

FALL BOOKS 2

# America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW

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## 25 Years Later

IGNACIO ELLACURIA  
AMANDO LOPEZ  
JOAQUIN LOPEZ  
IGNACIO MARTIN - BARO  
SEGUNDO MONTES  
JUAN RAMON MORENO  
16 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 1989

LUKE HANSEN  
JON SOBRINO  
PAUL LAKELAND

# OF MANY THINGS

**T**hurston N. Davis, S.J., *America's* editor in chief from 1955 to 1968, once described this review as "a weekly raid on the City of God in order to publish, in the City of Man, a journal that talks common Christian sense about the world of human events." Father Davis would have been the first to admit that this self-understanding sounds a bit pretentious. But he was onto something, an insight that a Christian ministry like ours ought to keep in mind always: The journey from the City of Man to the City of God, as Father Davis said, "is the path marked out for all mortal viatores."

The one problem with this way of thinking, as William T. Cavanaugh and other theologians have noted, is that it lends itself too easily to a strictly spatial conception of the two cities. Yet Augustine of Hippo, the fifth-century saint who bequeathed to us this doctrine of the two cities, had something different in mind. The distinction between the two cities is "not between two organizations, but two states of mind," as Richard Price has written.

The boundaries of the cities do not neatly correspond to the distinction between the visible church and the world: "When St. Augustine speaks of a city," wrote Étienne Gilson, "it is in a figurative sense, or, as he himself states, a mystical sense that he does so." As a mystical body, then, the City of God transcends space and time. As a sacrament and the visible sign of the City of God, the church also transcends space and time.

This was much on my mind as I travelled last week between two other cities, New York and Kansas City, Mo., in order to attend two very different events. In New York I attended the annual Erasmus Lecture, given by Archbishop Charles Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., of Philadelphia and hosted by First Things, the journal of opinion

founded by the late Rev. Richard John Neuhaus. In Kansas City I visited *The National Catholic Reporter*, the lay-led newspaper that is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

At first glance, it might be difficult to see what these two events had in common. But one could make that mistake only if one understood the City of God in strictly spatial terms. In that case, it would indeed be hard to see how two groups who so often disagree with one another could share the same space.

But what the two ultimately have in common is not an idea or a platform but a communion of hearts. This communion among the Catholic members of both groups is not a union of their hearts with one another as much as it is a union of their hearts with Christ, the sole source of our unity as a church.

Some people think that talking this way minimizes real and important disagreements. In fact, it makes disagreement and argument possible, for a real argument requires freedom of minds and hearts. When we remember that the sole source of our unity is not the rightness or wrongness of our ideas but our devotion to a person, then we are more free to disagree with one another, precisely because we are more free to be wrong. Our conversation then becomes an encounter rather than a mere confrontation. While we may sound different notes, if we listen closely enough we can hear a certain harmony.

Father Davis completed his self-described pilgrimage from the City of Man to the City of God in 1986. He was reading that week's letters to the editor when his heart gave out. It's unlikely that it was something he read. It wasn't someone else's opinion that killed him; it was simply his time to go home. Father Davis's heart was always fixed there, on his true home. That alone made him one of the freest and fiercest intellectuals of his time.

**MATT MALONE, S.J.**

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**MODERATOR, CATHOLIC BOOK CLUB**

Kevin Spinale, S.J.

**EDITORIAL E-MAIL**

america@americamagazine.org

**PUBLISHER AND CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

Edward Spallone

**DEPUTY PUBLISHER**

Rosa Del Saz

**VICE PRESIDENT/ADVANCEMENT**

Daniel Pawlus

**DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR**

Kerry Goleski

**OPERATIONS STAFF**

Chris Keller, Glenda Castro

**ADVERTISING CONTACT**

ads@americamagazine.org; 212-515-0102

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*Cover:* The memorial plaque in the garden of the University of Central America in San Salvador shows the names of the six Jesuit priests murdered there on Nov. 16, 1989.

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## ON THE WEB

**Rev. Jack Wall**, right, talks about the work of **Catholic Extension** on “America This Week” on SiriusXM. Plus, **video reporting** from the **Synod on the Family**. Full digital highlights on page 38 and at [americamagazine.org/webfeatures](http://americamagazine.org/webfeatures).



### Family on Hold

As many people struggle to balance work and family life, some Silicon Valley companies are offering female employees a new option: hold off on having kids. Starting in January, Apple will offer female employees up to \$20,000 toward the cost of freezing their eggs. Facebook offers female employees a similar benefit. The trend is deeply troubling. In “Dignitas Personae,” a 2008 document on reproductive technologies, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith stated, “cryopreservation of oocytes for the purpose of being used in artificial procreation is to be considered morally unacceptable.”

But secular critics also are concerned about the implications of such policies. Some have wondered whether egg-freezing policies might implicitly pressure women to prioritize work over possible family life and their own personal lives. Others have worried that increased attention to egg freezing may mean companies will devote fewer resources to maternity leave and child care.

The demand for egg freezing has increased in recent years, but the procedure and storage of eggs is costly—approximately \$10,000 for a round of treatments—and the results remain unpredictable. And the procedure does not address the root of the tension between work and family that many female employees face. While some companies provide employee “perks”—like free lunches and on-site gyms—employers should also view family time as central to employee happiness. If we are to build a meaningful culture of life, the church must encourage employers to offer sufficient emotional, spiritual and financial support to young professionals who hope to build their families and spend time with them—today.

### Not Just a Game

The label “social justice warrior” is not considered a compliment in the world of serious gaming. It is an insult hurled by video game enthusiasts at those who challenge the sexism, violence and exclusion that mark their virtual realities. And as the gaming industry, which has traditionally catered to young white males, becomes increasingly diverse, more people are doing just that.

Anita Sarkeesian is one of them. In her online video series “Tropes vs. Women,” Ms. Sarkeesian criticizes the harmful and stereotypical ways women are portrayed in many games: woman as damsel in distress, as sexual plaything, as passive victim of male aggression. On Oct. 13, the day before the pop culture critic was set to give a talk at Utah State University, the administration received an email threatening

“the deadliest shooting in American history.” “Feminists have ruined my life,” the anonymous sender wrote, “and I will have my revenge.” After the police, citing Utah’s concealed carry gun laws, said they could not provide metal detectors or do pat-downs at the event, Ms. Sarkeesian canceled the speech.

This was not an isolated incident. Women routinely face graphic threats of murder and rape on Twitter and online gaming message boards. For decades the developers and players of video games have denied charges that the gratuitous killing in games could flow over into real-world violence. But when women live in fear of retribution for expressing their views, or leave their homes because their lives have been threatened—as at least three women, including Ms. Sarkeesian, have had to do since August—violence has already been done. If, as many insist, these harassers represent a small but vocal minority, it is incumbent upon responsible gamers to drown out such hateful speech and to create communities—and games—that respect women.

### Fueling Feud

In a recent television appearance, President Petro Poroshenko of Ukraine announced, “Ukraine will have gas, Ukraine will have heating.” Unfortunately, he may have spoken too soon, as a European-brokered deal to provide heating fuel for the winter months fell through because of Russian doubts about Ukraine’s ability to pay its bills. Talks are expected to resume shortly in hopes of overcoming the impasse. This comes at the end of a worrisome year that saw Ukraine’s sovereignty violated by the political and military machinations of Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin.

Russia cut off the gas supply to Ukraine in June over unpaid bills and a pricing dispute. Some saw the move as another way of punishing Ukraine for turning toward the West. Under a preliminary agreement reached on Oct. 19, Russia would have provided natural gas to Ukraine through next March at a cost of \$385 per thousand cubic meters. The deal was reportedly accompanied by progress toward settlement of the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine. But Russia backed away from the agreement days later, questioning Ukraine’s ability to pay down its already \$5 billion debt and make good on future payments.

Europeans are especially worried that if a deal is not reached soon, Russia will block gas supplies not only to Ukraine, but also to the E.U. member countries as well in retaliation for the sanctions that were imposed on Russia at the beginning of the crisis. How this plays out will depend on Mr. Putin’s ultimate intentions—which are very much in doubt.

# Go in Peace

Over a remarkable two-week period in Rome this October, church leaders from around the world met to talk about issues that confront and even diminish modern family life. And as in many modern families, the discussion at the Synod of Bishops on the Family at times became heated, disagreements became apparent and much was left unsaid at the table to be taken up at the next family gathering, a year from now in Rome.

At the conclusion of this planning assembly, Pope Francis addressed the synod fathers, encouraging them as they continue this exploration of family. It is critical to the future of the church that we all do so with open minds and merciful hearts. Over the next 12 months, the whole church will reflect on what happened at the synod. Challenging issues remain to be deliberated over together in love and hope, sensitive to the Spirit and the abiding wisdom of mercy.

As startling as some comments and statements were that emerged from these first conferences, nothing in church doctrine has changed. The midterm and final statements from the synod have no doctrinal force. After this October opening, the time for the real work has come.

How shall that work be conducted?

The world was astonished by the assembly's open discussions, encouraged by Pope Francis, and by the unprecedented transparency of these initial Vatican proceedings. The synod fathers are to be commended for that refreshing honesty and fearlessness. That frankness and transparency should continue throughout the coming year of dialogue.

Charity and courtesy should also be hallmarks of this continuing "family" discussion, whether conducted online or face-to-face in parish or diocesan meeting halls. The Catholic press worldwide should use this year as an opportunity to reinvigorate the contribution it alone can make in reaching Catholic families.

For Catholic bishops, listening makes a good beginning. One model worth emulating is a diocesan synod, like the one convened by Bishop Frank Caggiano of the Diocese of Bridgeport to discuss the questionnaire distributed last year by the Roman Curia as a global conversation starter for the synod. Devising new surveys or fashioning other methods of direct consultation with the faithful should be a component of the coming year of dialogue.

But church leaders, like all of us, need to speak with marginalized families themselves where they live and struggle. Overwhelmed by poverty or barely juggling work and

family commitments, not all members of the church family can come to parish meeting halls. But they need to be heard from too.

Church shepherds should seek them out at food pantries, homeless shelters and perhaps a neighborhood restaurant or two, where they might also meet family members who have drifted away and may be looking for a reason to come home.

This is a dialogue that must include other voices that have been subdued in the past. The more confident presence of African bishops should be welcomed. In fact, the vibrant participation of representatives from all the fast-growing parts of the Catholic world needs to be encouraged.

Similarly, a place must be found to hear the experience and wisdom of the family members who are the subjects of so many ongoing dialogues. Surely if someone is going to be talked about, it is unjust to leave that person out of the conversation. The church cannot discuss outreach to gay and lesbian people, to divorced or remarried couples without first hearing from these beloved brothers and sisters.

But neither should the Synod on the Family be reduced to the "headline" issues that so preoccupied the global media. Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna has rightly urged both the media and the church to resist focusing all synodal energy on "irregular" relationships and sacramental mitigation. The church is global, and so are its concerns. Families are being wearied and warped by economic inequities in the West, torn apart by conflict and crime in the Middle East and Central America and assailed by disease and poverty in Africa. Surely these matters should be at least as pressing a concern for a merciful church.

Closing out the synod on Oct. 18, Pope Francis wisely warned of a number of temptations that can sidetrack healthy dialogue: hostile inflexibility, do-goodism that can be destructive, the transformation of spiritual sustenance into unbearable burdens, abandoning the will of the Father for the sake of the expedient and exploiting the deposit of faith or ignoring complicated realities for self-serving ends.

There are other temptations to keep in mind: the temptation to fear and timidity, the temptation to trade hope for despair. Pope Francis reminds us to remain attentive to a God who is not afraid of new things. Over the next 12 months, the church should follow his advice and remain attuned to the Father, who is "continuously surprising us, opening our hearts and guiding us in unexpected ways."



## REPLY ALL

### Community Solutions

I would encourage readers to read Mr. Kennedy's essay, "Dignity For All" (10/20), carefully, beginning with, "We convinced the government to put the park under local control.... We set up a community reinvestment fund so that a portion of every entrance fee went into the local neighborhood—to build a bridge, buy a school bus, bring clean water to the community."

He is describing how the Catholic principles of solidarity and subsidiarity were used to help eliminate poverty in this area of the Dominican Republic. Big Government did not cure the poverty in this area. The local community did. Also the "tour companies from the North Coast" did not create the poverty.

These businesses discovered the natural beauty of the area and popularized it, which enabled the local community to pull itself out of poverty. Paul Ryan's plan is more in keeping

with Catholic social teaching than Mr. Kennedy's rambling rhetoric about how government is the fix.

GENE VAN SON  
*Online Comment*

### Opting Out

Paul Ryan's "Preferential Options" (10/13) was well written and makes a great deal of sense—theoretically. His suggestion to remove the federal government to the rearguard in favor of a state-based approach to fighting poverty is open to challenge. From a practical standpoint, can the states be trusted to provide the basic safety net for those less fortunate? For example, under the Affordable Care Act only 17 states and Washington, D.C., have set up state-run health insurance exchanges. The federal government, through the Department for Health and Human Services, has assumed responsibility for the remaining states.

LEO J. JORDAN  
*Wheaton, Ill.*

### Thoughtful Contributions

Some of Congressman Ryan's perfor-

mance as a 2012 vice presidential candidate, like his (hopefully past) infatuation with the thought of Ayn Rand, naturally leads to skepticism with regard to his poverty agenda. I prefer, though, to assume that he is maturing in his thought and trying to take his faith seriously. Good for **America** for seeking out the views of Mr. Ryan and my congressman, Joe Kennedy. Both have submitted thoughtful essays.

STEVEN REYNOLD  
*Online Comment*

### Total Defeat

"Proceed With Caution" (Editorial, 10/13), is a typically overly complicated anti-war response to the problem of Islamist militants. The editors deny the validity of air strikes and then swing back to seemingly include them among other tactics to get rid of ISIS. Why not instead see ISIS for what it is: a fascist, quasi-religious group that unfortunately will only understand force and complete and catastrophic defeat on the same battlefield on which it is currently taking over towns and villages, airports and oil refineries.

The editors' proposed response will take just as long or longer to resolve the issue and means letting the group continue to kill, rape, oppress and torture its perceived enemies—Christians, ethnic minorities and any and all men, women and children who do not openly subscribe to their radicalized version of Islam.

My proposed solution: Declare war on the group with an act of Congress, as we did in the 1940s against the German and Japanese fascism of that time, and throw everything at them until they are ultimately and comprehensively defeated militarily, financially and culturally. In the end that will save the lives of thousands, if not more, innocent men, women and children.

JOHN COPPOLA  
*Online Comment*

### Realistic Resolution

Re "Revisiting Remarriage," by Mary Ann Walsh, R.S.M. (10/6): In my



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OMG!



"Well, I think this is going rather well."

WRITTEN BY JAKE MARTIN, S.J. ART BY BOB ECKSTEIN

diocese, petitions for annulments may not be filed until one year following the civil divorce. By that time rigor mortis has set in and everyone, with the exception of certain ecclesiastics, believes the marriage is over and done with. The fait accompli that a divorced and remarried Catholic presents is their good faith desire to be in full communion with the church.

Annulment is not always possible under present procedures. I have wondered aloud how a couple might handle refraining from conjugal relations—no one has ever regarded that as more than an unrealistic choice. If the individual expresses a firm conviction that God brought the present union into being, I ask why then are they refraining from confession and communion. “Because of church rules, Father” is almost always the response. Then comes the conversation about conscience formation that leads to a pastoral resolution in the internal forum. If the synod fathers assert that such a solution is invalid there will be hell to pay in terms of the credible witness by men who have no knowledge of either marriage or conjugal relations.

(REV.) JOHN FEEHILY  
*Online Comment*

## Good Answers

I want to thank the editors for the Sept. 29, 2014, issue focusing on the question: “Who is my neighbor?” The entire issue, woven around the parable of the good Samaritan—from Amy-Jill Levine’s insightful lessons about the parable itself through Russell Shaw’s discussion of “Everyone’s Vocation” to Thomas Healey’s piece on Catholic Charities and Valerie Schultz’s reflection on prison ministry—offered a vivid and cohesive response to that provocative question. At a time when “us and them” language seems to be more and more prevalent, these articles serve to illustrate Jesus’ response and hopefully that of the church. Indeed articulating a response to that question is one

## STATUS UPDATE

*We asked two Catholic members of Congress to respond to Pope Francis’ calls to empower the poor. Readers weighed in on “Preferential Options” (10/13), by Paul Ryan, and “Dignity for All” (10/20), by Joe Kennedy.*

Paul Ryan received much criticism when he ran as vice president, but I find qualities in him that are rare in D.C.: honesty, integrity and sincerity. Yes, he wants to dismantle federal programs, but only to allocate money to those more directly in touch with problems at the local level. I also believe he has shown good faith in his willingness to reach across the aisle.

FRANK RUZICKA

Both men seem sincere. However, I firmly believe that Joe Kennedy is on

way of understanding the purpose of the Synod on the Family.

(REV.) JOSEPH DONNELLY  
*Southbury, Conn.*

## Salt the Earth

Russell Shaw’s article “Everyone’s Vocation” (9/29), about today’s almost total disregard of the primary vocation of the laity, is right on and much needed. It is not difficult to find parish priests today who measure their pastoral success by the number of laypeople they can recruit for some form of church service. These men are good and zealous pastors of souls. But their view of the laity’s role ignores what Vatican II said about the primary call of the laity: “to make the church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth” (“Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” No. 33).

(REV.) JOHN JAY HUGHES  
*St. Louis, Mo.*

## Seasoned Justice

As a married woman for 50 years, a

the right track. Eliminating government programs that assist regardless of race, gender or creed in favor of local programs, which may require listening to a sermon to get a bowl of soup, does not seem right.

EUGENE BEIL

I like the theory of families and individuals having more choices among and access to local service providers, as Mr. Ryan proposes, but perhaps that’s more of a goal than a starting point. Mr. Kennedy seems to have a better view of what the larger structural problems are. However, if the two of them could somehow foster more compromise between their two parties, perhaps something might actually get done.

CHRISTOPHER HADLEY, S.J.

mother of six, grandmother of 14 and great-grandmother of three, I feel I am qualified to respond to “Remarriage, Mercy and Law” (Editorial, 9/22).

For over 40 years, I have taught religious education in various parishes and served several terms on democratically elected parish councils. This background has provided me with many occasions to deal with marriages not approved in our church. I have witnessed sorrow, pain and damage to families who struggle to remain faithful, absent full acceptance in our churches. There have been times I have remained in the pew at the Eucharist as I have felt unworthy to climb over a family banned from the sacrament.

In Shakespeare’s “The Merchant of Venice,” the woman Portia says: “The quality of mercy is not strained./ It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven/ Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed:/ It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.” Where in canon law is the voice of Portia, urging, “mercy seasons justice”?

PATRICIA GALLAGHER  
*Fremont, Calif.*

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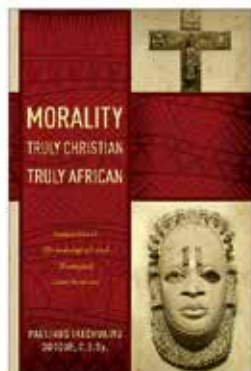
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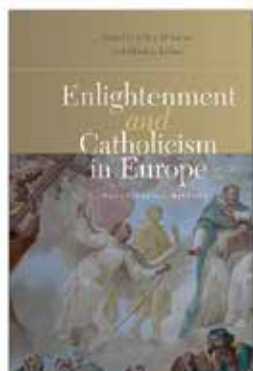


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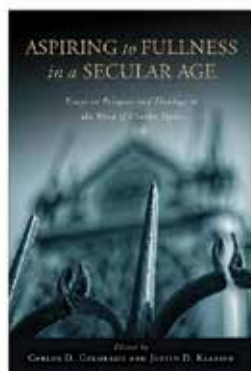


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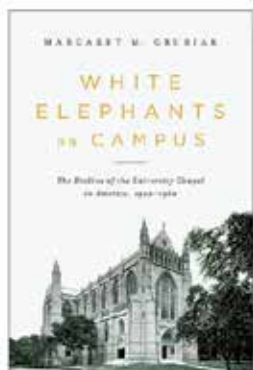


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# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

THE ENVIRONMENT

## Mountaintop Removal Devastates West Virginia Landscape

**RESOURCE CURSE.** A mountaintop removal near Charleston, W.Va. The technique has flattened more than 500 mountains throughout central Appalachia.



CNS PHOTO/TYLER ORSBURN

Sitting on the shaded front porch of his two-room cabin on a lazy August afternoon, Delphin Brock pointed toward the next mountain ridge, where a few weeks earlier heavy equipment was remaking the landscape. Then, he said, noise from the mining activity echoed over the mountains.

“You could hear the scrapers. They were doin’ a lot of shootin’ over there, you know, using explosives,” Brock said.

“I come over here and see this strippin’, and I tell you, you just want to cry,” Brock said. “Nothing grows for four or five years. [All the wildlife] there has to leave and go somewhere else. And when the wind blows, the dust flies,” he said.

The widespread industry practice of mountaintop removal involves clear cutting trees and using explosives to blow apart the tops of mountains to expose coal seams. The resulting debris, called overburden, is used to fill valleys between the mountains, often covering streams that are the headwaters of important waterways.

This day, the mountaintop where the miners worked to extract valuable Appalachian coal was quiet. Part of the distant mountain had taken on a faint green hue, a sign that grasses have been planted in an effort to reclaim the now flattened surface to its “approximate original contour” as required by state law.

In a state where mining is the only significant industry, conservation often

takes a back seat to mining interests. Because of the need for well-paying jobs in a state rife with poverty—17.8 percent in 2013—what the mining industry wants, the mining industry often gets.

Junior Walk is outreach coordinator at Coal River Mountain Watch in Naoma, W.Va., an organization formed in 1998 by people concerned about the effect of mountaintop removal on the environment and people’s safety and health. “My people have been in these mountains for generations, and they’ve always been under the boot heel of the coal industry, and I think there’s something really wrong about that,” Walk said. West Virginia is seen by mining executives as a “resource colony,” he said.

“That’s the way it’s been since the Civil War.... All of our laws were created here to expedite the process of extraction. To make it as easy as possible for people to come in, take what they want, leave a huge mess, make all their money and take it back up to Wall Street or wherever, and leave us with nothing,” said Walk, whose father and grandfather worked in the mines.

Bishop Michael J. Bransfield of Wheeling-Charleston understands the dilemma facing the region. The bishop, who addressed the issue of mine safety in a pastoral letter in 2010, said that although the need for jobs is great, environmental, safety and health concerns must not be overlooked.

Because of the transition to mountaintop removal, according to Bishop Bransfield, parts of southern West Virginia “have regressed tremendously.” The bishop has called for stronger monitoring and transparency in mining practices.

“What I’ve seen of mountaintop removal, I’m not really crazy about. I

do see it as a big problem. I see the residue left and what happens afterward is very, very bad," he said. "I believe that that [type of mining] will be re-

duced in the future because of what's happening now," he added. "So I don't think we're going to have as much of it as we've had in the past."

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### North Korean Charm Offensive Seeks to Deflect I.C.C. Inquiry

A collision over human rights appears inevitable at the U.N. Security Council after Japan and the European Union circulated a draft resolution in October that calls on the Security Council to refer North Korea to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. Forty-three countries have so far signed on in support of the draft. The resolution is the first substantial response to a U.N. Commission of Inquiry report on human rights violations in North Korea released last February. The inquiry found that a wide array of crimes against humanity, arising from "policies established at the highest level of State," have been committed and continue to be committed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Commission members were back at the United Nations in October pressing their case for accountability.

Former Australian justice Michael Kirby, the inquiry's chief investigator, spoke at a Council on Foreign Relations roundtable on Oct. 22. Kirby held out a hope that China, as a maturing great power coming to understand its global responsibilities, might defy expectations and refrain from vetoing the resolution on North Korea, a state it has frequently defended in the past.

Kirby told the roundtable that a "most extraordinary thing happened" at a U.N. event to discuss his commission's finding earlier that morning. A delegate from the North Korean mis-

sion, Kim Song, appeared at the session to defend North Korea's record. Song's unusual intervention, Kirby suggested, "indicates the deep concern that exists in the D.P.R.K concerning the response of the international community to the revelations in the report."

The inquiry found many examples of crimes against humanity, including

that possibility, he said. Proselytizing any religion is strictly forbidden in North Korea, and any evidence of such activities is a serious crime; some are reported to have been executed for it. Kirby said that in his personal view, while the killing of Christians may have taken place, it is more likely that most North Koreans simply abandoned the faith, seeing Christian belief as inimical to advancement, even personal safety, within the hermit kingdom.

While the world has long focused on the nuclear threat posed by North Korea, less attention has been paid to the state's appalling treatment of its own citizens, including a more or less complete state clampdown on free expression, particularly freedom of religion. As many as 120,000 Koreans are detained in four large political prison camps. Kirby said the inquiry's "gripping" testimony offers "the story of a totalitarian regime which has lasted for a very long time in respect of which the world has turned the other way and ignored [its abuses]."

The U.N. commission gathered testimony from expatriate North Koreans around the world. Kirby reported that the North Korean U.N. delegate called these witnesses "human scum who had been bribed to give their testimony" and "criminals."

The crime they had all committed, Kirby explained, "was the crime of leaving North Korea."

Kirby added, "The charm offensive of North Korea has been proceeding now for about four weeks. Yesterday [Oct. 21] was the latest example, the decision to release [Jeffrey Fowle], one of the three United States citizens who are in detention," he said. "This is all an attempt to get the United Nations to water down its resolutions and to depart from the obligation of accountability."

**KEVIN CLARKE**



**KEEPING TABS ON NORTH KOREA.** Chief U.N. investigator Michael Kirby in February in Geneva.

"oppressing people because of their religious beliefs." Kirby said at the time of the partition of the Korean peninsula at the end of the Korean war in 1953, some 23 percent of the population in the north were Christians. Now less than 1 percent may be so described. "That's a very rapid fall," he said. "An immediate question is presented. Is that because of a form of genocide? Is that because the North Koreans have killed a very significant section of their population?"

The commission "did not feel able to make that finding" because they could not get into North Korea to complete their investigation, but did not close off

## Francis Speaks Against Capital Punishment

Pope Francis called for abolition of the death penalty as well as life imprisonment and denounced what he called a “penal populism” that promises to solve society’s problems by punishing crime instead of pursuing social justice. “It is impossible to imagine that states today cannot make use of another means than capital punishment to defend peoples’ lives from an unjust aggressor,” the pope said on Oct. 23 in a meeting with representatives of the International Association of Penal Law. “All Christians and people of good will are thus called today to struggle not only for abolition of the death penalty, whether it be legal or illegal and in all its forms, but also to improve prison conditions, out of respect for the human dignity of persons deprived of their liberty. And this, I connect with life imprisonment,” he said. “Life imprisonment is a hidden death penalty.”

## High Hurdles for Immigration Reform

President Obama’s promised executive actions to fix parts of the immigration system will not come until after the Nov. 4 elections, but some analysts are predicting anything he does will be treated contentiously, with legal challenges and calls for impeachment. Nevertheless, the possibility that Republicans will in January hold a majority in the Senate as well as in the House solidifies the reasoning for Obama to use executive orders to change administrative policies and enforcement priorities, said panelists at an immigration law and policy conference at Georgetown University Law Center on Oct. 21. The president has promised fixes to what many call the “broken” immigration system, prefer-

## NEWS BRIEFS

Recalling the words of St. John Paul II—“Don’t be afraid! Open your hearts wide to Christ”—**Archbishop Terrence Prendergast, S.J.**, of Ottawa urged Canadians to remain steadfast after a shooting that left a Canadian soldier dead on Oct. 22. + Twelve Chaldean religious men and priests were suspended on Oct. 22 from their priestly ministry for not receiving permission from their superiors before **seeking to emigrate** from Iraq. + Archbishop Blase J. Cupich, who will succeed Chicago’s Cardinal Francis E. George in mid-November, told the priests of the Archdiocese of Chicago on Oct. 22 that he **will live in the rectory** at Holy Name Cathedral. + Although **prayers and meetings with Orthodox** leaders dominate the schedule of Pope Francis’ trip to Turkey on Nov. 28 to 30, he will also meet government leaders and visit Istanbul’s Blue Mosque. + The European Union fails to protect the **human dignity of refugees** and asylum seekers, who often are unnecessarily held in detention facilities or in prison, the European Conference of Justice and Peace Commissions reported on Oct. 22. + **Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete**, an American theologian, scientist and author and one of the U.S. leaders of the international movement Communion and Liberation, passed away on Oct. 24 in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.



**Msgr. Lorenzo Albacete**

ably with a bipartisan piece of legislation, since his first campaign for president in 2008. Multiple efforts to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill have failed in Congress. The likelihood of passing comprehensive immigration reform in the next 10 years “is increasingly remote,” said Simon Rosenberg, president and founder of the New Democrat Network, a think tank and advocacy organization, at the Georgetown conference. “We lost our shot.”

## Action Against ISIS?

Stephanie Celustka prayed at Mass for an end to the Islamic State threat in the Middle East. The parishioner from San Diego’s St. Anne Catholic Church is among the 53 percent of Americans who said in a September Pew poll that they support a U.S. military campaign against ISIS, as the Islamic militants

in Iraq and Syria are also called. “I think that it’s important that we protect the people who don’t have the ability to protect themselves,” Celustka said. “I just hope the U.S. doesn’t turn into one of those countries that uses its power to take over and control, but uses the power to protect.” Pope Francis told cardinals gathered at an Oct. 20 consistory that “we are witnessing a phenomenon of terrorism of previously unimaginable proportions.” He said the situation demands constant prayers and an adequate response from the international community. Airstrikes from an international coalition led by the U.S. have driven ISIS out of some territory in Iraq and Syria, but the group has continued to dominate, and some military experts are calling for ground troops.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

DISPATCH | LONDON

## Silly Season in the United Kingdom

Pastoral mists, mellow fruitfulness and snivelling head colds are not the only signs of the end of summer here in Britain. For decades, a distinctive peculiarity of the political scene in the United Kingdom has been party conference season. Always a sure sign of autumn's arrival, these events annually saw the Labour, Conservative or Liberal Democratic party faithful descending on an English Victorian seaside town over consecutive September weeks. Blackpool, Bournemouth and Brighton—the venues mysteriously rotated so that every town got a bite at the cherry—a week's post-summer extra trade for hoteliers and pub owners.

In days gone by, autumn conferences would be the locus of fierce policy battles in public and behind-the-scenes intrigue. Battle lines were drawn, and members would often challenge party policy, regardless of whether the party in question held parliamentary power or not.

Labour party conferences always featured the trades unions, mocked by the Tory-dominated national press for their bloc votes and leftist leanings. And Tories, as members of the Conservative Party are called, were reliably, well, Tories, while it was never completely clear what Lib Dems were—soi-disant though unlikely alternative governments-in-waiting. The conferences always culminated in the leader's speech, while attentive commentators scanned for signs of the next rising star (or of someone's political demise). There had been little similarity to the U.S. tradi-

tion of the party convention, seen from this side of the ocean as no more than the ceremonial anointing of the chosen presidential contender and running mate.

It's all different now. Conducted in modern city-center conference halls, not charmingly decrepit Victorian hotels, U.K. party conferences are increasingly adopting U.S.-style political cho-

U.K. party conferences  
are increasingly  
adopting U.S.-style  
political choreography.

reography. Every effort goes into delivering a slick, telegenic spectacle with no mistakes or gaffes. Proceedings match the daily news cycle or, better, dictate it. Every speech and every contribution from the floor is carefully planned for maximum media impact; spontaneity is risky.

How refreshing it is, then, in a particularly eccentric and British way, that things can still go terrifically wrong.

This year prime ministerial hopeful Ed Milliband, the Labour Party leader, is struggling to recover from a bad conference. Advised to speak without notes to bolster his reputation for economic competence, his performance was a nightmare; he simply forgot the section on addressing the U.K. deficit. Platform speakers at the following weeks' Tory and Liberal Democratic conferences couldn't resist this free gift. Labour's bold move to recruit former Obama advisor David Axelrod clearly hasn't worked out so far. The largely invisible

Axelrod's most noted contribution so far has been to misspell the party leader's name.

Conservative Party planning took a knock, too. They suffered the surprise defection of two lawmakers to the rising U.K. Independence Party. Despite those losses, the Tories appear to have emerged from conference season in better shape than Labour. The Lib Dems, widely castigated for their ineffectual performance in coalition with Conservatives, look condemned to the political wilderness for a generation.

The upcoming U.K. general election, planned for May 7, 2015, sharpened minds this conference season. Fallout from the recent Scottish independence referendum had an impact as well. And the rise, in England at least, of the U.K.I.P. has the ruling Tory administration in more of a panic than the spin doctors would admit. The U.K.I.P.'s policy of withdrawal from the European Union has been countered by a Tory promise to hold an "in or out" referendum in the next parliament, should they win in May. That puts the European question back in center stage.

British E.U. membership has always been a pebble in the shoe of conservative British politics, even though the United Kingdom's eventual accession in 1974 came about under a Tory prime minister, Edward Heath. Margaret Thatcher soothed Tory concerns with her hostile attitude to Europe. Now the U.K.I.P. is doing much the same, and Tories are worried.

So in London autumn is here; the leaves in Parliament Square and St. James Park are turning and the election campaign, officially only three weeks in the spring, has already begun. But will this year's general election engage a cynical electorate? That might prove the most important question of all.

DAVID STEWART

DAVID STEWART, S.J., is *America's London correspondent*.



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# Extraordinary Time

Among the many masterful moments in J. F. Powers's 1962 novel *Morte D'Urban* is a Sunday afternoon party where the protagonist, Father Urban, tries to interrupt an argument between two businessmen about the parable of the unjust steward (Lk 16:1-13). Father Urban steps in: "I'll grant it's a difficult text, but rightly understood...." But he has nowhere to go from there. In fact, he himself finds Jesus' teaching rather hard to stomach. "It had even entered Father Urban's mind that Our Lord, who, after all, knew what people were like, may have been a little tired on the day he spoke this parable. Sometimes, too, when you were trying to get through to a cold congregation, it was a case of any port in a storm. You'd say things that wouldn't stand up very well in print."

In discussing the church's approach to issues like divorce and homosexual partnerships, the recent Synod on the Family (held in Rome during the first half of October) brought focus to other contentious Scripture passages that often cause similar strife in our attempts to parse pastoral meaning from what sound like hard words.

Jesus' strictures against divorce seem harsh in light of his mercy elsewhere; St. Paul's notions of sexuality and gender relations are in even the most panglossian interpretation a puzzle to the modern Catholic mind. That these sayings are often used as rhetorical weapons by those who seem to delight in binding up heavy

burdens on the troubled and the vulnerable makes them even harder for many to accept in their traditional interpretations.

Our own lives as Christians, we all know, require much more compassion for the gray areas of life. The synod made it clear that those teachings cannot and will not be swept under the rug (as other teachings are: Where's the synod on "the laborer deserves his wage"?), but it also allowed the bishops to discuss them frankly and openly.

By the explicit decree of Pope Francis, traditional Vatican secrecy is history; no longer are synods stage-managed pageants that simply ratify the pope's decisions. Pope John Paul II openly read his breviary during the proceedings of many synods, a less than subtle expression of his opinion of collegiality. This time around, pretty much everything was open to the public, no topic was *verboten*, and we all got a glimpse of the sometimes very colorful characters involved. A veritable soap opera ensued, complete with fancy outfits and accusations of infidelity from every corner. And, like a soap opera, the juiciest bits were about divorce and the love that dares not speak its name.

Mercy meets doctrine; teaching meets practice; the rubber meets the road. Remind you of your parish? And pageantry aside, that's more or less what this synod resembled. Except the fights were a bit meaner, which just means the stakes were a bit higher. The church looked bad

in the eyes of those who want a uniform message and a united front; the church never looked better to those who have longed for decades for this kind of openness.

The *sturm und drang* reminds me of a conversation I was privy to during a graduate course at Fordham in the opening weeks of the papacy of Benedict XVI. "You must find

it scandalous," one of the Catholics said to a Protestant in the class, "the way Catholics fight with one another." Her response was a surprise. No, she said, not at all. In fact, she admired Catholics for their unity. "If my congregation had the sort of nasty fights you people have," she continued, "half of us would just leave and

start a new one."

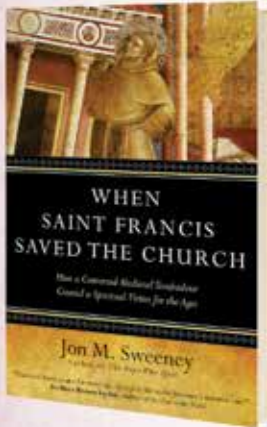
Another county needs to be heard from. For all our fractious negotiations and dramatic gestures and accusations of disloyalty, the vast majority of us tend to stick together in the Catholic Church. The crazies notwithstanding, no one truly thinks a change in the church's pastoral practice on divorce or homosexuality would produce a schism; similarly, a robust endorsement of the current teaching probably wouldn't result in a mass exodus either.

That being said, it's O.K. to be a little snarky on occasion, too, something J. F. Powers knew well. In *Morte D'Urban* he has Father Urban leave the party described above with a curious flourish: the annoyed priest signs the guestbook "Pope John XXIII."

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

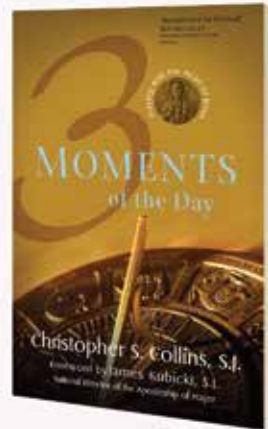
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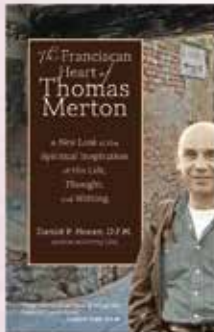
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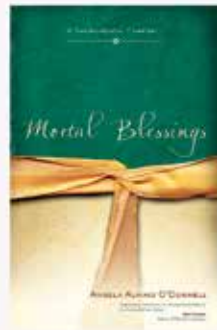
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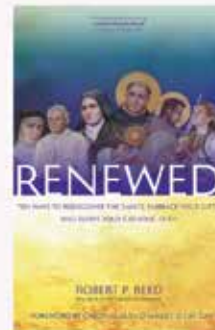
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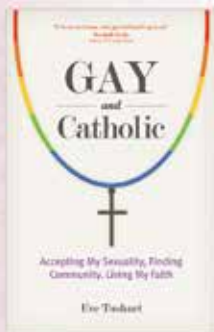
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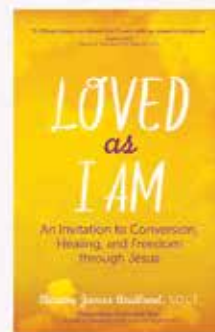
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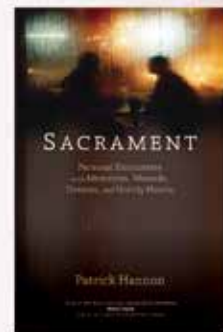
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# Truth, Then Justice

## Memory and healing in El Salvador

BY LUKE HANSEN

**I**n Arcatao, El Salvador, a small town nestled amid stunning mountain vistas near the Honduran border, the Historical Memory Committee is charged with preserving the memory of the civil war that left more than 75,000 dead—and thousands more “disappeared”—between 1980 and 1992. Their latest project: building a memorial chapel to hold some of the exhumed bodies from a nearby massacre.

The chapel offers a space to remember and mourn, but that is not all. Rosa Rivera y Rivera, who is helping lead the project, explained that a garden and a pathway lined with flowers are also essential components of the memorial. “Flowers are signs of life and joy,” Rosa explained through an interpreter. “We cannot remain only in the past. We must educate our children” for the sake of the future, “so that it never, never happens again.”

Among the many people killed during the civil war were six Jesuit priests—Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., Ignacio Martín-Baró, S.J., Segundo Montes, S.J., Juan Ramón Moreno, S.J., Joaquín López y López, S.J., Amando López, S.J.—along with Elba Ramos and her daughter Celina, who were guests in the Jesuit residence at the University of Central America in San Salvador on the night of the murders.

This past summer I traveled to El Salvador as part of a delegation to mark the 25th anniversary of these assassinations, and I saw some of the many ways the country continues to suffer from the bitter fruits of war. Even two decades after the peace accords officially ended the conflict, the country is still plagued by epidemic violence and impunity from legal prosecution, social disintegration and polarization, a stagnant economy and extensive migration that tears apart communities and families.

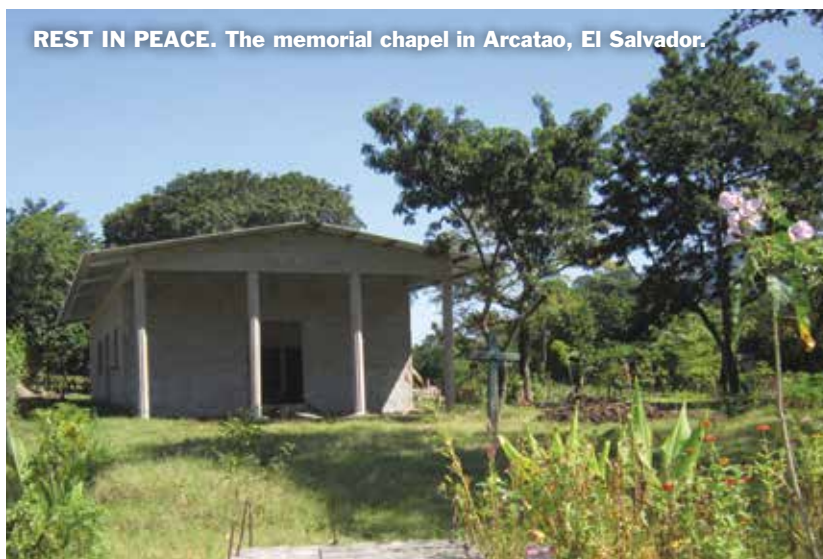
In the first months of 2014, the homicide rate in El Salvador hovered between 10 and 14 deaths per day, the fourth highest rate in the world and not far behind the average daily total during the civil war. Omar Serrano, vice president

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**LUKE HANSEN, S.J.**, a former associate editor of *America*, is a student at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif., a graduate school of Santa Clara University. Hansen took part in a delegation to El Salvador, sponsored by the Ignatian Solidarity Network and Christians for Peace in El Salvador, from July 24 to Aug. 1, 2014.

of social outreach at the UCA, told the delegation through an interpreter that people understand high death rates during wartime, but the current rate of violence is “irrational and absurd.” People see the violence as worse today than during the war years, he said.

Yet our delegation also saw many concrete signs of life and hope and healing. A popular movement, for example, helped establish a national monument to civilians who were killed or disappeared during the war. Human rights groups continue to pursue justice and accountability for those responsible for these crimes. Communities of faith, trying to recover from the wounds of war, are imbued with a sense of the paschal mystery. They remember and mourn the victims of the war, but



**REST IN PEACE.** The memorial chapel in Arcatao, El Salvador.

PHOTO: DON CLARKE

never without an expression of faith and hope in resurrection and new life. Murals and flowers are among the many signs that acts of barbarity do not and will not have the last word. The fidelity, hospitality, festivity and joy of the people are even surer signs.

The Rev. Luis Salazar, pastor of the thriving parish of María Madre de los Pobres near San Salvador, told our delegation, “We are a community of faith that believes in the God of life.” When our delegation visited the parish senior center, some members of the community were doing needlework. When we arrived, however, they stopped the work, put on some music, started dancing and invited us to join them. In a welcoming speech, one of the leaders explained that their work





**HOPE BLOOMS.** Obdulio Ramos, the husband of Elba, planted roses on the lawn where the Jesuits were assassinated, along with Elba and her daughter, at the University of Central America, San Salvador.

was motivated by Archbishop Óscar Romero, whom they call “our pastor,” and Rutilio Grande, S.J.—both of whom lived, worked and died among the people of El Salvador—and now Pope Francis, “who celebrates the Gospel so joyfully.”

## Searching for Truth

The assassinations at the UCA in the early morning hours of Nov. 16, 1989, drew the attention of the world yet again to the civil war in El Salvador. Since 1980 the United States had been delivering about \$1 million in aid each day to the Salvadoran government. After the murder of the Jesuits, however, Congress voted to cut the aid package in half. At the same time, the United Nations and countries like Spain and Mexico quickly became involved in negotiations between the Salvadoran government and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, the coalition of rebel groups known as the F.M.L.N. It took 20 months and a series of agreements along the way, but the government and the F.M.L.N. finally signed the Chapultepec Peace Accords on Jan. 16, 1992.

The most significant accomplishment of the peace accords was an immediate cease-fire and an end to the war. The accords also laid the groundwork for reforming and rebuilding Salvadoran civil society. The agreement dissolved the military and police groups responsible for much of the violence during the war, established a new constitution, formed a new civilian police force, created new procedures for electing Supreme

Court justices, incorporated guerrilla fighters into civilian life, allowed the F.M.L.N. to form a political party and mandated the United Nations to investigate human rights violations.

The U.N. Commission on the Truth for El Salvador took eight months to investigate what happened during the war and recommended measures for promoting national reconciliation and healing. The final report, “From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador,” was published in March 1993. The commission received 22,000 complaints involving murder, torture and disappearance; 85 percent were attributed to state agents, and 5 percent to F.M.L.N. forces. Concerning an early period of the war from 1980 to 1983, the report concluded: “Organized terrorism, in the form of the so-called ‘death squads,’ became the most aberrant manifestation of the escalation of violence. Civilian and military groups engaged in a systematic murder campaign with total impunity, while state institutions turned a blind eye.”

The report examined the most notorious assassinations and massacres of the war. The commission, for example, found “full evidence” that Maj. Roberto D’Aubuisson, founder of the Nationalist Republican Alliance, or Arena, ordered the assassination of Archbishop Óscar Romero in March 1980. They also found “substantial evidence” that the Salvadoran military and a paramilitary group deliberately killed at least 300 innocent people, including women and children, at the Sumpul River near the town of Arcatao on May 14, 1980.

The report called the massacre a “serious violation” of international humanitarian and human rights law, and said that military authorities attempted to cover up the incident.

In addition to recommending substantial reform of the judiciary, military and police, the U.N. report also addressed the need for justice and reconciliation. It described the “two-fold requirements of justice” as punishing the guilty and compensating the victims. The commission expressed no confidence in the Salvadoran judicial system to actually prosecute perpetrators, but it did assert that victims and their families were entitled to “moral and material compensation.” In addition to monetary reparations, the commission recommended that the national government build a memorial bearing the name of every victim of the conflict.

The ruling party at that time, Arena, harshly criticized the report and ignored most of its recommendations. Just five days after the United Nations issued the report, the national assembly approved general, unconditional amnesty for all those involved in the civil war. It protected high ranking political and military officials (including F.M.L.N. leaders) from prosecution. Supporters of general amnesty claimed that the legislation helped protect a fragile peace agreement and helped a polarized society focus on a united future. Critics, however, contended that true peace was not possible without justice. They asked how there could be no consequences, even for the most horrendous crimes.

Andreu Oliva, S.J., the current president of the UCA, told the delegation that the peace accords have made a lasting impact in the area of political rights and freedom of expression and association, but much more work needs to be done. “The peace accords achieved an end to the war, but not reconciliation or justice or an improvement of living conditions,” he said. “The accords could have been a path to reconciliation” but were not completely fulfilled.

“There are different visions of reconciliation in the country,” Father Oliva explained. “Some people call for truth and reparations, while others say we should ‘forgive and forget,’ but they are not even willing to ask for forgiveness.” The human rights office of the UCA, he said, has called for an international tribunal for restorative justice, but the government has not supported this proposal.

## Legal Openings

Under international pressure, El Salvador prosecuted several military officers in 1991 for the assassinations at the UCA, but only two were convicted—and they were soon freed under the amnesty law. At the time, several human rights groups expressed concerns with the proceedings. In 1999 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights recommended that El Salvador revoke the amnesty law and conduct an entirely new investigation into the murder of the Jesuits and the women.

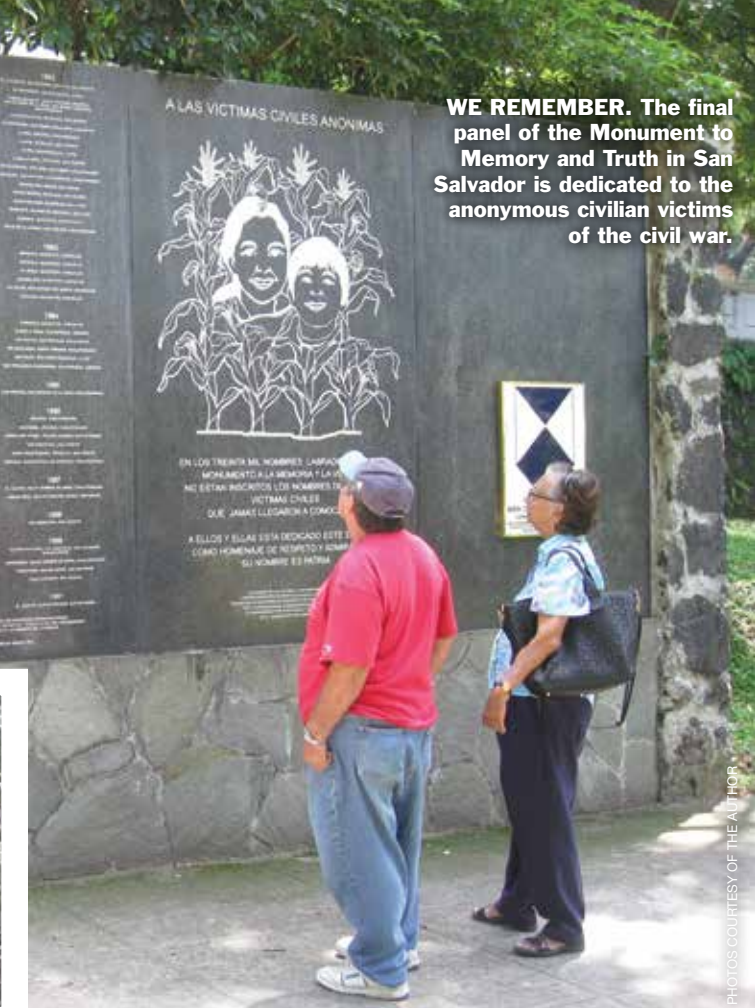


So far El Salvador has not reopened the case, but legal action is afoot across the Atlantic. In 2008 the San Francisco-based Center for Justice and Accountability filed a criminal case in the Spanish National Court against former Salvadoran president Alfredo Cristiani Burkard and 14 former military officers and soldiers for their role in the murder of the Jesuits. (Five of the six Jesuits were Spanish citizens by birth.) A year later the court charged all 14 former military officers and soldiers—and reserved the right to charge Mr. Cristiani at a later date—with state terrorism and crimes against humanity. In 2011 the court charged six additional defendants.

Col. Inocente Orlando Montano, one of the original defendants in the case, is currently serving a 21-month prison sentence in the United States. In 2012 he pleaded guilty to six counts of immigration fraud and perjury. U.S. authorities are currently considering how to respond to Spain’s extradition request for Colonel Montano, one of the top military officers in El Salvador when the Jesuits and the women were murdered.

## A Monument to Truth

Parque Cuscatlan, a serene green space in the heart of San Salvador, is home to the Monument to Memory and Truth. Following the recommendation of the U.N. commission as well as 20 years of advocacy by citizen groups, the city gov-



**WE REMEMBER.** The final panel of the Monument to Memory and Truth in San Salvador is dedicated to the anonymous civilian victims of the civil war.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

ernment of San Salvador finally erected a memorial wall in December 2003. It stretches 300 feet and stands 10 feet tall. The endless rows of white engraved names on a dark surface immediately remind the U.S. visitor of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., but the memorial wall in San Salvador lists only civilians who were killed or disappeared during the civil war. The list, organized by year and last name, includes 32,000 names. A final panel honors 30,000 anonymous civilian victims of the war.

In a sea of 32,000 names, it takes some work to find “Óscar Arnulfo Romero,” even though it is bracketed by tiny painted green leaves and slightly discolored from being touched by many hands over the years. There are other familiar names on the wall: Rutilio Grande, Ignacio Ellacuría, Maura Clarke, Jean Donovan. But most of all, the memorial serves as a stark reminder that unjust and untimely deaths were the fate of tens of thousands in the country, not just a few priests and sisters. The deaths of Margarita Veronica Garcia, Nelsey Mirella Herrera, Isabel Luna, Maximino Rodríguez, Gerardo Cruz Sosa may not have been reported in the newspaper, nor did they garner international concern or a remembrance in annual commemorations or pilgrimages; but the memorial—and the Gospel—invite us to imagine where they lived, whom they loved and who loved them. Whose world was turned upside down by their disappear-

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ance or death? In this way, the wall itself is an act of resistance to death and anonymity because it identifies people by name and thus recognizes their dignity.

The first few sections of the wall consist of a mural by the Salvadoran artist Julio Reyes. The mural tells the story of colonialism, massacres and popular protests. In the final panel, flowers bloom and some of the petals transform into doves of peace. A few feet down the path, an older couple sits on a park bench, tears flowing. They share no words, but simply hold each other. The civil war ended 22 years ago, but the memory of the war and the pain of the losses remain close.

## A Work in Progress

Ms. Rivera y Rivera, who serves on the Historical Memory Committee in Arcatao, told the delegation that people in the town were run out of their villages as early as 1976. Government forces burned their homes, she said, so people took clothes and food and fled to Honduran refugee camps or to the nearby mountains, where they lived on seeds, leaves and the roots of plantain trees. The town was eventually repopulated.

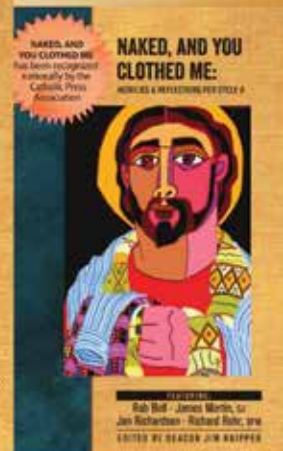
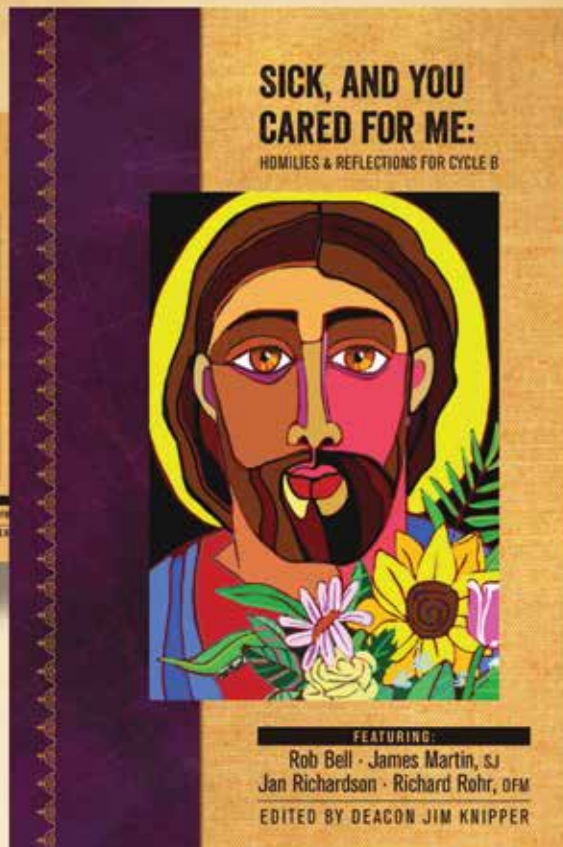
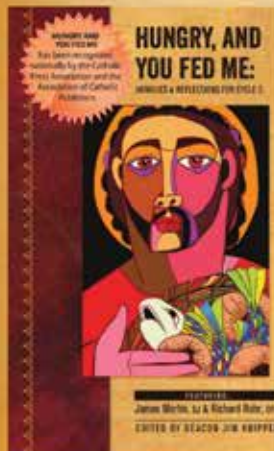
The current pastor, Miguel Angel Vásquez, S.J., told the delegation that when he first arrived in Arcatao in June 1986, he saw that the war had destroyed everything. During the war years, he said, there were 59 massacres in his diocese alone. The Historical Memory Museum displays many artifacts like broken and rusted shells of bombs and bullets as well as documentary photos of wounded men, children in makeshift schools and skulls from the massacre at the Sumpul River.

At present, nine bodies from different massacres are buried near the memorial chapel—a work in progress—and the community waits for more bodies from the local medical examiner. It will not be possible to exhume all the bodies from the war era, however, because of the passage of time and the fact that the Sumpul River swept away so many of the bodies.

Students from the local Jesuit school have completed service hours to help build the memorial chapel, and the community has raised funds through food sales, appeals to local businesses and the support of outside groups like the city of Madison, Wis., the sister city of Arcatao. So far the community has invested nearly \$20,000 in the chapel and memorial site. “We have many ideas but few resources,” Ms. Rivera y Rivera explained. “We have trusted God to provide what we need.”

Once completed, the chapel will include a statue of Mary, who “like so many here,” Ms. Rivera y Rivera explained, “saw the torture and killing of her child. Mary continued forward, and kept walking, so we too continue in the struggle.”

“I have seen how these communities can rise up,” Father Vásquez told the delegation. “I have seen the resurrection of the community and the people, a new way of sharing and living together. Peace is possible when we all come together.”



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# On the Way to Healing

Humanizing a 'gravely ill world'

BY JON SOBRINO

**M**y presence here today brings back cherished memories. Twenty-five years ago the Jesuit School of Theology conferred on me an honorary doctorate as a way of honoring my Jesuit brothers and two simple women who had been betrayed and assassinated in the middle of the night just a few weeks earlier in San Salvador.

Years have passed, but I still find inspiration in those men and women. The six Jesuits, like many of us here today, worked at a university. Amando López, Juan Ramón Moreno and Ignacio Ellacuría were theologians. The last is internationally known. Segundo Montes was a sociologist who accompanied immigrants in Honduras and took up their cause before the U.S. Congress. Ignacio Martín Baró was a social psychologist who analyzed the violence perpetrated against the common people. Joaquín López y López was co-founder of the University of Central America and founder of *Fe y Alegría*. The two women, Elba and Celina, mother and daughter, were in charge of maintenance, cleaning, gardening and cooking. They were typical of the men and women whom Archbishop Óscar Romero loved to the end, a crucified people, a people poor and hopeful. Remembering them all, and drawing on the thinking of Ignacio Ellacuría, I will offer some reflections on what I think is the greatest problem facing our world today, a world into which we send our graduates. I also will touch on what we have to do.

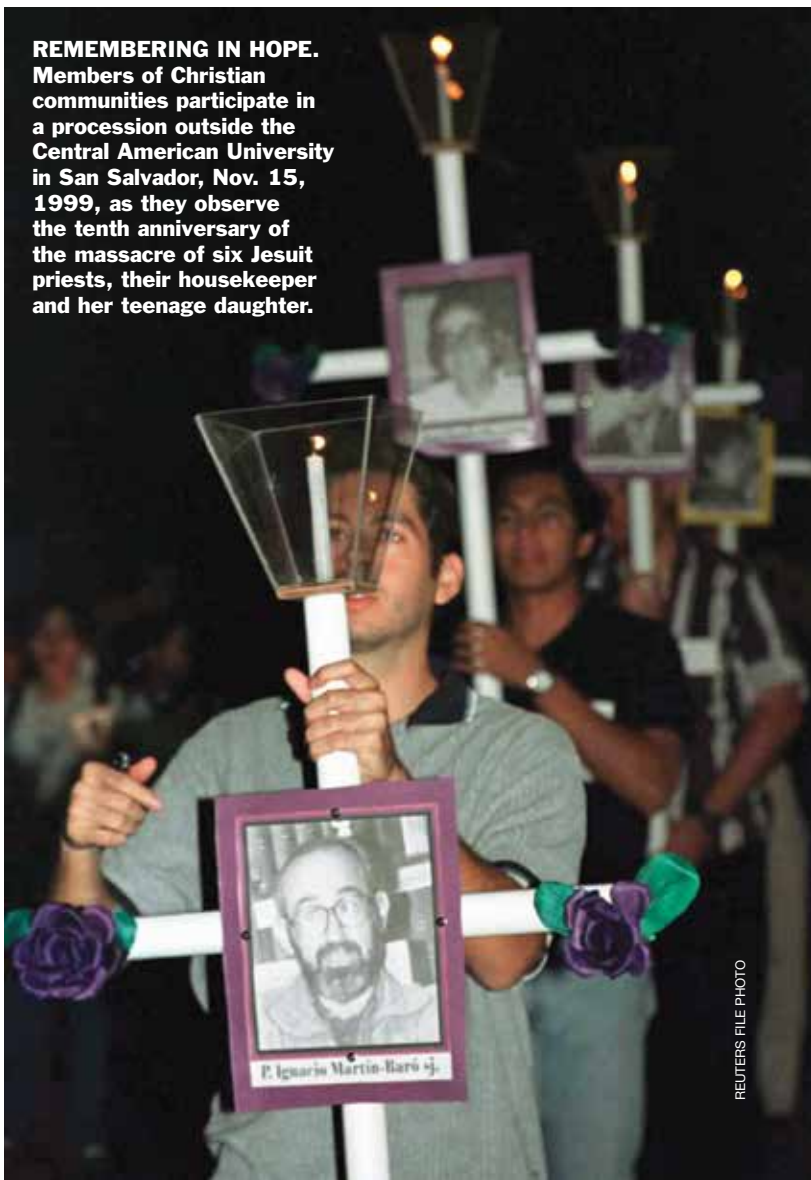
## The Civilization of Wealth

A truth most real, most hurtful and most puzzling is that our world is in bad shape. During his final days in 1989, devoid of all youthful exuberance, Ignacio Ellacuría said tersely that “our civilization is gravely ill.” In 2005, Jean Ziegler, then special rapporteur at the United Nations on the right to food, said that the world was being threatened with destruction by massive financial capital. A few

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**JON SOBRINO, S.J.**, teaches and writes at the University of Central America in San Salvador. He was a friend of Archbishop Óscar Romero and a colleague of Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., and other members of the Jesuit community who were assassinated at the university, with their cook and her daughter, 25 years ago this November. This article is an edited version of the speech Father Sobrino delivered at the graduation ceremony of the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, in Berkeley, Calif., on May 24, 2014.

**REMEMBERING IN HOPE.** Members of Christian communities participate in a procession outside the Central American University in San Salvador, Nov. 15, 1999, as they observe the tenth anniversary of the massacre of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her teenage daughter.



REUTERS FILE PHOTO

months ago, the Venezuelan theologian Pedro Trigo, S.J., wrote that the current reality of forced migrations—of which you all have experience here in California—expresses, “in all its harshness, magnitude, and hard-heartedness, the sin of the world.”

Myopic, misleading or hypocritically maintained tributes to globalization cannot hide the disease that threatens our world, and Father Ellacuría warned of the dangers of “a fateful and fatal outcome.” Denouncing these false tributes, he

maintained that this sickness is produced by what he called the civilization of wealth. And he concluded that in order to avoid the danger, we have to “reverse, subvert and launch history in another direction.” Some hopeful progressives say that today “another world is possible.” He argued that “another world is necessary.” And for that other world to burst into reality, another civilization is needed, a civilization that opposes and overcomes the present civilization. He called it a civilization of poverty. This notion is not easy to comprehend in all its depth, but I will attempt to explain it.

Father Ellacuría did not precisely define what he meant by civilization, but he described it well enough as a general project of humanity, an order of values, a fixed state of things. In each case he was not referring to one aspect of social reality, like the economy, religion, the cultivation of science and so on, but rather to a totality. Nor did he define precisely what he meant by *poverty*, when he used that word to characterize a civilization. But it is very important to understand this term correctly. He warns those who object to the use of the term that he does not mean universal impoverishment. That should be obvious.

The decisive factor is that poverty, in this sense, has to be understood in relation to the wealth of the other civilization, which it opposes and overcomes. This means that, although the analysis of the content of the civilization of poverty may be incomplete, it will always be seen in contrast to its counterpart, the civilization of wealth, which it seeks to overcome or surpass.

And most fundamentally, salvation emerges from that overcoming of the civilization of wealth, the salvation of our gravely ill current civilization. Father Ellacuría writes, “In a world sinfully shaped by the dynamism of capital and wealth, it is necessary to stir up a different dynamism that will salvifically surpass it.” It can be said that our world is subject to this figure of sin—which in one form or another is death—a figure that has a powerful dynamism. For this another dynamism is needed that through struggle overcomes that power that configures our world and makes it gravely ill.

With these words Father Ellacuría formulated his global thesis to include the fundamental elements of both civilizations in their dialectical relationship: “The civilization of poverty...rejects the accumulation of capital as the engine of history and the possession and enjoyment of wealth as the principle of humanization. It makes the universal satisfaction of basic needs the principle of development and the growth of shared solidarity the foundation of humanization.”

## The civilization of wealth is a selfish ‘good life’ and a type of success that excludes others and comes at their expense.

This is not easy to accept; it is not even easy to understand. Hence, even with good intentions, sometimes the word *poverty* has been eliminated and replaced by other formulations; people speak about “the civilization of shared austerity” and other similar concepts. The main reason for this substitution, I think, is the chill that results from the introduction of the word *poverty* into the description of an ideal civilization. But in doing so, we need to keep in mind that the word *austerity* does not go to the heart of the matter. Austerity is, indeed, a subjective attitude that is opposed to wastefulness, while poverty is an objective reality—a complex one, as we will see—that opposes wealth. Poverty, not austerity, is the dialectical opposite of wealth, which is what must be overcome. And it is important to understand well

what is meant by a civilization of poverty.

In the civilization of wealth, the driving force of history is “the private accumulation of the greatest possible capital on the part of individuals, groups, multinationals, states or groups of states.” Its meaning is the maximum enjoyment of that accumulation based on its own security and the possibility of an ever-growing consumerism as the basis for happiness itself.

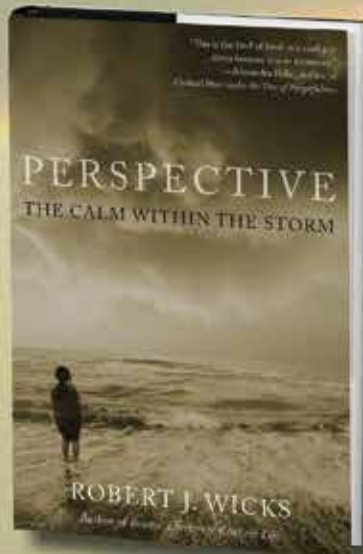
This civilization is not located geographically, because it is present “in the East as well as in the West and deservedly is called capitalist civilization (whether state capitalism or private capitalism).” The judgment that we make about it should not be simplistic, for that civilization “has brought benefits to humanity that, as such, should be preserved and furthered (scientific and technical development, new modes of collective consciousness, and so forth). But it has also brought greater evils.” One is that it does not satisfy the basic needs of all. Two, that it not only does not generate equality but is not capable of doing so. Three, it does not generate a humanizing spirit.

The first point is a crime. It is the denial of life. It causes the slow death that results from poverty or hunger and the violent death that comes to those who rebel and struggle for life.

People who wield great power often try to obscure the second point, but they are not convincing. There are simply not enough resources on this planet for what has been accumulated to be enjoyed by everyone. Following the insight of the philosopher Immanuel Kant, the civilization of wealth is unethical precisely because it is not universalizable. Whatever the song sung by the sirens—whether they say that evil is not as absolutely bad as it may seem, or that the good follows its

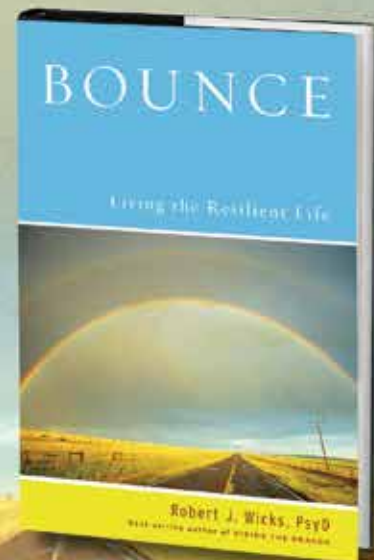
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path, or that reprogramming efforts will reduce poverty by 2025, etc.—it remains undeniable that the standard of living (not just of millionaires, but even of middle-class Americans, Europeans or Japanese) is not universalizable. They consume so many resources, raw materials and energy that what remains is simply not enough for the rest of the world's population to live well.

This makes it difficult or impossible for the human spirit to flourish as a dimension of the totality of a civilization. This is the third of these evils. It is the negation of mutual support and universal dignity—whatever the formulations in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights might be. Father Ellacuría insisted with increasing force that the civilization of wealth does not generate the spirit, inspiration, energy or values capable of humanizing people and societies. The civilization of wealth is a civilization of the individual, of a selfish “good life” and a type of success that excludes others and comes at their expense. One example is the spirit of elitism that is generated by the multi-million dollar sports industry.

And the life breath the Spirit imparts diminishes even more when the West, which produces this civilization, understands it not only as the result of talent and noble efforts—which is partially true, though accompanied by massive historical and secular deprivations—but also as the result of a certain predestination. This is how some ancient religions understood what it meant to be a “chosen people.”

As already stated, the civilization of wealth is not defined geographically, although it is more established in some regions than others. For Father Ellacuría, the United States is the paradigm of such a civilization, and other countries configured along these lines act as if they too are endowed with a type of Manifest Destiny.

Such a spirit dehumanizes. It tends to generate contempt in some people and servile or irrational, violent responses in others. In 1989, referring not to the economic resources of the United States but to its spiritual potential, Father Ellacuría said that it “has a bad solution.” He added that having a bad solution is worse than having no solution, as is the case in the third world. Generalizing, he concluded that countries of abundance have “no hope”—while hope is very much a reality in the third world. On the contrary, he said, these countries of abundance are characterized spiritually by fear.

Looking at the world in its entirety, that is, at the world

of Father Ellacuría and at our world today, one cannot see how such a world has meaning, especially when we consider that the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus remains the dominant parable, the one that describes the situation in its entirety. The conclusion is short and to the point: the civilization of wealth is “a humanistic and moral disaster.” And passing judgment on its long history, he added that the self-correcting processes of such a civilization are not sufficient to reverse its destructive course.

### ‘A Civilization of Poverty’

What can heal this world is what Father Ellacuría called “a civilization of poverty.” I hope I can explain it well so that it remains an enduring legacy.

In the first article in which Father Ellacuría addressed this theme, he programmatically defined the civilization of poverty as “a universal state of affairs that guarantees the satisfaction of basic needs, the freedom to make personal choices, and a space for personal and communal creativity that shapes new forms of life and culture; these in turn engender new relationships with nature, with other human beings, within oneself, and with God.”

This could be considered the most general expression of utopia. It is specific to the civilization of poverty when the foundations of such a civilization are discussed. It is “founded on a materialist humanism transformed by Christian light and inspiration.” In the first place, this expression touches on the ability to humanly engage material reality. And thus, as also articulated by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical “On Human Work,” what is being proposed here is a civilization based on work that not only produces but also channels creativity and human fulfillment, a civilization that humanizes instead of just producing economic capital.

In the second place, this civilization of poverty is permeated by important elements of the Jesus/biblical tradition. And in the case of Father Ellacuría, the Ignatian contemplation of the Two Standards likewise is functioning and appropriately historicized, materially and socially. I wish to elaborate on this point a bit. In his Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius presents two paths, one leading to salvation and the other to condemnation. One starts with poverty; the person following this path, like Christ, will also experience insults and humiliations. We recognize this path as one of humility, one that leads to authentic good. The other path, on the



contrary, begins with wealth and is furthered by worldly and vain honors, overweening pride and an integral dehumanization that leads to evil. The two standards are opposed to each other by their very nature.

Within this Ignatian understanding, poverty is the key, and Father Ellacuría insists on the need to work for a civilization of poverty. Therefore, it is not enough to prophetically preach this civilization against the civilization of wealth. It is not even enough to simply proclaim it as good news for the poor of this world. Father Ellacuría says that the solution “cannot be in escaping from this world and confronting it with a sign of prophetic protest, but in entering into it to renew it and transform it in the direction of the utopia of the new earth.” Because it is dialectical and contrary to the prevailing civilization, one cannot work for the civilization of poverty without suffering persecution and defamation. That would be a vain illusion. The multitude of martyrs for justice in Latin America since Medellín is clear proof of this.

Within the context of building this civilization of poverty, Father Ellacuría proposes two fundamental tasks. The first, more understandable and acceptable in principle, is to “create economic, political and cultural models that enable a civilization of work as a substitute for a civilization of capital.” The other task is to strengthen “mutual solidarity, in contrast to the closed and competitive individualism of the civilization of wealth.”

With solidarity we enter a sphere of reality that not only has to do with instrumental efficacy. It is the sphere of the Spirit, that which is truly spiritual. In his final years, Father Ellacuría insisted that it is the Spirit that must inform this new civilization, and it must be generated principally by the poor. It seems to me that this is the most striking aspect of his thought during his final years, when he analyzed global social reality: his insistence that the new civilization be informed by spirit, a spirit generated mainly by the poor. The poor in their plentitude are the poor with spirit, *pobres con espíritu*, and the civilization they humanize is a civilization of spirit.

In a second article that Father Ellacuría developed within an explicitly Christian context in 1983, he wrote:

This poverty authentically gives space to the Spirit. People will no longer be stifled by the desire to have more than others, by lustful desires to have all sorts of superfluities when most of humanity lacks basic necessities. Then, the spirit will be able to flourish, that immense spiritual and human wealth of the poor and of the people of the Third World, who are now choked by poverty and by the imposition of cultural models more suitable for other settings, but not necessarily more humane.

In conclusion, if you will permit me a bit of irony, I like to say that “in the liturgy, things always go well for God.” My sincere desire is that things will go well for God in the civilization of the poor. In other words, I hope that this divine vision becomes historical reality.

My hope and desire is that all of you, graduates, professors, family members, Jesuits and others, work in such a way that the civilization of poverty not only remains a concept or ideal in our liturgy, but indeed becomes a reality.

In this civilization of poverty, may the poor be our sisters and brothers. They are the very ones who inspired the martyrs I mentioned in the beginning of this talk. These poor persons also loved and inspired four North American women, Maura, Ita, Dorothy, and Jean, who also gave their lives for this civilization.

Let me close with the words Ignacio Ellacuría used at the end of his last theological essay. He is speaking about the “new human beings” who emerge with the civilization of poverty:

These new human beings, for their part, keep on announcing, firmly and steadfastly although always in darkness, a future that is ever greater, because beyond all these futures, following one upon another, they catch sight of the God who saves, the God who liberates. ▲

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# An Unlikely Gathering

The recent extraordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops is likely to go down as a milestone in the history of the church. It was the first time since Paul VI established this organ of collegiality on Sept. 15, 1965, that the assembly “truly functioned as a synod and not a staged gathering of pseudo-concord,” as one senior prelate (who preferred anonymity) told me recently.

There is overwhelming evidence that the October 2014 meeting functioned in a substantially different way than any of the other synods over the past 49 years.

“It has been a great experience, in which we have lived synodality and collegiality, and felt the power of the Holy Spirit, who constantly guides and renews the church,” Pope Francis said in his homily on Sunday Oct. 19, as he closed that assembly and beatified Paul VI.

The 2014 synod functioned well because Francis gave it the freedom to do so. At the opening session, he encouraged participants to speak from the heart, candidly, without fear. His words ended not only the discreet Vatican censorship of past years but also the far more damaging “self-censorship” of the bishops themselves in past synods, as the presidents of the Argentine and German bishops’ conferences stated publicly.

The proposal for a synod of bishops emerged at the Second Vatican Council as the council fathers were debating collegiality (1963-64). In a recent interview with Salt and Light TV, Cardinal

Luis Antonio Tagle of the Philippines recalled that “the bishops at the council wanted a direct link to the pope and direct collaboration with the pope without passing through the Roman Curia. So the Synod of Bishops, in the mind of Vatican II, is not under the Roman Curia.”

Paul VI shared this vision and established in Rome “a permanent council of bishops for the universal church,” called “the Synod of Bishops.” The synod, with its permanent secretariat, is not part of the Roman Curia and does not depend on it; it is subject directly and solely to the pope, with whom it is united in the universal governance of the church.

Significantly, in the apostolic letter establishing the synod (“*Apostolica Sollicitudo*”), Paul VI wrote that the synod, “like all human institutions, can be improved upon with the passing of time.” That is exactly what Pope Francis is doing.

From the beginning of Francis’ pontificate, he set out to empower the synod. This is still a “work in progress.” He appointed Archbishop Lorenzo Baldisseri (then secretary of the Congregation for Bishops) as its new general secretary and entrusted him with the renewal of its structure and functioning. He further underlined its importance by making Baldisseri a cardinal and putting him in second place on the list of new cardinals after the secretary of state but before the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Furthermore, unlike previous popes, Pope Francis participated in several meetings of the synod’s council.

The assembly just ended is unique in the history of synods also because it was only Part I of a two-part process; Part II comes in October 2015. The year between the two sessions is for discussion based upon the final report of the first session. Not since the Second Vatican Council has such a thing happened.

Paul VI said he decided to create the Synod of Bishops “so as to establish ever closer ties with the bishops in order to strengthen our union with them,” and

together with them “to carefully survey the signs of the times and to make every effort to adapt the means and methods of the holy apostolate to the changing circumstances and needs of our day” (“*Apostolica Sollicitudo*,” No. 1). It was no accident that Pope Francis quoted these words in his homily at the assembly’s closing

Mass. His choice of theme for the two-stage synod reflects this well.

Now, in another highly significant development of the synodal process, Pope Francis is actually inviting, through the bishops, the entire church—priests, women and men religious and lay faithful—to participate, in their dioceses and parishes, in a global discussion of the final report and to give their input in preparation for the assembly in October 2015.

Clearly, Pope Francis wants this organ of collegiality to mature and play a more significant role, “*cum Petro et sub Petro*” (“with Peter and under Peter”), in the life of the universal church.

GERARD O’CONNELL

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



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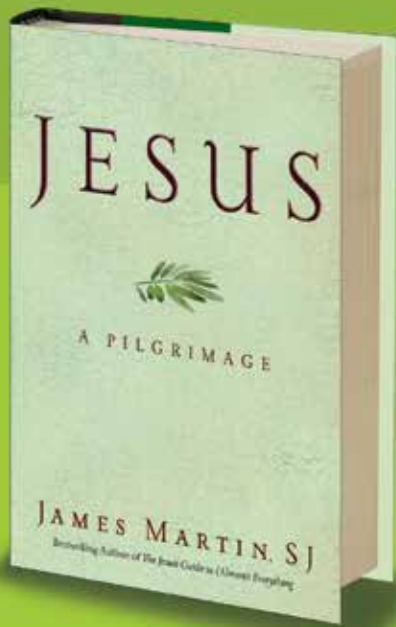


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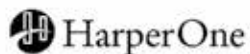
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# In the Steps of Romero

Thinking with the church in El Salvador

BY THOMAS P. RAUSCH

Sitting a few feet from the great bronze sculpture of the four evangelists lifting up the murdered archbishop, I read on the red marble slab over Archbishop Óscar Romero's tomb the phrase *Sentir con la Iglesia*, generally translated as "To think with the church."

The words have a deeply Ignatian resonance. Though not in the original text of the Spiritual Exercises, they were added as a subtitle to introduce St. Ignatius' "Rules for Thinking With the Church," and would have been familiar to Romero, who had frequently made the Exercises. While most English speakers understand the phrase to mean giving assent to official church teaching, for Romero the Spanish *sentir* would have lost none of its rich meaning of "to feel"; and "the church," far from signifying just the hierarchy, would have primarily meant the suffering people of God for whom he was the bishop. He was the kind of bishop Pope Francis describes in his earthy language as "smelling of the sheep." Images of this beloved shepherd are still common in San Salvador.

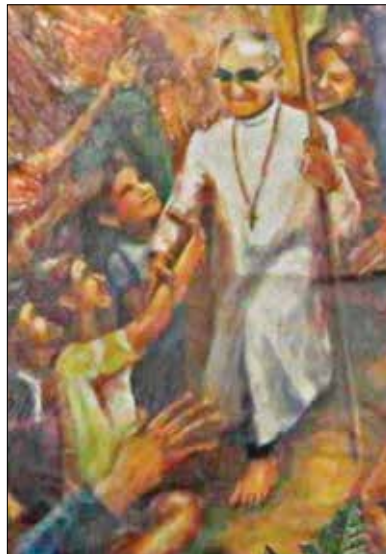
I was in the capital city recently with a group of 10 students participating in our university campus ministry's Ignacio Companions program, an alternative spring break designed to give students a firsthand experience of how people in developing countries live today. El Salvador continues to struggle, but there has been progress since the

peace accords were signed in 1992. The Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, formerly a coalition of several left-wing guerilla groups, is now a political party. While we were there, it was campaigning openly against the National Republican Alliance, a right-wing political party founded by Roberto D'Aubuisson, widely considered to be responsible for the assassination of Archbishop Romero. The dreaded National Guard was reorganized into a national police force. There is more support for education and some minimal land reform, but many underlying problems have not been addressed.

On our first day we attended Mass in the crypt of the Cathedral of the Holy Savior, a wonderful liturgy full of passion and life. The priest challenged those assembled to become familiar with Pope Francis' "The Joy of the Gospel" in preparation for the runoff election that was to take place the following Sunday. After the Mass, we gathered at Romero's tomb with two other student groups from Jesuit institutions.

The next day we heard from two women from CoMadres, the Committee of Mothers of the Disappeared, a group formed in 1977 to search for their missing family members. One reviewed the history of

government violence, including a horrific story of a demonstration at which hundreds were killed when the army opened fire on the marching students. Afterward, the authorities called in a road roller to flatten the bodies, some of them still alive, and hosed down the street with fire trucks. Another woman, Mercedes, had herself been imprisoned for over a year and a half, raped, kept naked in a cold cell for six months and repeatedly tortured. The students were stunned and deeply moved by her story.



That afternoon we visited the Fe y Alegría school in Chacra, a hardscrabble community in the hills above the city. The school was founded by Father Joaquín López y

López, S.J., who was one of the six Jesuits murdered at the University of Central America in November 1989. It is part of a Jesuit-founded network of primary and secondary schools, now present in 13 countries throughout Latin America.

The contrast between the community of poor, cinderblock houses we passed through and the bright faces of the students—the boys in crisp white shirts and ties, the girls in navy sweaters and white blouses—could not have been more dramatic. The young people greeted us enthusiastically and played

PHOTO: ART LEFT AT THE TOMB OF ARCHBISHOP ÓSCAR ROMERO IN SAN SALVADOR IN 2011. CNS PHOTO/LUIS GALDAMEZ/REUTERS

THOMAS P. RAUSCH, S.J., is the T. Marie Chilton Professor of Catholic Theology at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, Calif.

with our students during recess.

On Tuesday we journeyed to a tiny village called Agua Caliente in the northern countryside. Founded by 18 refugee families after the civil war in El Salvador ended in 1992, there are now some 80 families in the community. We met with members of their presiding council in the community center, an open, tin-roofed building with one wall decorated with pictures of Romero and two women active in the struggle as well as the names of over 200 family members who perished in the war.

Our students were welcomed by various families—chickens and skinny dogs wandering through their open houses—with whom they would share simple meals and spend the night. Though challenged by the lack of a common language, the outdoor privies and bucket showers, they spoke universally of the warmth of their hosts.

The next day we visited the nearby site of the massacre at Tenango and Guadalupe, where 200 villagers, mostly women and children who couldn't escape a military envelopment, were killed in 1983. As students and villagers we gathered to pray for the dead around a concrete structure built like an oversized tomb.

On Thursday we returned to the city and visited the UCA, a beautiful tree-shaded campus where that night in 1989 soldiers of the U.S.-trained and equipped Atlacatl Battalion dragged Father López y López and five of his

Jesuit companions from their beds and shot them in the garden behind their residence, then killed their housekeeper, Julia Elba Ramos, and her 16-year-old daughter, whom they found hiding in an adjacent parlor. As we prayed quietly in the rose garden, planted by the husband of Ms. Ramos, one of our students broke down in quiet tears. Afterward we celebrated the Eucharist in the Chapel of the Martyrs, a short distance from the Jesuit residence.


Friday was our last day. We visited El Rosario, a beautiful Dominican church adjacent to the national cathedral, a concrete arch structure lit with vibrant colors that stream through small squares of glass set into the walls on two sides—and the site of more victims of army violence. When a group of demonstrators, some wounded, sought refuge in the church in 1979, the military did not allow them to leave or get help. After three days without medical care, 21 people died and were buried under the floor, where they rest to this day. That afternoon we visited the Wall of Truth and Memory, inscribed with the names of some 30,000 civilian victims of the war, and later the hospital where Archbishop Romero was assassinated while celebrating the Eucharist.

Besides our quiet liturgy in the Chapel of the Martyrs, two experiences will long remain with me. One was our visit to two student communities, both inspired by Dean Brackley, S.J., one of five North American Jesuits who came as volunteers to the UCA only

weeks after the murder of those six Jesuits, to continue their work. Indeed, it has continued. The first community, Romero House, offers scholarships that unite Salvadoran students who otherwise would have no opportunity for higher education. The second, Casa de la Solidaridad, is a program for students from Jesuit schools in the U.S. who come for a semester of academic study, spiritual encounters, community and direct involvement with the poor. Father Brackley, who died of cancer in 2011, once said to the students at the Casa, "I hope this experience has broken your hearts. I hope it's allowed you to fall in love again. I hope it's ruined you for life."

As our time in El Salvador came to a close, I found myself moved not only by the memorials, sites and people we had visited along the way, but by how these encounters affected our students, and the leadership some of them showed. Several students led nightly reflections in which all participated; one stayed up late each night to select a Scripture passage for us to pray with the next day.

In their reflections, the students remarked on the passionate faith of the people they had met, their warmth, their pride in their country, the ways they welcomed us. Students also opened up about their own struggles with faith. One said faith was like riding a bicycle up a hill; you either make progress or go backwards. Another, who after a long search was preparing for baptism at Easter, said that he realized at the cathedral that Catholicism is a world church, celebrating the same Eucharist around the globe; he felt he was coming home.

Summing up the experience, one student said, "We're just human. We belong to each other. We need to care for each other." The words of former Father General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., rang true: "When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change." 



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# In God's Country

Diving headfirst into college life

BY MARY WOODS

**M**y muscles ached and my breath came in shallow jerks. I stood perpendicular to the face of the cliff, a rock-climbing harness round my waist, staring 50 feet down to the ground. This, apparently, was rappelling “Australian style.” Australians, I thought to myself, are nuts.

It was my third day participating in the two-week summer program at Wyoming Catholic College in Lander, Wyo., the school I had long wanted to attend. W.C.C. offers an outstanding liberal arts curriculum, steeped in the Great Books and Catholic tradition. It has a close-knit, vibrant, faith-filled community. It exists among mountains and horses. What more could I ask

for? But, just to be sure, I signed up for their high school summer program, called Powerful Experience of Adventure and Knowledge, or PEAK, to get a taste of college life.

I expected to be challenged at PEAK; I did not expect to be walking face-first down cliffs. After a few grueling minutes, with the patient coaching of my counselor and a fellow student

down below, I reached the ground in one piece. Unbuckling myself from the harness, a feeling of raw humility washed over me. I hate making mistakes. In general, I avoid situations where I will look bad. But up on that cliff, all my protective emotional lay-

erly, I reached the ground in one piece. Unbuckling myself from the harness, a feeling of raw humility washed over me. I hate making mistakes. In general, I avoid situations where I will look bad. But up on that cliff, all my protective emotional lay-

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 But being a merciful tyrant, he continued, he would allow us to retain three individual rights—if we could choose them unanimously in half an hour. For the next 30 minutes, 18 high school students pressed round the blackboard, eagerly and sometimes heatedly discussing natural rights. (We ended up choosing the right to freedom of religion, the right to bear arms and the right to trial by jury, with freedom of speech as a fiercely contested runner-up.)

But there was another type of humility at Wyoming Catholic, one that did not come from being tested physically or academically, but in relationships. Christian relationships require humble love, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians: “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.” Our counselors, who were current students or recent graduates of the college, radiated this kind of love. At lunch they shared tables with us like friends despite our differences in age and experience, and



**CLIFFHANGER.** The author, right, rappelling Australian style near Wyoming Catholic College.

ers were stripped away, leaving me panicked and weak in sight of everyone. I was not self-sufficient; I *needed* help. The realization stung, but only for a moment. The next instant I was overwhelmed with gratitude for my wonderful ground team. Their firm encouragement pulled me through as strongly as my harness and rope.

It was not only hanging off cliffs that humbled me. The classes were just as challenging, in a different way. Our reading list spanned millennia, from Plato and Socrates to the Gospel of Mark to the American Constitution. The professors pushed us to grapple with such ageless ideas as liberty, jus-

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**MARY WOODS** is a home-schooled high school graduate and Byzantine Catholic residing in Frankfort, Ill. She plans to attend Wyoming Catholic College in the fall of 2015. She writes about literature and the Catholic faith on her blog, *The Pen and the Sword*.

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in the wilderness they guided us and kept us safe like true leaders. They joyfully taught us new skills while never boasting of their own. At the end of two weeks I knew I was going to miss them as much as the friends I had made among my peers.

Finally, everything we did during PEAK was grounded in a complete sense of submission to God. Every day we rose before 7 a.m. for morning prayer at the parish church, a mere two-minute walk from the dorms. At noon we attended Mass, and in the evenings the church stayed open for adoration and confession. Prayer life mingled with nonchurch activities. We prayed before classes, before meals, before and after outdoor adventures.

During our weekend backpacking trip, one of the college chaplains, Father Chris, hiked out with us to celebrate Mass in the wilderness. I will not forget that Sunday morning. The rising July sun glared in our eyes, and the huge rock outcrop on which we knelt was rough and uneven. And yet as Father Chris presided at the liturgy from the boulder-turned-altar, I felt more focused than I had during any other Mass that week. We had no pews or kneelers or air-conditioning—nothing man-made for the comfort of man. Everything was God's. From the lichen on the rock to the pine trees, to the icy mountain river and the blinding blue sky, everything that morning shouted God's glory.

A favorite expression at Wyoming Catholic is "wisdom in God's country." And now I understand why. But even more than wisdom, the lesson I took to heart most deeply was that of humility. After all, as the psalmist sings, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps 111:10). During PEAK, before I could start learning anything else, I had to learn humility—in body, in mind, in spirit and in my relationships. So maybe, then, walking headfirst down that cliff wasn't nuts. Perhaps it made me a little wiser. **A**

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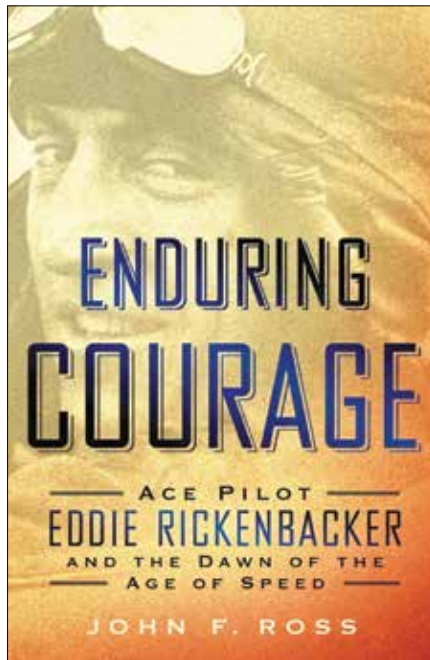
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On May 17, 1918, the 28-year-old Eddie Rickenbacker and his friend Reed Chambers took off in their French-made Nieuports in search of German targets in the early morning skies of war-torn France. Rickenbacker had made his first kill just a few weeks before and he was gaining confidence, a quality he kept in good supply. But at 20,000 feet, oxygen flow to the blood and brain slows, judgment is impaired, and the open cockpit is freezing cold. Following Chambers, Eddie turned back toward the base; but he spotted three German Albatrosses far below. He picked a target and zoomed down, squeezed off 50 rounds with his machine guns and watched the German tumble into a death spiral.

Suddenly, with a second Albatross on his tail, he jerked his stick back into



his stomach to snap his dive into a climb. The fabric covering his right upper wing ripped back from its wooden ribs. His engine coughed, then stopped, sending his Nieuport into an uncontrolled tailspin. He fought madly, jerking the stick and shifting his body weight from one position to another to no avail. As his whole life ran through his mind like a moving picture, he wondered whether the plane would disintegrate and allow him to fall free, strike the ground and “splatter all over” or let him land in a tree. He had seconds to live. Still cool, he threw his weight and jammed the controls. Something exploded and the plane pulled out and headed for France. He landed so hard the wheels crushed into the fuselage; he staggered out and vomited behind the barracks.

Rickenbacker had a hard life. When his father died in a fight, Eddie quit school and developed a genius for mechanics. When car racing was fresh and unregulated, and both drivers and spectators died from crashes and explosions, he redesigned engines and cars and made himself one of the fastest drivers in the nation. His zeal for racing led naturally to his determination to fly. In his squadron, surrounded by upper-class young pilots from Ivy League universities, including Theodore Roosevelt's son, he proved himself their superior, the top “ace” with a record 26 kills. As a squadron leader he demanded teamwork; their planes flew close to one another not just for protection but for psychological support.

As an airline executive in 1941, he survived a plane crash in Georgia, sustaining broken and crushed bones and an eye popping out of its socket, leaving him hospitalized for four months. In 1942 on a secret mission to deliver a reprimand to General Douglas MacArthur, his B17 got lost and crashed in the Pacific. He assumed command of the eight men in three small rubber rafts. They survived for 24 days on three oranges and an occasional fish, but no fresh water until it rained. His strategy was to keep the team together by discipline. Any signs of “quitting” he punished with scalding verbal abuse. Using one survivor's pocket New Testament, he led prayer services and uninhibited discussions in which they confessed their lives and failures to one another till the heat wore them down. One survivor recalled, “Lord, how they learned to hate that man.” Yet it was better they hate him than think about death.

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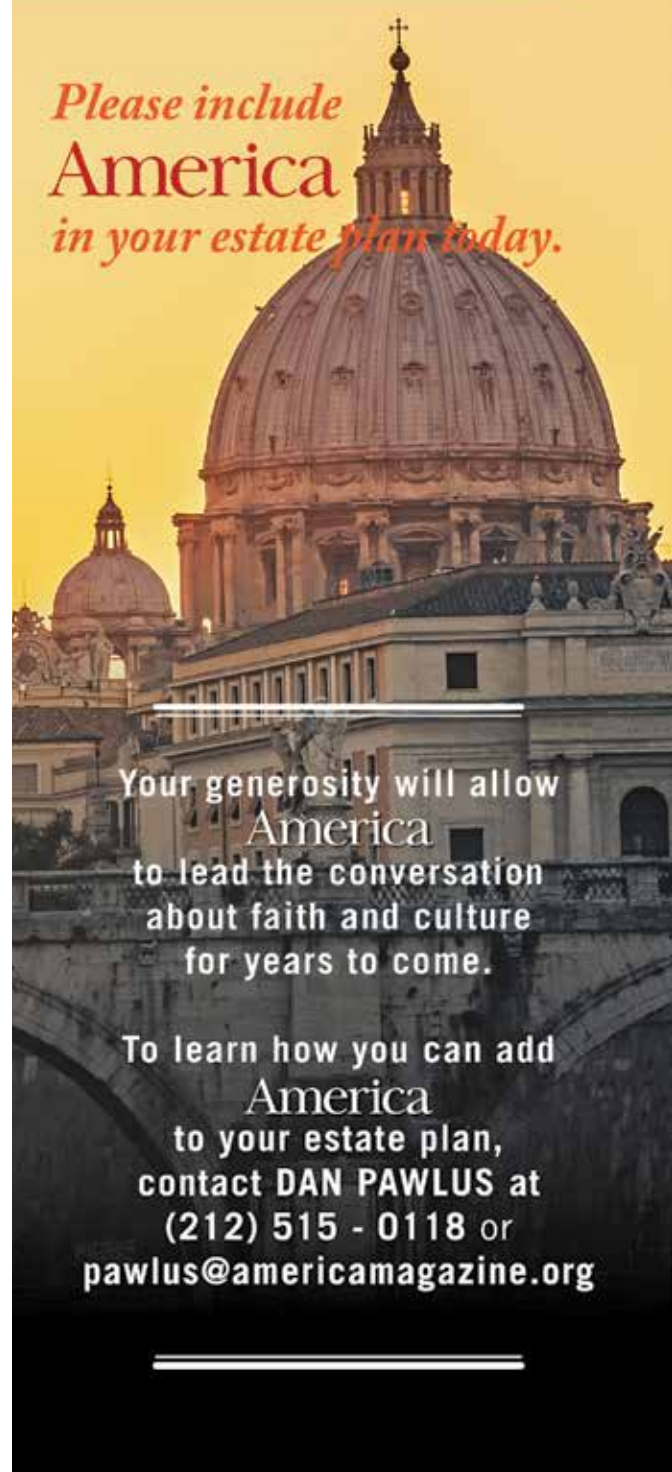


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times in magazines and books; now the biographer John F. Ross has retold it as a model of courage. In 1968 Eddie told a journalist the United States should forget peace talks with North Vietnam but “bomb the living hell” out of their ports, because war is “kill or be killed.” God did not save him because of who he was, he wrote, but because there was still work for him to do. As he was dying in 1973, he insisted he was not a hero, but that his extraordinary feats were simply the result of the American way of life.

To move from Rickenbaker to Ryan K. Balot’s *Courage in the Democratic Polis* is to engage two other levels of discussion: first to 4th- and 5th-century ancient Greece, where the philosophers set norms that still guide us in the search for the good life, and then to our own time, if we dare to apply the morality of ancient Athens to our cultures.

Balot begins, “Courage is the most

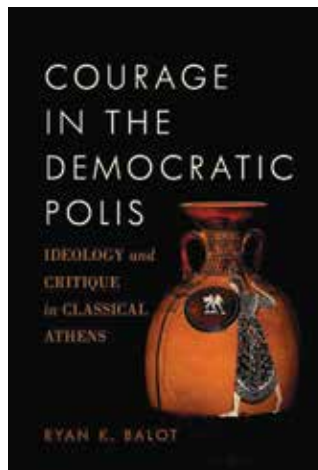
exciting and elusive of traditional virtues. Where moderation is boring, courage is dangerous; where justice is impartial, courage is devoted to special causes.” He reminds us that Susan Sontag stated that the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorists were courageous—presumably to remind us how far out a philosophical discussion in a free society can reach. He also notes that it is politically expedient for our politicians to don military garb in artificial displays of courageous leadership. I think of George W. Bush wearing a pilot’s uniform to declare victory in Iraq.

Balot recalls that virtues come in clusters, that the Athenians linked courage to democracy by including free speech, wisdom, innovation, equality and rational deliberation. In short,

courage is not an elite membership badge but a value that all citizens must protect. Also, “unlike some contemporary authors, Athenians linked courage to particular emotions.” Yes, we feel fear, shame, anger and pride, but they are not decisive in how we express our ideals. The moral limitation in Athenian courage was this: at root it was “manliness,” which includes the subjugation of women and the desire to rule others. In subsequent chapters he critiques

the imperialism of Athens, which was hardly consistent with its commitment to democracy.

How does Athenian virtue compare with that of the Spartan, who were noted for their warrior courage? Part of the difference was education. While the Spartans obeyed law ignorantly, in



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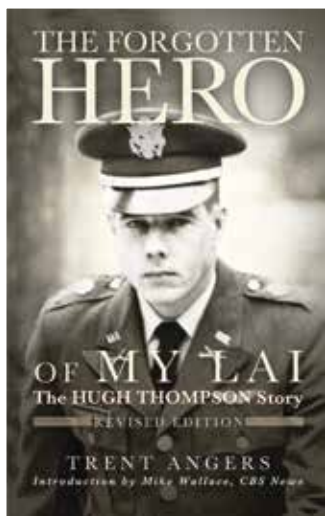
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Athenian democracy the citizen understood his relationship to political society. It was this personal self-understanding that made them more courageous. Is the American military culture more Athenian or Spartan?

Balot uses Thucydides's account of the Peloponnesian War (427 B.C.) to distinguish between "manly courage" and prudence. The city state of Mytilene had attempted to revolt against the Athenian hegemony, but had lost. They were allowed to send a delegation to Athens to plead for compassion while the Athenian assembly debated their fate. The assembly, fearing a continued revolt, sentenced all male citizens of Mytilene to death and the women and children to be sold into slavery. Athens sent a warship to carry out the verdict, and they slew 1,000 people. But the next day the Athenians rethought their brutal decision in debate. Cleon of Athens, called by Thucydides "the most violent man in Athens" declared that "democracy is incapable of governing others" and called for the mass execution. Diodotus questioned whether the death penalty is really a means for deterrence from revolt or rather an incentive to rebel. By a narrow margin the Mytilenian people were spared and only their leaders executed.

A neglected form of heroism is that of the person committed to the community whose conscience demands that he or she stand up against the group, even risking career or life. Trent Angers's *The Forgotten Hero of My Lai* (2014 edition, revised to include President Nixon's role) tells the story of Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, who as a helicopter pilot flew over the ravaged hamlet on March 16, 1968,

and observed the slaughter of the innocent men, women and children, totaling over 500.



Thompson landed in the village, tried to intervene, saved the lives of several persons piled up with the dead bodies and committed his time, energy and life to bringing the guilty killers to justice. The 105 soldiers of Charley Company had been told the day before to "kill everyone" in the village and that the enemy might outnumber them two to one. It was their chance to "get even" with enemies who had killed their buddies. As a matter of fact, the Viet Cong had left the village. Arriving at 7:30 a.m., led by Lt. William Calley with a platoon of 25 men, they wandered through the village killing everyone, one child after another, raping women, mowing down old people and dumping them in a ditch. They were just following orders. A rare G.I. balked. Ordered by Calley to shoot civilians, Harry Stanley refused. Calley stuck his M-16 in Stanley's gut and ordered him again. Stanley stuck his pistol in Calley's ribs

and said, "I wasn't brought up that way, to be killing no women and children. I ain't gonna do it." Calley and his companion turned their attention to shooting helpless people in a ditch. For the next three years, until Calley was convicted on March 29, 1971, young Thompson, his second marriage falling apart, testified again and again before Congressional committees, gave interviews and spoke at events, as he came to realize that a clique of Congressmen, directed by the White House, plus an avalanche of hate mail accusing him of treason, were making every effort to undermine his credibility. Calley, found guilty of the premeditated murder of at least 22 Vietnamese, was placed in a comfortable house at Fort Benning pending appeal. Finally, in 1998 Hugh Thompson was presented the Soldier's Medal for bravery. At the ceremony, one speaker quoted General MacArthur: "The soldier, be he friend or foe, is charged with the protection of the weak and unarmed. It is the very essence and reason for his being." Then Hugh Thompson and his friends flew to Vietnam to be reunited with those whose lives he had saved 30 years before.

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RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J., is *America's* literary editor.

HANK STUEVER

## SISTER IN THE SPOTLIGHT

### A NUN ON THE BUS How All of Us Can Create Hope, Change, and Community

By Sister Simone Campbell  
HarperOne. 224p \$25.99

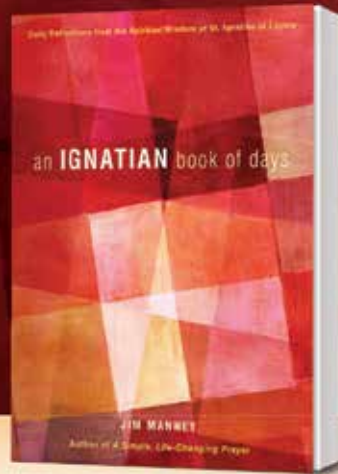
Simone Campbell, S.S.S., became semi-famous a few years ago, just when the self-identified progressive Catholic movement most needed an articulate, telegenic, activist nun who could "do" 21st-century-style media—

especially television—and hold her own in a noisy, partisan realm where irony and mockery often act as news values.

As readers learn in her forthright if somewhat dry memoir *A Nun on the Bus*, when the time comes to face down Fox News's Bill O'Reilly (or Mike Huckabee or Neil Cavuto) or appear on "60 Minutes" and "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart" or take a seat at the occasionally profane roundtable of

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A JESUIT MINISTRY

HBO's "Real Time With Bill Maher" or playfully pretend to debate the jingoistic blowhard played by Stephen Colbert on Comedy Central's "The Colbert Report," Campbell draws courage from her closest ally: "When I am in the media spotlight," she writes, "I face my anxiety by taking a deep breath and praying, 'Come, Holy Spirit.' I trust as always that I will not be left an orphan."

The Holy Spirit, perhaps not a frequent presence in studio green rooms, once saw her through 33 media interviews over a period of five days, with hardly any professional on-camera training. The Holy Spirit was presumably with her when, during an appearance on Maher's show earlier this year, she tried to reason with the conservative pundit Dinesh D'Souza on raising the minimum wage. (After reading *A Nun on the Bus*, I watched that exchange while searching online for some of Campbell's other notable TV appearances.)

"You're kind of bleeding all over me right now," D'Souza said in response to Campbell, with clear disdain for her story about a working mother living in a homeless shelter.

"You've got a nun flying atcha," Maher gleefully observed.

"I've got a nun on a very high horse," D'Souza complained.

When she gets going, Campbell can seem like cable TV's own Joan of Arc. Left-leaning audiences thrill to hear a woman of faith tell it like it is, even on subjects as dogmatically fraught as abortion laws.

In Campbell's case, the high horse turned out to be a chartered tour bus that she and several other nuns boarded for a three-week, 2,700-mile road trip in the summer of 2012 to raise awareness of how deep cuts to federal aid would affect the working poor. (One stop included the Wisconsin offices of Rep. Paul Ryan, a Catholic Republican who championed the cuts in his "Path to Prosperity" proposal as

## THE FUTURE OF THE CATHOLIC LITERARY IMAGINATION

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House Budget Committee chair.)

The nine-state journey of the sisters, dubbed the Nuns on the Bus—fully recounted here in a heartfelt travelogue—happened to coincide with growing outrage among U.S. Catholics that the nuns working hardest to help the poor and spread Gospel values were being pursued by the Vatican, which had launched an investigation into the women's theological views.

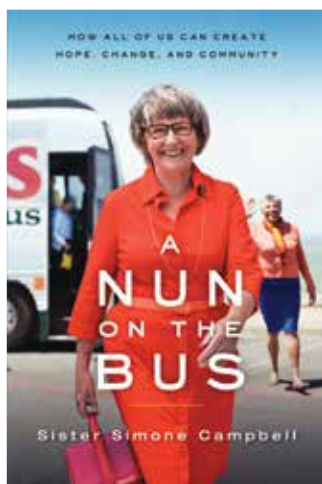
"These nuns need to learn their place—which is at my desk!"

Colbert (another Catholic) said, before bringing Campbell out for an appearance on his show. "You and your fellow nuns have clearly gone rogue.... And by the way, sister—where's your outfit?"

The bus tour was a public relations coup for women religious. Though it didn't do much to stop the Vatican investigation, it brought still more media attention to the causes Campbell and her sisters hold most dear, including the Affordable Care Act and immigration reform. By summer's end, Campbell was invited to give a prime-time address during the Democratic National Convention, all of which she recalls here with genuine awe at the attention and, as anyone who knows nuns will recognize, a humble redirection of the spotlight.

The 69-year-old Campbell, a family law attorney who has been the executive director of the Washington-based NETWORK lobbying group since 2004, is hardly anyone's idea of a loose cannon. In both her media appearances and in this book, she is most comfortable when sticking to her talking points, sometimes redundantly so—a skill she may have perfected in her decades of advocating on issues that lawmakers find it all too easy to ignore.

For all her willingness to step into the arena, the usual game of politics unnerves her. Campbell sees a link between partisanship and the television she nevertheless agrees to appear on: "Couch potatoes drive me crazy. So does the media coverage [of politics] that feeds off their viewing habits. I'm convinced that because people spend so much time watching sports, the media uses nothing but sports metaphors (or war metaphors—we spend a lot of time watching war on TV,



too) to cover politics. We need new metaphors.... The problem with a sports metaphor is that it treats politics and democracy like a spectator sport. Political democracy requires engagement, not passivity."

*A Nun on the Bus* isn't quite the fully detailed, tell-all memoir some of us might have hoped to read from a semi-celebrity nun, but it is filled with lovely and often inspiring moments from Campbell's spiritual journey, including the story of how and why she joined the Sisters of Social Services

as a young woman in Southern California and what she thinks will become of her order and others as nuns continue to age.

Meditation helps Campbell shut out some of the clatter of politics, as does her delight in writing poetry (she includes some of her favorite poems at the book's end). On a Zen retreat in Tucson several years ago, she writes, she came to an awareness that "God is the 'hum' that holds all creation together at every moment of existence. God is intimately connected and never separate. God IS us (but we are not God).... We are not separate, we are not orphaned. My entire spiritual landscape was utterly altered and that was a gift."

That universal hum pointed her toward the constant buzz of television. You can see real joy on her face when she explains her and her sisters' work to Colbert: "We work every day to live as Jesus did, in relationship with people at the margin of our society."

"That's a cheap applause line, *Jesus*," Colbert faux-jeered. "You can throw Jesus into anything and people are going to applaud."

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HANK STUEVER is *The Washington Post's* television critic.

PAUL LAKELAND

## SEEDS OF THE CHURCH

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### BLOOD AND INK

**Ignacio Ellacuría, Jon Sobrino, and the Jesuit Martyrs of the University of Central America**

By Robert Lassalle-Klein  
Orbis. 240p. \$34

Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., has long been known as a major voice in liberation theology in general and in the particular role of education in promoting human liberation. In this present book, whose publication coincides more or

less with the 25th anniversary of the violent death of Ellacuría, his Jesuit brothers and their two lay colleagues, he appears with far greater definition than heretofore in English-language publications. In Robert Lassalle-Klein's exhaustive study, Ellacuría is presented as a Jesuit, a scholar, a pedagogue and, yes, a disciple who learns from others to refine his understanding of the reality of El Salvador, particularly from the example of the life of Archbishop Óscar Romero and, equally important,

from the experience of the poor and oppressed Salvadorans.

The greatest value of this text to American readers will surely be the richness of the author's account of Ellacuría's intellectual and spiritual background for a better understanding of his essays published, for example, in the collection edited by Michael Lee (*Ignacio Ellacuría: Essays on History, Liberation and Salvation*). Lassalle-Klein provides a very detailed account of the early efforts to re-orient the Central American Jesuits to a commitment to the option for the poor announced at Medellín in 1968, a thorough discussion of the intellectual roots of Ellacuría's thinking in the work of Xavier Zubiri and Karl Rahner, S.J., and a tribute to the spiritual influence of Miguel Elizondo, S.J., and Óscar Romero. Through it all we get a clear picture of the growing sense among the Jesuits of El Salvador and in the work of the Catholic University José Simeon Canas, that a solution to the plight of El Salvador awaited the emergence of the voices of the marginalized.

They above all would be the agents of change, and the role of the university would be to help bring them to this point. This realization is at the heart

society, and if he could not answer the question, he would not teach the class. But he probably could always answer the question. And if we do not hear as much about the other martyrs or even about Jon Sobrino, as seems promised by the book's title, it is no doubt true that it was because of Ellacuría's life and work that the murders took place. It was he, above all, whom they were out to get.

If Lassalle-Klein's book has a weakness, it may be that it is too detailed, or at least too detailed for some potential readers. Some will relish the minutiae of the story of how Ellacuría and others maneuvered the Central American Jesuits toward the option for the poor; others will perhaps luxuriate in the frankly arcane concept of "sentient intelligence" in the work of Xavier Zubiri (surely this will be a very small group) and others more theologically in the know will find fascinating Ellacuría's efforts to wrestle Rahner into the camp of the politically aware. Many more will respond to the Ignatian and Trinitarian spirituality outlined in the concluding pages, to the drama of Romero's "conversion" and to the exploration of the role of "the crucified people" in the historical reality of El Salvador. Relatively few, it would

seem, will find all of these distinct discussions equally nourishing, though it is certainly true that they were all important to Ellacuría himself.

Perhaps we should put this down to a less than entirely successful transposition from the format of a scholarly dissertation to that of a published book. The number of times in which we are

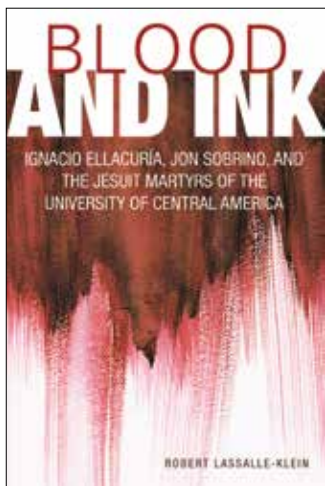
treated to phrases like "in the following section I will briefly outline..." could certainly have been dramatically reduced.

*Blood and Ink* is definitely a worthwhile venture, though it might have been better as two books rather than one (*Blood and Ink?*). The account of Ellacuría's intellectual influences and the growth of his mature thought is one story. The complexity of the times in El Salvador and the important role of the university is another. And while it is important to see that the two are closely related, and indeed that the maturity of Ellacuría's thought depends on realizing the close connection between blood and ink, there may just be too much in the one volume to digest, particularly since Lassalle-Klein, in what again may be the residue of the dissertation mode, sometimes goes into rather more detail than is needed to make his points.

All that said, what is very clearly established throughout the book, perhaps because of the detail, is why Ellacuría and the others had to suffer violent deaths. The term *martyr* is often stretched in our world today, but in the case of these individuals it is clearly accurate. Like Jesus before them and because of the way in which they saw Jesus in the lives of the crucified people around them, they paid the price of challenging entrenched power. Just as with Óscar Romero, one wonders what their futures would have produced had they been allowed to live. And yet one is led toward Tertullian's conclusion that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church." Their words and their lives are validated in their horrifying conclusion, and they give us hope. Lassalle-Klein's book enriches our understanding of what we have lost and, despite and through our loss, all that we have been given.

---

**PAUL LAKELAND** is the Aloysius P. Kelley, S.J., professor of Catholic studies at Fairfield University. His most recent book is *A Council That Will Never End: Lumen Gentium and the Church Today*.



FROM OUR BLOG IN ALL THINGS

*"The church acknowledges there may be pastoral solutions to long-standing problems. Nothing heals better than fresh air."*

Mary Ann Walsh, R.S.M., "The Promise of Synod 2014."

[americamagazine.org/things](http://americamagazine.org/things)

of Ellacuría's mature thinking and explains his well-known assertion that before he taught a class he would ask himself what its topic had to contribute to the well-being of El Salvadorian

# THE LANGUAGE OF PEACE

## STRANGE GLORY

### A Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer

By Charles Marsh  
Knopf. 528p \$35

There are lives so fraught with moral significance that each generation must be reintroduced to them in order to preserve the health of civilization and hope for the future. For pacifists or, more aptly, for those seeking a stronger receptivity to nonviolence, these icons include Mahatma Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Martin Luther King and, less familiarly for American Catholics, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

*Strange Glory*, by the commonwealth professor of religious studies at the University of Virginia and Dietrich Bonhoeffer visiting professor at Humboldt University in Berlin, is not a simple book. It could not be, because Bonhoeffer was neither a simple man nor a simple pacifist. In the pantheon of pacifists, he is the most puzzling. Could a pacifist abet the assassination of Hitler? Marsh tells us that although Bonhoeffer played no active part in any of the well over 100 assassination plots, he “gave his blessings to those who conspired to murder the Führer while affirming the essential nonviolence of the Gospel” and never lost “his deep ambivalence about the proposed assassination,” describing himself as an “accomplice conscious of his guilt.”

While Bonhoeffer’s *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Letters From Prison* rank among the last century’s most important works of theology, read in the context of his life they lack the sharp contours we would like from our moral exemplars as we try to become more faithful to the demanding sayings of Jesus in the Beatitudes. On the other hand, none of our other pacifist exemplars lived in regimes as comprehensively wicked and

soul-searing as Nazi Germany.

Not yet 40, he was hanged April 9, 1945, just 16 days before the Flossenburg concentration camp was liberated by the Allies. Anyone following contemporary thought about just war in Catholicism (and elsewhere, to be sure) knows that, especially in the nuclear age, the classical notion of just war increasingly seems morally obsolete. Presidents and others have too readily found its language useful to camouflage national political-economic interest in the garb of national security. Yet for pacifists and their admirers there persists the morally nagging “what about Hitler?” questions, including the current “what about the beheading ISIS” ones.

Hesitant pacifists especially will find *Strange Glory* worth the pondering. Bonhoeffer’s own journey toward pacifism was plodding. Though his brother Walter died in the war and his brother Karl-Friedrich returned cynically disillusioned, Bonhoeffer had no immediate moral qualms about “the war to end all wars.” As late as his postgraduate work at Union Theological Seminary in New York City in 1930, a friend recalled that despite Bonhoeffer’s comprehensive knowledge of the Christian tradition and his erudition, “a peace ethic was something completely new to him” and that Bonhoeffer “made strong arguments against Christian pacifism” and seemed only “beginning to learn the language of peace.”

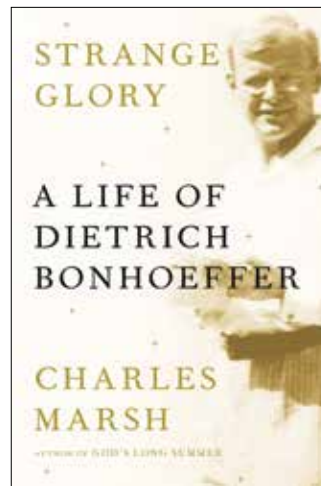
Recent notes, letters and reflections collected by Bonhoeffer’s colleague and soul mate Eberhard Bethge add innumerable rich details to the 17-volume Bonhoeffer Archives (1986), and

Marsh’s approach is to use this new “soft” data to help the reader inhabit, not just know, Bonhoeffer’s life. The overall impact is that what first seem to be external inconsistencies pages later become internal paradoxes. As the author quotes extensively from Bonhoeffer’s many letters, we slowly get to know not a brilliant theologian but a singularly extraordinary human being, who linked mind and heart and wrote and lived without pretense. Marsh, making the personal political and the political personal, captures Bonhoeffer’s efforts to achieve a “nonreligious interpretation of faith” that embraces Jesus

as “the man for others” and then adroitly places him within the larger context of the era.

While Bonhoeffer admired the traditional Catholic monastery (see his *Life Together*, 1954) and in his seminary work for the dissenting Confessing Church he tried to approximate it, he was not monkish. He liked his wine, had no trouble mixing his

after-dinner theology talk with several schnapps, stayed up late and slept late into the morning, took naps, was constantly borrowing money from his prosperous family, let others know how smart he was (his first doctorate at 21, second at 24), liked tennis and Ping Pong and could be short-tempered about not winning, and he was never without his cigarettes. Still, his normality included no girlfriend until June 1942, three months before imprisonment, when he’s 36 and his fiancée Maria von Wedemeyer is 18. And this happens just weeks after his ardent soul mate, Bethge, at the age of 33, began courting the 17-year-old Renate Schleicher, Bonhoeffer’s niece. Not surprisingly, Marsh informs us that Bonhoeffer had no interest in Freud. While acknowledging that he was emo-



tionally underdeveloped, Marsh persuades us that a sexually jaded contemporary eye does not adequately capture Bonhoeffer's delayed heterosexual love life.

While *Strange Glory* qualifies as exemplary history, so moving is Bonhoeffer's directness that Marsh himself, in his commentary, sometimes turns Bonhoefferesque in his explicit acknowledgment that only an icon constantly stripped of the hagiographic can hope to subvert our present-day encrypted nationalistic idols. In this spirit, Marsh takes pains to separate Bonhoeffer the paragon from Bonhoeffer the martyred legend. He tells us that the famous last words attributed to Bonhoeffer before his hanging—"This is not the end for me; it is the beginning of life"—are those of a British intelligence officer writing five years after the war. Bonhoeffer had no aspirations for martyrdom; and to deceive the Gestapo, he kept a phony diary on his desk that placed him elsewhere on the days when Hitler resist-ers met.

After he was removed from Military Intelligence (which he joined to escape the draft), he volunteered for other non-killing service and signed the request with the necessary "Heil Hitler." He attracted government attention for his critique of the Lutheran Church's acquiescence to the Reich's nazification of the church and its widespread acceptance of the April 7, 1933, order removing any one of Jewish descent from civil service, which included the tax-funded churches. But just a few months later Bonhoeffer, listening to the caution of colleagues, refused his mother's and his sister's soulful requests to lead the Lutheran funeral services for his Jewish (and baptized) brother-in-law, a decision that haunted him till his death.

Marsh makes us see all the discontinuities in Bonhoeffer's life as inevitable paradoxes for any non-cloistered pursuer of Christ's Beatitudes. While

they are alive, icons have at least one clay foot. In more general theological terms, Bonhoeffer spent his life trying to mesh his Barthian-grounded sense of God's transcendent total otherness with Reinhold Niebuhr's moral realism. Especially at a time when leadership in the United States continually

slips back into the historically discredited hope of empires that their temporal eternity is ensured by a political "realism" secured by its military prowess, *Strange Glory* is worth the grapple.

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

FILM | JIM McDERMOTT

## THE LONG GOODBYE

*The dark depths of 'Gone Girl'*



The weekend on which the church's Synod on the Family began deliberations coincided, by chance, with the opening weekend of *Gone Girl*, one of the most provocative and disturbing films about marriage, gender and family to be mounted in the United States in recent memory

The story, based on Gillian Flynn's massively successful 2012 novel of the same name, is about Amy Elliott Dunne, a Missouri housewife who disappears mysteriously on the morning of her fifth wedding anniversary, perhaps at the hands of her bar-owner husband, Nick. For those who have read the book and wonder about the quality of the film adaptation, it's safe and spoiler-free to call it an impressive

adaptation: 2 hours and 20 minutes of oh-my-Baby-Jesus-did-that-just-happen sorts of choices and twists enacted by an extraordinary cast (including Ben Affleck as Nick) and demanding conversation afterward.

There is a lot about "Gone Girl" that makes it relevant to the synod (warning: spoilers ahead). On the one hand, many aspects of the film's hellish vision of marriage are, I suspect, all too familiar to most people who have been in a troublesome, long-term relationship. It is a touchstone for the challenges of being married, the wounds couples can suffer and also inflict, and the real ways in which a relationship can go wrong.

On the other hand, when the mystery of what's happened to Amy is

revealed, “Gone Girl” presents a very disturbing image of women, one that may be more dangerous than it is illuminating.

One of the key issues the synod addresses is the place of divorced Catholics within the church. One of the truths that underlies that conversation is that marriage is hard—very hard. People often say marriage has its up and downs. But these difficulties are rarely discussed in specific terms: the sense of suffocation (and/or the desire to suffocate) that partners sometimes feel; the moments, if not long periods of temptation; the bouts of gnawing restlessness or frustration.

The film is a meditation upon those dark depths, an unrelenting look into the pettiness, cruelty and even madness that sometimes simmers under the surface in any long-term relationship. Although reviewers are calling it a great date movie, I suspect “Gone Girl” will evoke many painful memories. Its characters go to terrible, crazy extremes; yet the core of their battles always remains eerily and firmly familiar, a more extreme evocation of our own experiences of wound and sin. As difficult as that makes the film to watch, such depictions can be freeing as well. The insanity we have known, the terrible choices we have sometimes made—it’s not just us. When it comes to relationships, perhaps especially marriage, we can all get a little crazy sometimes.

People wonder why anyone bothers with the sacrament of reconciliation anymore; yet a story like “Gone Girl” reminds us just how desperately we all need a place where we can come clean and be forgiven. We rightly grieve over marriages that break up, and in its own strange, bleak way, “Gone Girl” illustrates the costs involved in that separation. And it suggests perhaps we should also stand in amazement and gratitude to God that so many couples manage to make it through dark times and survive in honest, healthy ways.

Yet “Gone Girl” is a thriller that ends

by confirming every horrible claim and revenge fantasy abusive men might make—that women are manipulative, vindictive, psychotic, unpredictable, dangerous, inescapable, in need of punishment. Amy Elliott Dunne is no innocent victim; she turns out to be a sociopath who frames not only her husband but two other men as perpetrators of sexual abuse.

I have been trying to tell myself that this twist does not matter. “Gone Girl” is a work of fiction, after all, not a term paper on gender roles or values. It was also written by a woman and has been read by many book clubs made up of women. (A group like this was seated around me in the theater.) The story includes some wonderfully rich female characters, including Nick’s sister, Margo (excellently played by Carrie Coon) and the lead detective (played by Kim Dickens, who really should be in just about everything).

Let’s be honest: both men and women are capable of violence, lying and manipulation. But this world that we live in, the world that the next stages of the synod, we hope, will consider in all its rich and painful ambiguity, is a place where misogyny and domestic abuse against women are prevalent. In the United States alone, over 20 percent of women report that they have been the victims of sexual assault in their lifetime, and 25 percent are victims of

domestic abuse. Celebrities and athletes have made headlines of late for instances of alleged abuse. And in many countries, women and girls find both their lives and their bodies in regular, grave danger. The last thing we need in a world like this is a character whose story of deceit might cause people to view real-life victims with undue suspicion. Nor do we need a story that invites us to embrace fears and revenge fantasies ourselves.

The author, Gillian Flynn, has said that demanding that her female characters be good or pure is confining. I sympathize with her argument. It is always more fun to write about the sinners than the saints. But to imply that the character of Amy Elliott Dunne represents some sort of a “liberation” is absurd. “Gone Girl” may raise deep questions about marriage, but when it comes to its portrayal of women, I can’t help feeling that it is irresponsible.

And yet the film certainly has people talking, and conversations around issues of abuse and sexual violence are sorely needed. One hopes that as our church continues to discuss the struggles and needs of couples and of women that it can help turn this conversation into real action, ministering to the messiness of our lives.

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**JIM McDERMOTT** is *America’s Los Angeles correspondent*. Twitter: @PopCulturPriest.

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## LOST IN THE BRONX

The light flicks on to a familiar scene, the cold, indifferent space of an industrial kitchen—outsized stainless steel sinks, tall pots stacked on tall shelves, long-handled ladles hung above the cast-iron stove.

The lone soul in the room is a woman. (We don't yet know she's a nun.) She stands before the microwave oven, praying. She dutifully lists the world's suffering children, the sick, the poor—but her heart's not in it. After a few futile attempts to name others she should pray for, she gives up. Mercifully, the timer on the microwave goes off, and she is relieved from her fruitless vigil.

So begins the poignant story of "Grand Concourse," a play written by Heidi Schreck and brilliantly performed at Playwrights Horizon, a small gem of a theater tucked away on busy 42nd Street in Manhattan. For 100 minutes, Schreck and her small cast of gifted actors perform theatrical magic—the willing suspension of disbelief falls over the audience like a spell, and we are transported from glitzy Manhattan to the nitty gritty of a Bronx soup kitchen. Here, near the epicenter of the lights and sights of Times Square, we witness two women grapple with their inner poverty, their brokenness and the darkness they discover within themselves.

Schreck's play is as brave as her nun, Shelley, who lives a virtuous life performing the corporal works of mercy even as she is losing her faith. She goes through the motions of caring for the poor—an endless round of chopping vegetables, sliding them into plastic tubs, dumping them into big pots on

the stove, a ritual she performs repeatedly in the play—but, as with her ineffectual prayer, she does this by rote rather than with love. Shelley is tired, midway through her journey of life, and sure of herself as she seems, she has lost her way.

Shelley's spiritual torpor is relieved by the arrival of Emma, a young volunteer who comes to the soup kitchen in search of work. "I thought I might do some good," she replies when asked why she has come. "For whom?" Shelley asks, skeptically. "For them," Emma answers, the people she would serve, and then, more honestly, "For me." Though Shelley may not realize it, in her uncertainty, in the commingling of altruism with selfishness, Emma is a version of herself. She, too, is lost, and Shelley takes her on in attempt to help her find her way.

But Emma is not what she seems. Just as she gains Shelley's trust and affection—neither of which the latter easily grants—Emma's dark side manifests itself in ugly and destructive ways. Shelley forgives Emma's first offense against her friend and mentor—her claim that she has cancer turns out to be an outrageous lie—but Emma's offenses mount, culminating in an action that leads to the suffering and death of the one creature in the world Shelley loves. Devastated by her loss, as well as by this betrayal, she finds Emma's sin unpardonable. Confounded by the darkness of the deed and tired of the obligation to forgive every violation by virtue of

her vows, Shelley makes a choice that is as dramatic as it is inevitable. She decides to leave her order.

Ironically, it is not until this final scene of the play that she appears in her habit. This tired woman, who has struggled mightily with her vocation, seems newly sanctified by her clothing. She has never seemed so deliberate,

so committed and so free. In her final speech to Emma, who has returned in search of forgiveness, Shelley does not grant it—not because she can't forgive, but because she chooses not to. No longer bound to a code of conduct that prohibited such choosing, Shelley exercises her God-given free will. Her decision might seem troubling, but the aura that emanates from her bespeaks a new-found peace.

Surely this is a paradox and a conundrum, but the play refuses to simplify the cause or the cure for spiritual desolation. "Grand Concourse" tells an archetypal story: into Shelley's carefully-ordered operation walks chaos, into her hermetically sealed world of habitual virtue walks sin, into her spiritual stasis and sense of mistaken vocation walks grace—all in the unlikely form of a wayward girl who wins her heart and then breaks it.

The light flicks on to a familiar scene, the cold, indifferent space of an industrial kitchen. A former nun stands in her habit before the microwave. No words come from her mouth. Her face, her smile, her whole body is a prayer.

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ANGELA ALAIMO O'DONNELL is a writer, professor and associate director of the Curran Center for American Catholic Studies at Fordham University in New York.

# Talent Shows

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), NOV. 16, 2014

Readings: Prv 31:10-31; Ps 128:1-5; 1 Thes 5:1-6; Mt 25:14-30

*“So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober” (1 Thes 5:6)*

To be “awake and sober” seems like a minimalist approach to the Christian life, but it is a figurative sign of the Christian spiritual life engaged and diligent. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians in the context of the parousia, the second coming of Christ, which the early Christians hoped might arrive in their own lifetimes. Paul contrasted those who were “falling asleep,” who would be surprised when the Day of the Lord arrived like a thief, with Christians who were “awake and sober...for you are all children of light and children of the day.” The vigilance of “awake and sober” Christians allows the growth of talents as we await the return of Christ.

The parable of the talents in Matthew is a parousia parable set precisely in this period of awaiting the return of the Lord in a state of wakefulness and sobriety. It is one of a series of parables whose catechetical purpose was to encourage Christians to await Jesus’ return with vigilance and attentiveness to the evangelical mission. It is also a Matthean parable, similar to that of the ungrateful servant in Matthew 18, in which slaves (Greek *douloi*) are put in charge of vast sums of money.

In the parable three slaves are given talents, five, two or one, according to ability. A talent was the equivalent of 6,000 denarii, and one denarius was a day’s wage for a worker, so a talent

was the equivalent of over 16 years’ wages. There is a touch of the absurd about this parable, for the sum given to the slaves is extravagant. But it also rings true in the ancient context; for masters of estates often allowed trusted slaves, known as a *vili-cus* in Latin or *oikonomos* in Greek, to handle finances and run their estates while they were away in the city.

The slave who had five talents went off and doubled his money, as did the slave who had two talents, while “the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.” When the master returned, the slaves who had used their talents to double the master’s money were praised and rewarded, while the slave who buried the money because he “was afraid” of the master was excoriated as a “wicked and lazy slave,” to be cast “into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The traditional interpretation sees this parousia parable as concerned about using the gifts God has given us to build the kingdom until the second coming of Christ. Some interpreters have challenged this interpretation, though, arguing that the heart of the parable reveals economic exploitation by the master, who rewards the two slaves who double the value of the master’s talents. In this reading, the third slave, who buried his talent, is the model servant because he refused

to enmesh himself in this corrupt system. The master is not a figure of Jesus but of the masters in Jesus’ day who became wealthy on the backs of slaves and the poor. The point of the parable is that one should challenge unjust economic practices just as Jesus did. It is a powerful reading of this parable, but the parousia looms too large to replace the traditional interpretation entirely.

Such interpretations should make us question, however, what the talents stand for in this parable. Talents were money, and this is where newer interpretations remind us of economic realities. Do the talents represent simply the unique gifts that each individual has? Did the slaves who doubled their talents double their inherent abilities or worthwhileness? What



## PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

How are you using your talents to draw people to the body of Christ?

is true worth for God? It’s not money; only earthly masters care that outrageous amounts of money are doubled. The thing of surpassing worth to God is people. To double the master’s talents is to draw other people to God’s kingdom.

The one who buries his talent misses not only his own value but the value of others. The slaves who double the talents understand not only their inherent value, but the value of all people. Absurd it might be, but each of us is a treasure. To keep awake and sober is to be vigilant in using our talents in spreading the good news, that message of surpassing value, by drawing other people to recognize their own immense value. **JOHN W. MARTENS**

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

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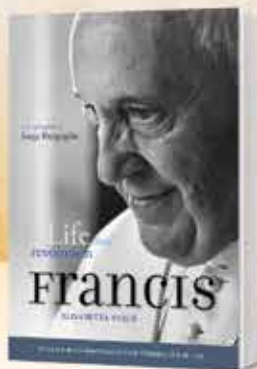
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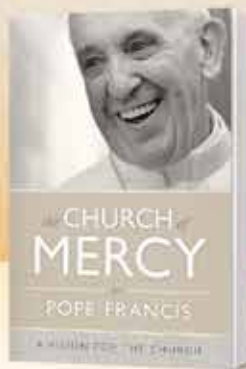
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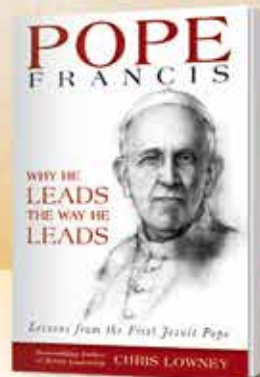
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