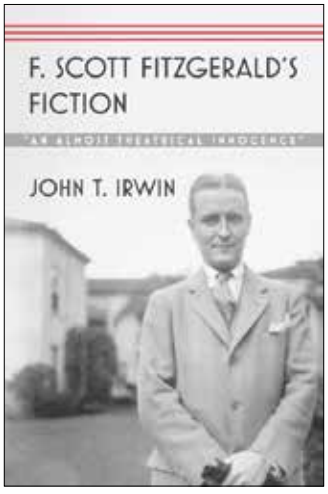
Do we need another book about F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)? He wrote only four novels and dozens of short stories, a small body of work that has spawned a dozen biographies, countless academic books and articles as well as several films of *The Great Gatsby* and his other fiction. If this fine interpretation by John Irwin, a lifelong teacher of Fitzgerald in American literature courses at Johns Hopkins, were just another overview, I would say no. But he has produced a work of love derived from decades of teaching the imaginative patterns in the main narratives of this chronicler of the American Jazz Age and Depression.

Irwin uses an eclectic approach to Fitzgerald, mixing biography with close reading of imagery and plot, all the while inserting personal insights into Fitzgerald's characters from the psychology of Freud and Sartre, the so-

ciology of self-presentation of Erving Goffman, the philosophy of Plato and the anthropology of Greek myths. The importance of Platonic idealism on characters was also a major theme in Irwin's earlier critical work on Poe, Borges and Faulkner. Most of his focus in this last volume of a trilogy centers on what Irwin considers Fitzgerald's two greatest novels, *The Great Gatsby* (1926) and *Tender Is the Night* (1936), and their sources in his short stories and personal life.

Irwin contends that Fitzgerald's central insights were into the influence of "Platonic idealism" and "theatricality" in the lives of his characters (and himself). He places Gatsby in the line of Romantic heroes like Dickens' Sidney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities*, who idealizes his future sacrifice of himself for his vision, just as Gatsby idealizes his Romantic vision of woman and gets killed for it. However, Gatsby's story is subordinate to that of his narrator, Nick Carraway, who self-consciously idealizes the past by encountering Gatsby's illusion that he can reach the concrete object of unattainable desire. As a "Southern" writer from the Midwest (whose rich, vulgar mother was from the North but married to a poor gentleman from the South), Fitzgerald centers *Gatsby* on the conflict between money and good breeding in post Civil War society. Gatsby is a Northern, self-invented gentleman who makes money in the underground world in order to win over Southern Daisy, who sought a rich gentleman but married Tom Buchanan, a rich Northern boor. Fitzgerald's deepest loyalty, Irwin shows, was to Southern breeding, which in the United States usually loses to Northern money.

The theme of "theatricality" fascinates Irwin in his reading of Fitzgerald. He finds the young novelist to be, like Henry James, deeply enamored of the stage, writing light musicals during his Princeton days and later creating a comedy, "The Vegetable," whose failure in 1923 led the author to concentrate on fiction writing. Irwin finds "theatricality" not only in the dialogue, scene structure and plots of Fitzgerald's short stories and novels, but also as the key to the psychology of his characters. Like Fitzgerald (and his wife Zelda), his characters are continually self-dramatizing, creating themselves by taking on roles and anti-roles in their relationships. Gatsby is "an actor in social drama among the rich" (just as Fitzgerald himself was from 1920 to 1936) and sought his Platonic ideals by pursuing Daisy in melodramatic schemes. In this novel, the two main stages are West Egg, a suburb made up of show people who earn visibility by professional acting and posing as celebrities at Gatsby's parties, and East Egg, a suburb made up of the inherited rich who already have public visibility from their status and security, but who are also full of affected "gestures."



Gatsby himself tries to live by sincere "emotion," but is always trying to cover up by acting as if he has inherited wealth and breeding. Irwin uses Sartre's notion of self-constitution by seeing and being seen by the Other to interpret Gatsby's circle caught between two New York 1920 suburbs. He finds Gatsby continually creating a persona for the gaze of others, primarily by inventing a past and displaying objects in which to personify himself, especially his house, his clothes and other accoutrements of a gentleman. Irwin finds that Fitzgerald did something of the same in his own life by creating an imaginary new family for himself to replace his vulgar rich mother and ineffectual father, an imagination he embodies in one of his few Catholic stories, "Absolution." This story also contains an amusement park as a symbol of the false world of American glamour apart from God, all parallels to the author's youth.

Irwin tries to make much of the religious language in the famous *Gatsby* passage: "Jay Gatsby of West Egg sprung from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God—and he must be about his father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty . . . so he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen year old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end." When Irwin goes on to use Thomas Aquinas's trinitarian language of the Son of God as mental image of the Father to explain this self-invention of Gatsby, he fails to show the significance of this theology to the novel, and offers no biographical source for such an interpretation. Irwin is much more successful in applying Goffman's 1959 "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" to the world of *Gatsby* and of Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night*. In these novels Fitzgerald makes theatricality the key to the imagery and the "histrionic personalities" of the main characters, some of them sincere and emotional in their roles (Gatsby), others cynical and artificial (Rosemary).

Such theatricality becomes most explicit in his Pat Hobby short stories and *The Last Tycoon* (1940), which portrays the confusion of acting and reality in the lives of Hollywood gentry at all levels, from rich producers like Monroe Stahr to writers like Hobby. Irwin also shows how the Fitzgeralds themselves, F. Scott and Zelda, used "an almost theatrical innocence" to cover up the humiliation and deterioration in their marriage and emotional lives.

Beneath all this decline, Fitzgerald never found the "repose" he admired in friends like Gerald Murphy or characters like Dick Diver or Monroe Stahr.

A further imaginative pattern that Irwin tries to show in these novels is that of the mythic double. Irwin believes that Fitzgerald probably read T. S. Eliot's essay on the use of myth in James Joyce around 1923 and went on to incorporate variations of mythic doubles in his own novels. Thus, Fitzgerald models the self-invention of some of his characters on certain Greek myths that provided an order or form to the narratives of life in the chaotic 1920s and 30s. Irwin discerns such myths as Pygmalion and Galaea in Gatsby and Daisy, Dick and Nicole and Rosemary, and even in Fitzgerald and Zelda's own lives. In these pairs, he finds the artist or writer creating an ideal image of woman, who is also the double of the artist in his female aspect. Where the myth does not exactly fit, Irwin traces variants from Plato's myth of the soul splitting into two halves who seek reunion or the Narcissus myths in which the hero falls in love with either himself or his twin sister. Even in *The Last Tycoon*, Fitzgerald used the mythic method to portray Monroe Stahr and Kathryn Moore. In some of these variations, Irwin finds traces of incest.

A final key theme in Fitzgerald's novels that Irwin traces is that of Being in tension with Having. In *The Last Tycoon*, for example, Being is equated with work and Having with love, with producer Stahr eventually choosing the Being of his film work over the Having of a mistress. This contrasts with the plot of *Tender is the Night*, in which Dick Diver prefers Having/love over his work as a psychiatrist and eventually fails in both. This conflict between personal and professional life was also at the heart of Fitzgerald's tragic life.

All of the patterns in the author's life, according to Irwin, ended up in his novels, with the most basic one of the search for the Platonic ideal driving him on to become what Irwin considers the best American novelist. However, for Fitzgerald, the return to the Ideal was not to that of his earlier muses—his mother, Zelda or other women, but to what Irwin calls "a self-generated image of his ideal reader." (In discussing Fitzgerald's mother, Irwin makes one of his few comments on his earliest novel, *This Side of Paradise*, whose hero, Amory, fends off a dominating mother similar to Fitzgerald's own. This novel also contains some of the story of the author's rejection of his Catholic background, a topic that Irwin curiously fails to address).

DAVID LEIGH, S. J., *is professor of English at Seattle University. His latest book is* The Pattern of Apocalypse in Twentieth-Century Fiction *(2008).*

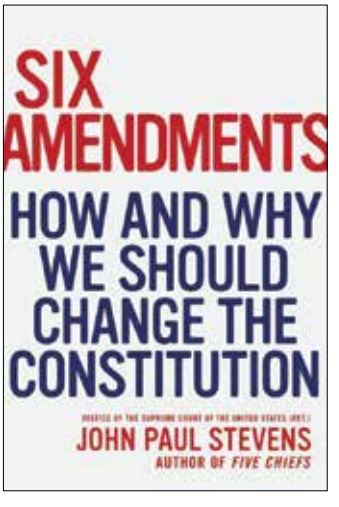
DANIEL J. MORRISSEY

DEMOCRACY IN DANGER

SIX AMENDMENTS
How and Why We Should Change the Constitution

By John Paul Stevens
Little, Brown and Company. 192p $25

A friend who sits in the legislature of my home state, Washington, recently told me he was thinking about sponsoring a bill calling for a constitutional convention and asked me what I thought. Although the framers provided for this process to amend our charter of government, throughout American history all attempts to make that happen have failed to garner the requisite support from two-thirds of the states. Most thoughtful observers have feared that this meeting might open up a constitutional can of worms. Yet I told my friend, half-seriously, that he ought to go ahead because such a desperate measure might be needed to cope with the dreadful rulings of our current Supreme Court.



In a highly-readable new book, however, retired Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens proposes that we stick with the alternative, time-honored method of changing the Constitution by adopting particular amendments. That itself is no easy task requiring approval of two-thirds of each House of Congress and ratification by three-fourths of the states. Aside from the first 10 amendments that were added as the Bill of Rights soon after our nation began, the Constitution has been amended only 17 times in over 200 years. And that is even more unlikely today given the polarized political climate—particularly with the controversial changes that Justice Stevens is proposing.

Yet knowing all that, Stevens is undaunted. He is now 94 and stepped down from the high court just four years ago after serving there for over 34 years. Appointed by a Republican president, Gerald Ford, he was at first part of the court's moderate wing, but by the time of his retirement he was its most liberal. Stevens's transformation might be best explained by a comment from Justice

Felix Frankfurter about his years on the Court, "I didn't change, everyone around me did."

As Stevens implies in his earlier memoir, *Five Chiefs*, the opinions of new justices appointed by Republican presidents made his earlier approach seem progressive. His most bitter remark about the politicization of the court came in his dissent in Bush v. Gore. Protesting that his conservative colleagues would not let the state judges in Florida proceed with the vote count in the 2000 presidential election, he wrote, "The endorsement of that position by the majority of this Court can only lend credence to the most cynical appraisal of the work of judges throughout the land."

Yet during his tenure Justice Stevens's constitutional vision also clearly deepened; in *Six Amendments: How and Why We Should Change the Constitution* he gives us the benefit of those insights. He makes these proposals, he says, as part of a continuing response to the capacious charge of America's founders "to form a more perfect union." And his well-argued suggestions are targeted to reverse ill-considered Supreme Court decisions or long-standing practices that he sees as undermining the strength of our nation and our democratic values.

Two of his amendments take aim at deficiencies in our election process. Federal courts have historically tolerated gerrymandering of legislative districts except in recent decisions when it has disenfranchised minorities. Stevens rightly asserts, however, that this perverse practice can be just as harmful to our country when it is done to entrench the power of one political party. Not only does it stack elections in favor of candidates from that faction, it also sends partisans to Congress. The result, as many have observed, is a national legislature in the control of extremists who are unwilling to compromise.

Even more deleterious to our democracy, Stevens points out, is the notorious Citizens United case that struck down restrictions on corporate campaign contributions because they violate the First Amendment. One of the justice's last major opinions was a lengthy dissent from that decision where he showed that the majority's jurisprudence was totally foreign to the intent of our country's founders. In his book Stevens also forcefully describes how unlimited campaign expenditures

corrupt our political process by making wealth the deciding factor in elections.

In two more of his proposed amendments, Stevens seeks to remedy other large shortcomings in our governmental structure that have been brought about by the narrow "states' rights" views of some of his colleagues. One would overturn a ruling that state officials do not have to assist the federal government in background checks for gun ownership. Such an approach, says Stevens, not only hampers federal law enforcement efforts that might be necessary in a situation like the Sandy Hook/Newtown shooting, but could even cause wider harm by impeding measures necessary for national defense.

His next amendment would correct any impression that sovereign immunity could be used by states to frustrate federal laws, in particular those that promote civil rights. Justice Stevens's

discussion of the history of that antiquated doctrine is impressive and culminates with his conclusion that "The Sovereign can do no wrong" philosophy underpinning it directly contravenes our commitment to justice under law.

In advocating for his last two amendments Justice Stevens makes his most forceful arguments for policies that will make the United States a more civilized society. He points out how recent Court rulings striking down state and municipal gun regulations are contortions of the original and long-accepted meaning of the Second Amendment that it applies only to state militias. Neither the Constitution nor logic, he says, should interfere with what local officials believe is necessary to curb the rampant gun violation in our society. School shootings and other mass killings are "an ongoing national tragedy" and the law should do everything it can "to encourage intelligent discussions of possible remedies."

As for the death penalty, which he originally supported, Stevens now regards it as a national embarrassment. Writing even before this summer's botched executions in Oklahoma and Arizona, he says that our current procedures allow prison officials "to make mistakes that will cause excruciating and undetectable pain." Life in prison without parole, he argues, should suffice to keep dangerous individuals out of society and deter homicidal activity. That leaves only retribution as a logical justification for the death penalty. But who these days, says Stevens, wants to think of the government as a cold-blooded killer? In addition, the ever-present possibility of innocent defendants being given this ultimate and irreversible punishment should now convince us that America is better than the death penalty.

There may be little chance that these amendments will be formally adopted, but as Stevens well knows, the court itself has the power to modify or even reverse its earlier decisions. As he points out, it did just that in Citizens United and in its recent rulings on the Second Amendment. So the justice's contribution to our constitutional discourse is hardly a futile effort; rather it is gift to our nation.

Stevens was the last veteran of World War II to sit on the Court. When he ended his distinguished judicial career commentator E.J. Dionne called him "The greatest Justice of the greatest generation." With the publication of *Six Amendments* we should again thank him for his service to our country.

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Follow the Shepherd

CHRIST THE KING (A), NOV. 23, 2014

Readings: Ez 34:11–17; Ps 23:1–6; 1 Cor 15:20–28; Mt 25:31–46

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" (Ps 23:1)

The correlation of the roles of king and shepherd precedes even the Old Testament. Akkadian, Babylonian and Sumerian texts, including the Code of Hammurabi, all invoke the king as shepherd. Clearly this association emerges from the pastoral context of the time, when sheep- and goat-herding were central to the ancient Semitic way of life. But there was something about the way a shepherd carried out his tasks that lent itself to comparisons to the political and spiritual realms, in which the king was the shepherd of his people and God was the shepherd of all humanity.

Part of what made the shepherd-king imagery resonate is that sheep were not primarily intended for slaughter. Although sheep were food, their true economic value was found in their wool, a renewable resource. As a result, the shepherd was concerned not only to feed, care for and protect his sheep from predators but to increase his flock. So a shepherd had to know his flock intimately and had to protect the weak and the vulnerable in his flock from internal and external threats.

Ezekiel 34 is a prophetic meditation on the false shepherds of Israel, who scattered the flock, with the result that the sheep "became food for all the wild animals," and the true shepherd, God, who comes to rescue his sheep. God promises: "I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness." God says, "I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep.... I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak." Yet God goes on to add another duty to the shepherd's job, saying "the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.... I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats." Though Ezekiel does not identify the "fat and the strong" or tell us the criteria by which decisions are made, this judgment is clearly a part of the true shepherd's role.

ART: TAD A. DUNNE

Though God is the shepherd, Ezekiel also tells us that God "will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince (*nasi*) among them" (34:23–24). But while the coming Davidic servant is here called a prince, in Ez 37:24 God says, "My servant David shall be king (*melech*) over them; and they shall all have one shepherd." Christians proclaim in Jesus the true king who brings together the divine and human as the good shepherd who guides us perfectly to our eternal home.

It is the portrayal of Jesus the king in Matthew that makes clearer the image of the good shepherd as judge from Ezekiel. Jesus is presented as sitting "on the throne of his glory" with "all the nations…gathered before him." The job of the king is to separate the sheep from the goats, with the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. The sheep will "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" while the goats are told to "depart from me into the eternal fire." The basis for the judgment is behavior. Those on the right, the sheep, who cared for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the imprisoned, remain with the shepherd, for they have lived their lives in imitation of the good shepherd. Those on the left, the goats, are herded to "eternal punishment" because they could not see the king, the good shepherd, among the weak and the vulnerable. Jesus says, "Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

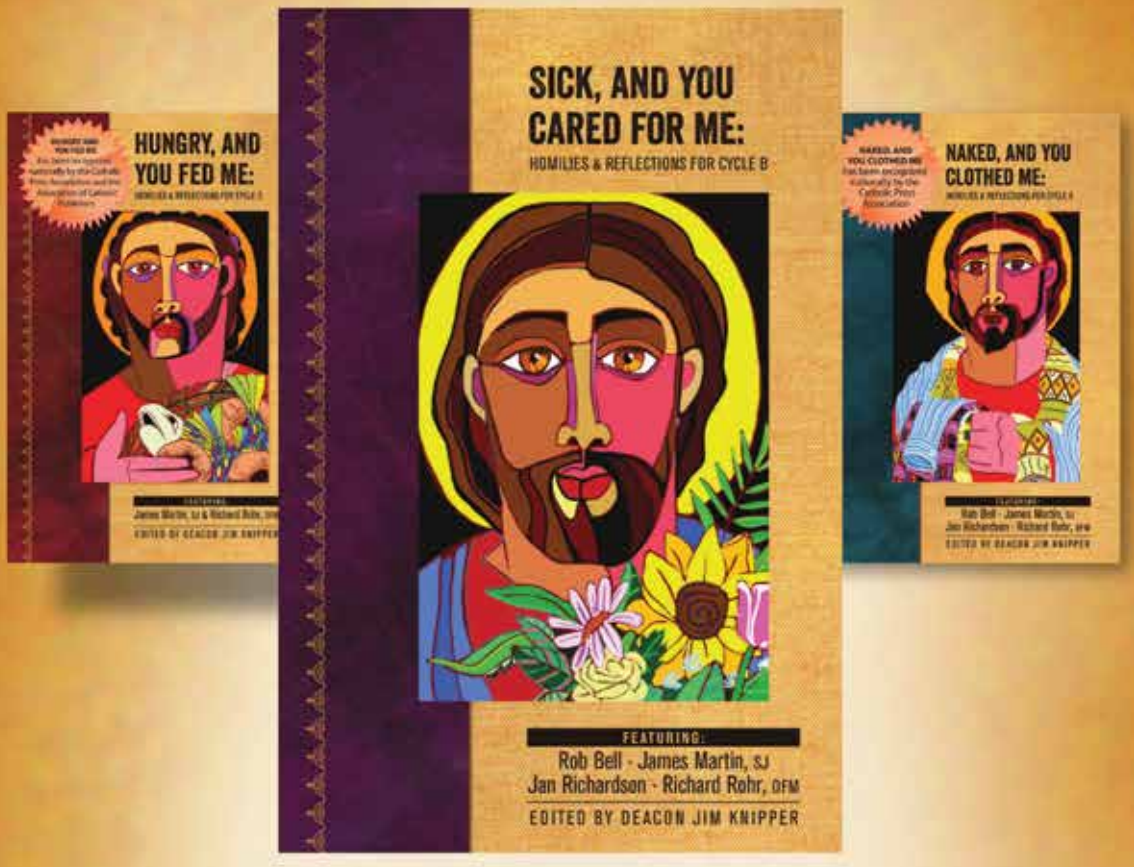
What is remarkable about the judgment is how fully the shepherd aligns himself with his flock. The shepherd-king Jesus knows his flock so intimately and cares for his flock so intensely that he judges us by how we have sought out in solidarity the least of the flock. The true king is not a cruel despot or harsh overlord, but someone who asks only that we identify with those who are the weakest and the most vulnerable. The good shepherd asks us to live by following him.

JOHN W. MARTENS

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How do you let the Good Shepherd guide you?

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



NEW RELEASE!

Some of the finest homilists come together under the moniker of "Homilists for the Homeless" in this compilation of homilies and reflections for the Sundays and Feast Days in Cycle B. The gift made by these contributors make it possible for proceeds of every book to go towards feeding and sheltering the homeless and those in need.

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