

faith

July and August 2015
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OF FAITH AND REASON

A Note to Our Catholic Politicians

Editorial

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Brother Timothy Danahar OP

The Harmony of Faith, Reason and Science

Bishop John Keenan of Paisley

Vocation: A Seminarian's Perspective

Deacon Phil Cunnah

Reflections Upon the Eve of Ordination

Deacon Jamié McMorris

Raising China's Faith

John Newton

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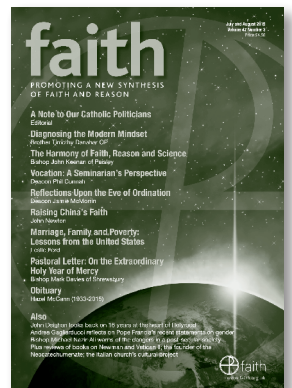
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Contents

- 02 A Note to Our Catholic Politicians**
Editorial
- 03 Diagnosing the Modern Mindset**
Brother Timothy Danahar OP
- 05 The Harmony of Faith, Reason and Science**
Bishop John Keenan of Paisley
- 06 Vocation: A Seminarian's Perspective**
Deacon Phil Cunah
- 08 Reflections Upon the Eve of Ordination**
Deacon Jamie McMorin
- 10 Raising China's Faith**
John Newton
- 11 Marriage, Family and Poverty: Lessons from the United States**
Leslie Ford
- 12 Pastoral Letter: On the Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy**
Bishop Mark Davies of Shrewsbury
- 24 Obituary**
Hazel McCann (1933-2015)



Regular Columns

- | | |
|--|---|
| 13 Politics: John Deighan
A Farewell to Holyrood | 18 Book Reviews
Newman and Vatican II; Kiki Arguello, founder of the Neocatechumenal Way; Catholic education in the light of the 'Progetto Culturale'; Antonio Rosmini, founder of the Order of Charity |
| 14 Vatican: Andrea Gagliarducci
Pope Francis and the Family: the Next Step | |
| 16 Michael Nazir-Ali
Spirituality and Religion in a Post-Secular Age | 22 Film Review
Hollywood's unhealthy portrayal of parents |

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A Note to Our Catholic Politicians

Editorial

On 22 July 1966 the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill passed its second reading in the House of Commons with a massive vote of 223 votes for with only 29 against. The sponsors of the new legislation were astonished by their overwhelming success. Even among Catholic parliamentarians only a handful voted against the bill, as the pro-life Norman St John-Stevas MP noted at the time:

“As I was going through the lobby, Mr Enoch Powell, the one member of the Shadow Cabinet to vote against the Bill, turned to me and said: ‘Where are the Romans?’ Where indeed!”

Ever since, legions of Catholics engaged in parliamentary politics have proved complicit in the creation of laws that equally disregard the dignity of the person and thus undermine the common good.

“Sadly, however, on serious issues, some politicians who profess a Catholic faith remain silent – or even surrender – in the face of grave ethical injustice”, observed the Bishops Conference of Scotland in their pastoral letter marking the recent UK general election.

Scandalous? Certainly. Incomprehensible? No. The fact is that most Catholics in the United Kingdom – of almost any age – have been failed by erroneous or even non-existent catechesis. Catholic politicians included. They can’t love what they don’t know. They can’t uphold what they don’t understand.

So what is to be done? Thankfully the Scottish bishops chose not only to curse the political darkness but also to light a candle.

“The time has come for a new generation of Catholics to join political parties and to dedicate ourselves to political service in a way that remains faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, laying the foundations for a new Civilisation of Love that serves the common good of all, especially the most vulnerable in our society”.

For this to happen, however, several things have to be achieved. Intellectually, it requires a public re-presentation of the Catholic faith – one that shows it to be harmonious with reason – as called for by Pope Benedict XVI in Westminster Hall in 2010.

“I would suggest that the world of reason and the world of faith – the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief – need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilisation,” Benedict said.

The encouraging evidence from around the United Kingdom – witness this month’s article by Bishop John Keenan – is that the call of Pope Benedict is finally being heeded.

Politically, we need to provide much better formation for those young Catholics who would aspire to a life of public service; we also need to enhance our support – including spiritual support – for those already embarked upon this noble vocation. The next generation of Catholic politicians will require a well-developed and clear-sighted vision of the common good, coupled with the virtues of courage and prudence to pursue it.

The result will be a new type of Catholic politician who is capable of campaigning with clarity, compassion and flair on key ethical issues. Merely voting the right way when legislative push comes to shove is laudable but it’s not sufficient, as a glance across the Atlantic to Washington, DC, will show.

There on Capitol Hill you will find Congressman Chris Smith and Congressman Dan Lipinski. The former is a short, stocky Republican from New Jersey. The latter is a tall, thin Democrat from Illinois. Both are practising Catholics. Together they chair the Congressional Pro-Life Caucus, a grouping of politicians who pursue their cause with intelligence, creativity and fearlessness.

“The passage of time hasn’t changed the fact that abortion is a serious, lethal violation of fundamental human rights,” Congressman Smith told more than 600,000 people gathered in Washington DC for the 2014 March for Life.


“[Nor the fact] that women and children deserve better. And that the demands of justice, generosity and compassion require that the right to life be guaranteed to everyone”.

The fact that the majority of Americans – especially the young – now consider themselves pro-life is, in part, due to the unstinting efforts of Catholic politicians like Smith and Lipinski. They should be applauded.

While role models closer to home are fewer in number, they can be found. For nearly five decades, Lord David Alton has consistently spoken up when others remained silent. His wide range of political passions bear the hallmark of a Catholic faith that seeks to uphold human dignity wherever it is threatened. There are many who disagree with Lord Alton. There are few who disrespect him.

Then there is the pole star – and patron saint – for all Catholics involved in political life: Sir Thomas More. The heroic virtue he displayed in death was the result of a life rooted in deep personal prayer and ascetic discipline.

The one-time Lord Chancellor is a stark reminder that saints are not born but made. Catholics returning to Westminster – or even entering for the first time – should take note.

The campaign is over. The government is formed. The work of parliament continues. Business as usual? We pray not. 

Diagnosing the Modern Mindset

By Brother Timothy Danahar OP

Pope Francis desires a Catholic Church that acts “as a field hospital after battle” with “the ability to heal the wounds” of our contemporary culture. Before curing that culture, though, we must first fathom today’s secular mentality.

Brother Timothy Danahar OP explains.

It Begins with Desire

“Lord, what fools these mortals be!” According to Robin Goodfellow (Puck), Shakespeare’s fairy narrator, human behaviour appears foolish from the outside looking in. The lovers of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* chase after one another, each driven by their own desire, trying to have it align with another’s. As Shakespeare says elsewhere: “Love is blind.” Love of this sort seems self-absorbed, random and uncertain. And, unlike our plays, our lives often don’t end “happily ever after”. On the other hand, who of us can’t relate to this desire? We too are thirsty for connection, affirmation and purpose.

It’s hard to step back and get a clear picture of life, especially today with the rapid changes in our secular culture. But let’s try! We can ask three questions that will help us diagnose modern man: what motivates man, what is our goal, and how can we get there?

What Motivates Man?

Many Christians today, myself included, feel that the world has taken a bad turn. Not only are teenagers leaving the Church, but even whole families, who don’t find satisfactory answers in religion for the changes and challenges they face. What has happened to us? There are two answers: something old and something new.

The old disease that we humans have always laboured under is original sin. Thomas Aquinas tells us that this is a “quality” in our soul, having lost our gift of grace, which makes us both *selfish* and *sensual*. Without the presence of God in our soul that we were made to have, we are left deeply insecure, so that all of our desire is to first help ourselves, not our neighbour. We have also fallen away from spiritual things and have become addicted to the sensual, or worldly – to sex, music, travel, money, eating and drinking, sports, parties, politics, humour, emotional sympathy. All of these are good, but our addiction to them isn’t.

There is also something new today, a “twist” to our age-old malady. In previous generations, we didn’t have great control over the natural world, so we turned to God for help. Now, we have more control. What scientists call “Murphy’s Law” doesn’t apply only to physics or engineering, but also to society: “Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.” Why

have abortions increased? With more advanced and safer medical technology, *now we can*. Why is marriage being redefined by the state? Because with in vitro fertilisation, we can make families in labs. *Now we can*. We humans will go to any length to make life just how we want it to be; and lately we’ve got very good at this. But the results are disturbing.

Not only do we begin to trespass against the basic laws of ethics (not to mention Church teaching), but our need for God becomes much less obvious. Instead, we become obsessed with living “natural life” as happily as we can. Again, we’re making a nice, happy, *selfish* and *sensual* life for ourselves. Our desire keeps us running in circles, like Shakespeare’s lovers, lost in the forest and in a midsummer dream.

What is Our Goal?

What is the goal of life for the average modern person? Whatever they wish. Each person decides for themselves. We have become so fascinated by what we can do that we have forgotten where we’re going, or what anything is for. I’ve asked many non-religious people this question, and the answer is almost always “enjoyment”. That doesn’t mean the majority of people are atheists, or that they’re selfish and cruel. It’s just that God seems vague compared with this life, so they want to get the most out of it. More specifically, what they want is “connection”. Whether in romance, in a job, or in a group of friends, everyone wants to feel they’re part of something. But that desire is often selfish underneath, because once the group challenges you or calls you to change your mind, you can leave.

We are undergoing an enormous crisis of commitment. This is seen in church attendance, job insecurity, divorce rates. All commitment lasts as long as a person feels it’s still “compatible” with their own life. Against this mentality, G.K. Chesterton once wrote: “I have known many happy marriages, but never a compatible one. The whole aim of marriage is to fight through and survive the instant when incompatibility becomes unquestionable. For a man and a woman, as such, are incompatible.”

It is the glory of being human to learn sacrifice, to adapt to life’s difficulties with love and humility – not to come up with endless ways of avoiding them, which only makes the problem worse. Fairy tales have always taught us a certain truth, that life has a set of rules that we didn’t set up, and we will only be happy if we follow them (another big point of Chesterton’s). If we spend our time trying to change the rules, we miss out on the happiness God wrote into the rules of life, the hard-won joys of struggling together for the truth. Instead, we are left to enjoy our own brief thrills, all the while deadening our spirits to *the very thing we were made for* – joy in God.

Without God, progress is really re-arranging the furniture. We try to stay “right here” and make life better, but we end up making a mess of it. Humans were made to journey, and if we don’t know our way forward, we grow confused. This is

Diagnosing the Modern Mindset

continued

painfully obvious today, as our society has grown increasingly “bipolar”. Without God, we are torn in two directions: universities praise diversity, but students still form cliques; politicians promise a bright future, but our news programmes are distressing; people are obsessed with scientific explanations of everything, and equally obsessed with the sentimental love expressed in pop songs; sexual abuse with a minor is the most shameful of all crimes, but everyone has a right to complete sexual liberation once they reach the age of consent; we relocate all over the world, preferring to live anywhere but home, yet we still agonise over our local sports club; we own many things, and still feel we don’t have enough; we believe in discipline at school or at work, but we all have a right to “let ourselves go” at the weekend; we tolerate everything, except people that don’t agree with us.

The reason why we are torn is that we are creatures of earth, made to share life with God. Though we abandoned God, our hearts are still pointed in his direction, but we try to keep them on earth. We are torn in two, not moving forward, but in circles.

How Can We Get There?

If we cannot satisfy our desire by our own means, what is left to help us? “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb 13:8). There is only one thing to help us, and his name is Jesus. God could have sent us an instruction manual called “How to believe in God and Convince Others”. He didn’t. We are perplexed by the complex world, and we look for an easy answer. God’s answer isn’t easy, but it is simple. Jesus Christ is the answer to every human question. But every human must spend his life finding out just how Jesus answers his questions, his needs, his desires. God’s answer isn’t easy, but it’s true. And its strength is its simplicity: believe, pray, worship, love, obey, seek the Lord.

The litmus test of every society (and of every person) is silence. It is in silence that we can “be with” ourselves and with God. And if we cannot do this, there is something wrong with us. The more we fill our schedules with tasks, fill our cities with music, fill our heads with headlines, then the more we betray our unhappiness. “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10). Those who cannot be still, then, cannot know God. What then is our diagnosis of modern man, of how he thinks, of what he desires, of what he believes in?

First, man has always been insecure. We yearn for a perfect love, for that one thing that can satisfy and that can last! Those who have not known this (and it is only knowable by God’s grace, his free gift of revealing his love to us), have not known what is mostly deeply human about themselves. Second, modern man has grown better at deceiving himself, that he is finally becoming more secure on *his own efforts*. We humans are capable of faith, hope and love in the God who created us. Instead, we have faith in our own abilities, hope in the future we can create, and love of humanity. Yet we are bipolar even in these: we repeatedly lose faith in our attempts and try something else; our hope ends up in clinical

depression; our love is temporary and fragile. Many have not known a Love greater than their own, and our love is only as strong as we are. The more capable we have become, the more lost we have become.

The Bright Side

The good news is that we don’t have to run far to find God. Man may be more lost in our age, but God – who sustains all things at all times, who knows the secrets of every heart, and who will have the last, fair word at the judgment of each soul – is always close. In an age of false “naturalism”, where no one has time for God, our most effective approach is just the opposite: make time for God. Mere *Christian living* has become counter-cultural in our culture. And in an age of such insecurity, we must be ever more secure in God. In an age of deception, we must admit our faults openly and ask for help when needed. A little dose of Christian confidence can go a long way! Smiling at people, being selfless, being unashamed of where we stand – these work better than trying to explain ourselves to everyone, always being defensive, instead of pressing forward serenely.

We must get busy living Christian life! Not one of us can claim that we love God enough, or that we love our neighbour perfectly. We must keep going. We must, of course, stay aware of the cultural conversation (some must even take a real part), but we must not let it dictate every bit of our conversation. We must let God do that. We must pray. We must build each other up. The world may see us as holding an unbelievably high standard – to which we say, “Yes, it is a high standard. As high as God. But it is believable. Because God helps us live in the way he has invited us to!”

Secular people can be extremely aggressive. In my experience, however, many of them are very positive, and even polite. They seem normal and sincere. Yet their sincerity is dangerous, because it suggests that we humans can enjoy a “natural” lifestyle that doesn’t need God’s help. These people aren’t “out there in the world”. They are our neighbours. They are our families, our colleagues, and our classmates. As Christians in the world, if we open ourselves to God, we create an opening in the world. All of us are more sensitive to the people in our daily lives than we would let on. If we open ourselves to God, it will affect the world around us. Though we may see very little of it, in his own time, He will awaken many hearts to his love, calling them to true life! Christians desire the salvation of every person, and God knows that desire, and He’s working on it. Our role is to stay the course. “Delight in the Lord, and He will grant you the desires of your heart” (Ps 37:4). 🌿

Brother Timothy Danaher entered the Order of Preachers in 2011. He is a graduate of the Franciscan University of Steubenville, where he studied theology and American literature. Before Dominican life he worked as a lifeguard in San Diego, California, and as a youth minister in Denver, Colorado. He is now based in Washington, DC.

The Harmony of Faith, Reason and Science

By Bishop John Keenan of Paisley



Since being ordained in 2014, Bishop John Keenan has sought new ways of reaching out to contemporary society to explain the teachings of the Catholic Church. His efforts have included a hugely successful series of catechetical talks during Lent which filled his cathedral church in Paisley. Now he has taken to the pages of the national press to explain the harmony between faith, reason and science – and why the Catholic Church, Galileo controversy aside, has had a long association with empirical thinking.

Dispassionate readers, who have studied the Galileo caricature of a war between science and religion will know that, apart from that sorry, somewhat isolated affair, the Catholic Church and the science lab have long been conjoined twins in the advancement of knowledge.

On Easter Sunday morning this year, as Christians gathered to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, scientists deep underground at Cern were gathering excitedly to switch on the Large Hadron Collider for the first time since it was temporarily shut down in February 2013.

Before giving up the ghost, the collider had already accomplished its mission of discovering what we speak of so easily as the “God particle”. Despite the exhausting efforts of earnest campaigners against it, the desire on all sides to intertwine science and religion is as alive and well as ever.

You only need to recall how John begins his Gospel. Thinking of the very first verse of the Bible he proclaims: “In the beginning was the Word,” or Logos in the original Greek. We all know that logos means reason, the very source of the Greek philosophy of his time and of the method of modern empirical science subsequently.

With this verse, John pronounced definitively on the Bible’s conception of God as a God of Truth, who acts with respect for the premises of reason. Soon after, we find Christians heartily mocking other, irrational gods of the time which, being so hopelessly capricious, were to them no more than the work of human hands or, as we would say, the figments of men’s imaginations.

That is not to say there have not been wobbles in the partnership between science and religion. The medieval Scottish Catholic scholar, John Duns Scotus, challenged Thomas Aquinas’s embrace of Aristotelian empiricism and reason, and inclined, rather, towards a God who was so sovereign that He was entitled to behave as irrationally as

He pleased. The Reformers, in their turn, sought to purify the act of religion by an appeal to faith alone, *sola fides*, in the assurance that faith was somehow better, more spiritual and pure, when uncoupled from the limits and demands of rational investigation. Freed from the impurity of philosophy and science, religion would at last lead men to salvation.

No wonder men of science, feeling understandably scorned by such tendencies, would construct their own path to progress, in competition with the path of faith, and invite the masses to follow them as dogmatically as any priest ever had.

Our own age, heir to these entrenched positions, has felt compelled to make a choice between science and religion, presuming that aligning ourselves with one entails rejecting the other. It need not.

In order to foster anew the natural complementarity of science and religion, Pope John Paul II came up with the colourful image of a bird seeking to soar into the skies. He began his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* with the vivid words: “Faith and reason are like two wings by which the human spirit ascends to the contemplation of the truth.”

Flying needs two wings, just as finding the really important truths of existence needs both faith and science – working in harmony.

The criticism of science counterbalances religion’s all-too-easy temptation to fall into credulity, as if nothing could happen just by chance and even the most absurd bad luck is somehow all “meant”, by God. Faith, on the other hand, saves reason from futility. For, in a world without some transcendent truth and good, where everything is just chance, how can any small part of it have any meaning at all?

If you and I are really just stardust, how can this dust have inalienable rights? How can our loves be anything more than a mere collision of matter? How can our striving for justice for the weak be any more right than a totalitarian state’s will to absolute power? It was the American experimental physicist Leon Lederman who coined the phrase “the God particle”, and his book *The God Particle: If the Universe Is the Answer, What Is the Question?* he parodies the Genesis story of the Tower of Babel, where no one understood another’s language or method and everything had become confused.

Lederman imagines the Lord observing this pandemonium and saying: “Let us go down again and give them the God particle so that they may see how beautiful is the universe I have made.”

It might not be the “Very New Testament” Lederman claimed it to be but it does offer a taster of a new, more hopeful, chapter in the long history of the Book of Science and Religion. ☪

First published in The Scotsman, 12 May 2015

Vocation: A Seminarian's Perspective

By Deacon Phil Cunnah

Recent figures show there is an upturn in priestly vocations in several western countries, especially the United States. How does a young man discern the call to priesthood? That was one of the questions Deacon Philip Cunnah attempted to answer in a talk given recently to the Canmore Catholic Society at St Andrews University.

When we speak of vocation, we usually refer to a “calling” because the verb at the root of the word vocation means “to call”. Today in the typical parish this “calling” is understood as the call to priesthood or religious life. I’m sure many priests will have had similar experiences to myself when people ask us: “When did you receive *the* call?” This thinking isn’t unwarranted. The Gospels, for example, tell us the disciples were *called* by Christ on the shore of Galilee. Jesus called out to them: “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Mk 1:17). And they answered his call to follow him in a particular way. This thinking can, however, limit our understanding of vocation, and if we look to an earlier text in the Bible we can put Christ’s call into a wider context that opens up our understanding of what it means to be called.

The Easter vigil is probably still quite fresh in your memories; it certainly is in mine because I had to sing the Exultet this year for the very first time. You’ll remember that once we’ve lit the Easter Candle, we go back to the Old Testament and read it in the light of the Resurrection. One of the key texts in this part is the creation story from Genesis 1. We don’t just go back, we go *all* the way back, right back to the beginning. In that story, God creates by speaking: it is his word that brings everything into being, including men and women. “God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness’” (Gen 1:26). So our very existence is the result of God’s call for us to be created, to have existence, to be alive. We don’t just find ourselves alive randomly: we find ourselves alive with a purpose. We’ve been created with God’s intention and desire that we should grow and flourish. Pope Benedict captured this nicely in the following passage:

Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.
(Pope Benedict XVI, Homily at Mass of Inauguration, 24 April 2005)

You and I, then, are the result of God’s word: we are in a sense spoken into existence. So vocation goes to the heart of who we are because it’s there from the first moment of our existence and places us directly in relationship with God, who

desires what is best for each of us, what will help us to flourish. So this is our first principle of vocation, that our life is pure gift from God and it’s in relationship with him that we flourish. Hence, we need to be praying regularly, making space for him.

Notice that in the story of Genesis, to help Adam and Eve flourish, God speaks a rule to them, saying: “You may eat freely of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die” (Gen 2:17). He nourishes them by this word because he knows the limitations and weaknesses of his creation. God knows what we need better than we do. Human beings are not self-sufficient, ready to take on the world all by themselves. We need God. Sin enters the world when Adam and Eve stop listening to God and instead listen to the voice of the serpent. When understanding vocation, it’s important to realise that there are a number of competing voices calling to us; discernment is trying to establish which ones come from God. Sometimes it’s our own selfish desires that are driving our way in life. Sometimes, it’s societal pressure that is pushing us in directions contrary to the Gospel. Discernment requires self-reflection and growth in self-knowledge to decipher between these different forces, so that we choose a path that really does lead to the sort of life God intends for us.

After the Fall, God does not abandon his creatures. His first words are his call to the man: “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). These profound words express all God’s fatherly concern for his creation and his desire for us to flourish and grow. “Where are you?” is like a parent searching for the children who have wandered off during a shopping trip; it is the desperation to be close again. For those who have never stopped to think about vocation, God’s call “where are you?” is actually a great place to start. It can ask: “Where are you in relation to God? What keeps you from him?” or simply: “Where are you on your journey through life? Are you making big decisions? Are you just enjoying your first-year parties?”

Alternatively, think of a couple eating together while one of them is drifting off in a day dream. The other thinks: “Where are you? Will you share with me what’s going on in you right now?” If you spend some time in prayer, just allowing Him to start the conversation with you by listening to that question, “Where are you?”, you will be on that journey of vocation.

Yet there is a Word that God speaks which eclipses all the rest. John begins his Gospel with a famous passage: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life and the life was the light of all people” (Jn 1:1-4). The Word that we are listening for in vocation is a person. We are made for relationship with Christ. He is the one who brings the “new law ... [that we should] love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34); who has come that “we may have life and have it to the full” (Jn 10:10). Our vocation grows out of a deep personal relationship with him and, in this respect,

“Where are you?” These profound words express all God’s fatherly concern for his creation and his desire for us to flourish and grow”

reading and praying with the Gospels is an invaluable help to discernment because there we see what Jesus calls people to and gain some insight into authentic vocation.

First, Jesus goes straight for the heart. There are many times when his key question is “What do you want?” (Mk 20:21; Mk 10:51; Jn 1:38). This is not a disgruntled man who is fed up with people pestering him; it is Our Lord, who sees us more deeply than we do ourselves and who knows our greatest treasure is our heart. His desire is to capture our hearts. So vocation discernment is going to involve answering the question: “What do I want? What’s in my heart?”. And we can’t discern without entering into our secret place and being honest.

Second, following Jesus means following Jesus. His path is our path and this path took him to the cross. Jesus told his disciples: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mt 16:24). Sharing in the cross is an authentic sign of vocation. It doesn’t mean life is a constant struggle, it doesn’t mean life has to be a depressing slog. Sacrifice is an unavoidable part of life and that is a lesson secular culture tries to avoid. I often tell kids at school, for example: “Yes, you can do anything. You have so many opportunities. But you can’t do everything. At some stage you have to make choices which involve sacrifice.”

So if you’re going to be a priest, you will have to sacrifice the chance of a family. And more and more women are finding it’s very difficult to have a career and be a mother. I’m not saying the traditional family structure is the only one, of course not, but we have to be realistic; and through listening to many women and reading numerous articles in newspapers it is clear there is a growing realisation of this fact. Yet, there are two important points to be made about this. One is that sacrifice is often an answer to the question “what do you want?”, because it’s in knowing what we are prepared to sacrifice that we know what is most important to us, what we truly want. The second point is that following Jesus really does mean just that, and the cross is the means to the resurrection and new life. For us, the cross never has the final word, but it’s through the cross that God is most powerful.

Finally, Jesus invites us to trust him and not ourselves. This is the “stepping out of the boat” factor. When Peter recognises Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee, he knows he has to go towards him, and Jesus’ call to Peter is “Yes, come” (Mt 14:28-33). Stepping towards Jesus in vocation can feel like stepping out of the comfort of the boat, stepping out of the comfort of a life where we are in charge and we can rely upon our own resources. There can be many fears about vocation

based upon the uncertainty of what will come, but we have to allow Jesus to be free with us so that his providence can lead us. If this fear is holding you back, I would say that is not a genuine voice, but is the voice of the tempter trying to stop you from following him. Admittedly, Peter does fall in the sea, but don’t worry: Jesus saved him.

“God knows what we need better than we do. Human beings are not self-sufficient, ready to take on the world all by themselves”

These images of the heart, the cross and stepping out of the boat are what I would call authentic signs of vocation in Christ. They are not the only ones, but they are some of the most

prominent and perhaps they ring true in your lives. In his first homily as Pope, Benedict XVI summarised this vocation in Christ by drawing upon the words of his predecessor John Paul II. He declared:

Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way? If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom? And once again the

Pope [John Paul II] said: No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so, today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life. Amen.

In this whole process of vocation, there is a role for spiritual direction and close friends who can help you examine different parts of your life in the search of a genuine call. Very often we don’t see things quite so clearly from our perspective but others help highlight aspects of our life that we’re not aware of.

Perhaps, so far in this talk, you’ve been waiting for me to be more specific about the different types of vocation, such as priesthood, religious life, marriage and the single life. I’ve avoided that in this first part because on the one hand we can’t



Vocation: A Seminarian's Perspective continued

begin to discern and hear our vocation until we take seriously the fact that we are made for relationship with God in Jesus Christ. He it is that will call us and strengthen us to follow. So until we know the answer to the question "Where are you?" and are making prayer a serious part of our life, talk of discernment is very difficult. Indeed, chatting to various priest vocation directors, a common theme is that few people are coming forward for priesthood largely because few have the faith foundation to build a vocation upon.

On the other hand, I've started in this way because my experience of people living out their vocations doesn't always fit easily into these categories. I've met a lot of people who are living out their vocation based upon a call to a particular mission. They wouldn't call themselves committed singles: they're just single for now and if God sends someone their way they'll hope to get married, but right now they're focused on the mission they feel God has called them to, such as the pro-life movement or renewing sacramental catechesis. A call to mission is an important consideration in vocation discernment.

I leave you with the words of John Paul II from his apostolic letter *Dilecti Amici*, addressed to young people at the start of the United Nations International Youth Year in 1985:

In this context the "plan" (we have for our lives) takes on the meaning of a "life vocation," as something which is entrusted by God to an individual as a task. Young people, entering into themselves and at the same time entering into conversation with Christ in prayer, desire as it were to read the eternal thought which God the Creator and Father has in their regard. They then become convinced that the task assigned to them by God is left completely to their own freedom, and at the same time is determined by various circumstances of an interior and exterior nature. Examining these circumstances, the young person, boy or girl, constructs his or her plan of life and at the same time recognises this plan as the vocation to which God is calling him or her. (Dilecti Amici, 9) ☩

Deacon Philip Cunnah is a seminarian for the Diocese of Middlesbrough. He is studying for the priesthood at St Mary's College, Oscott.

Reflections Upon the Eve of Ordination By Deacon Jamie McMorris

At the very beginning of the rite of ordination, easily passed over in preference for some of the more dramatic moments of the ceremony, is a very simple exchange in which my name will be called and I will step forward. Although simple and, in a certain sense, practical, for me this moment is rich in meaning: the Archbishop will call me by name to serve Jesus and the Church in St Andrews and Edinburgh, confirming aloud the calling I heard in my heart many years ago.

He will then go on to explain what following this call will mean: a life of charity, lived out in celibate chastity, in obedience to him and his successors and nourished and strengthened in prayer, focused especially on Our Lord in the Eucharist. As a deacon, my life will be dedicated to ministry at the altar, the proclamation of the Gospel and the service of all people, especially the poor and the sick. Next year, I will return to the Archdiocese to be ordained as a priest and



On Sunday 3 May, Jamie McMorris was ordained a deacon at the Scots College in Rome. We asked the young man from Kinghorn in Fife for his personal reflections upon the eve of ordination, as he prepares to take one step closer to the priesthood.

live out the rest of my life in the service of the Church in our part of Scotland. While I have loved my time in seminary here in Rome, this prospect fills me with a great excitement and a sense of urgency to "get to work!"

Over the years I have spent thinking and praying about the Lord's call, and especially this weekend, I have come more and more to experience for myself the truth of Pope Benedict XVI's invitation to young people to "open wide the doors to Christ": that when the Lord calls us to follow him, he "takes away nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great". Rather, I have begun more and more to experience for myself the "joy of the Gospel" that Pope Francis calls us all to proclaim,

and which shone out in the lives of the priests who inspired me as a young man: an extraordinary sense of peace, happiness and purpose which comes from encountering Jesus and handing your life over to him." ☩



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Raising China's Faith

By John Newton

The dire plight of Christians in the Middle East has regularly hit the headlines in recent months. The often unreported plight of Christians in China, however, is also extremely grave, as Dr John Newton of Aid to the Church in Need now explains.

"The Chinese government has intensified the persecution [of Christians] recently. We have seen demolished churches, crosses taken away from the buildings, so there's not much we can hope for immediately. The Church is still enslaved to the government." This was the message Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kun, the former bishop of Hong Kong, had for Aid to the Church in Need, when he spoke with the Catholic charity last November. The most visible form of persecution over the past 18 months has been the targeting of churches in China's Zhejiang province and in particular those in its coastal city of Wenzhou.

The story goes that the latest campaign against the Church started when local Communist Party secretary Xia Baolong said Wenzhou City's skyline had "too many crosses". Whatever the truth of the story, by November 2014 more than 420 churches in the province had had their crosses pulled down – and numerous churches had been threatened with demolition orders. In a number of cases buildings were wholly or partly destroyed.¹

Wenzhou's Christians have become the subject of a campaign to restrict public displays of faith as Communist officials reasserted the party's foundational Marxist philosophy. Wenzhou is no doubt an embarrassment in a country where religious belief is still frowned upon – as according to Chinese state media an eighth of the city's eight million residents are Christian, earning it the nickname of "China's Jerusalem".

Yet the campaign to pull down churches has met with considerable resistance. In April 2014 thousands of Christians belonging to Wenzhou's Sanjiang church kept a round-the-clock watch to stop their church building being demolished.² The Church was part of the Chinese government's official Protestant umbrella organisation – The Three-Self Patriotic Movement – making the targeting of the building all the more surprising. But in recent years even official state sanction has not protected Christian groups. In 2010 property developers in Shandong province were given formal approval to knock down a 19th-century church built by Anglican missionaries – despite it being part of The Three-Self Patriotic Movement and designated as a protected national historical landmark.

Among other complaints, authorities in Wenzhou alleged that Sanjiang church, which cost more than £3m to build, was structurally unsound. No evidence for this was produced, although there had been protests by folk religionists that the building was out of harmony with the surrounding area's *feng shui*. The stand-off between Church members and the authorities ended in April 2014 with the structure, which had only been finished in December 2013, being razed. Gao Ying, vice-president of the official Yanjing Theological Seminary in Beijing, said: "The Sanjiang Church was a legal and registered congregation. I think they deserved a better outcome."³

Officially the demolition programme has been part of a three-year plan in Zhejiang province called "Three Rectifications and One Demolition" that encouraged authorities to pull down illegal structures that violated planning and zoning laws. A guidance document listed seven types of building that should be torn down – six of which were explicitly religious, including "minor places of worship and minor convents that accumulate wealth in the name of religion".

In March 2015 eight Christians who protested over the demolition of Sanjiang church, were sentenced to custodial prison sentences after pleading guilty to charges of "illegal occupation of farmland" and "gathering a crowd to disturb public order". Church members suggested that the defendants had been coerced into entering a guilty plea.

While these problems plague registered churches, unregistered congregations often face worse problems. Throughout 2013 dozens of Protestant house churches were shut down when they refused to come under the authority of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, and hostility to them continues. Underground Catholic communities fare little better. In late March 2015 police seized two priests in Mutanjiang – Fr Shaoyun Quan, 41, and Fr Jianyou Cao, 43 – who had just celebrated Mass for underground Catholic communities. After their arrest they were taken to an unknown location. At the time of writing no information was known about the priests' whereabouts.⁴

Attempts to cow China's Christian communities continue to be unsuccessful. When a small church in Wuxi village had its cross removed, a member of the congregation used his welding torch to put it back up. Authorities subsequently detained him, questioning him for 10 hours on the suspicion that he was running a welding business without a licence. The Church has since had its water and electricity cut off and officials have made inquiries about several church members with their places of work – which has been interpreted as an attempt to intimidate worshippers. But the Church is resilient: "I won't let them take down the cross even if it means they would shoot me dead," said 73-year-old Fan Liang'an, whose grandfather helped build the church in 1924.⁵ And that strength of faith is why Christianity is continuing to grow in China. ☕

Dr John Newton works for Aid to the Church in Need, whose help for the Catholic Church in China includes training for seminarians, providing children's Bibles and helping oppressed priests with Mass stipends.

Notes

¹D Bernardo Cervellera, "As more than 400 crosses are destroyed in Zhejiang, violence spreads to Henan, Shandong, and Anhui", *Asia News*, 23/12/14.

²Tom Philips, "Christians form human shield around church in 'China's Jerusalem' after demolition threat", *Daily Telegraph*, 04/04/14.

³Ian Johnson, "Church-State Clash in China Coalesces Around a Toppled Spire", *International New York Times*, 29/05/14.

⁴Bernardo Cervellera, "Chinese police seize two priests in Mutanjiang", *Asia News*, 03/22/15.

⁵Associated Press, "As government tears down church crosses, Chinese Christians rise to defend their symbol", *Fox News* (online), 28/07/14 (www.foxnews.com/world/2014/07/28/as-government-tears-down-church-crosses-chinese-christians-rise-to-defend-their)

Marriage, Family and Poverty: Lessons from the United States *By Leslie Ford*

Political debate during the recent UK general election often focused on the issue of child poverty. In this article, Leslie Ford of the Heritage Foundation, a think-tank based in Washington DC, draws upon sociological evidence from the United States to suggest that the Catholic Church's vision of the married family is the best poverty-busting measure available to modern society.

"I want a Church which is poor and for the poor." These words, more than any others, have defined the first two years of Pope Francis's papacy. They have guided his every word and deed, powerfully reminding Catholics and non-Catholics alike that the "preferential option for the poor" is central to Christian teaching. This will undoubtedly be a focus of his addresses to the World Congress of Families in Philadelphia and the United States Congress in Washington DC this September.

And it is a message American Catholics need to hear. In the US, the poor have experienced a unique form of poverty: a breakdown of the family. Their plight can be largely attributed to what Pope Francis has described as "the worst discrimination which the poor suffer... the lack of spiritual care." This manifests itself, first and foremost, in an unparalleled breakdown of the family.

This dimension of American poverty has historically been overlooked, with policymakers – and many social justice groups, including Catholic ones – instead focusing solely on financial issues. Since the initiation of President Lyndon B Johnson's War on Poverty in 1964, the federal government has spent \$22 trillion dollars trying to lift low-income Americans out of poverty. Currently, the federal government spends close to a trillion dollars a year on more than 80 mean-tested welfare programmes. As many as a third of Americans receive some form of federal benefits, coming to roughly \$9,000 per person.

Writ large, it can be argued that many of the material needs of the American poor have been relieved in the past century. According to the food security survey of the US Department of Agriculture, 96 per cent of poor parents stated that their children were never hungry at any time in the previous year. The US Census Bureau found that only 9.5 per cent of poor families reported living in mobile homes or trailers. Forty-two per cent of all poor households own their own homes, and the average home has three bedrooms, one-and-a-half baths, a garage, and a porch or patio.

And yet, the American poor still experience a profound privation – one which the welfare state has worsened. The number of children born outside marriage has been steadily rising for the past 50 years. In the 1960s, fewer than 10 per cent of children were born outside marriage. Today, 40 per cent are born to single mothers. The marital situation of the low-income family is now terrifying – 71 per cent of poor families with children are not married.

Why has family life for the American poor slipped away? Fifty years ago, the 1965 report by the future Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan drew attention to the counterintuitive incentives in

the welfare state. The structure of welfare support financially penalised mothers who married and rewarded mothers who remained single. Moynihan's report hypothesised that these penalties increased the number of low-income black children born outside marriage – which then stood at 25 per cent.

And yet, the welfare incentives highlighted by Moynihan are still present in the modern welfare state. Today, if a single mother receiving state assistance earns \$20,000 and marries the father of her child who makes the same amount, marriage will cost them roughly \$12,000. When low-income Americans are forced to make a choice between paying the bills and marriage, it's no wonder that the marriage rate has fallen.

Catholic theology clearly expresses the spiritual good of growing up in an intact family home. But the benefits are also unmistakably substantiated in social science research. Children raised by their married parents have substantially better life outcomes compared with similar children raised in single-parent homes. These children have positive, measureable outcomes: higher education attainment levels, better emotional and physical health, and greater self-esteem. They even have higher regard for marriage.

Perhaps most importantly, teens that have intact homes have a better chance of avoiding the pitfalls of high-risk behaviours. Boys who grow up without a father in the home are five times more likely to commit a crime and encounter the justice system. Girls without a father in the home are seven to eight times more likely to experience a teenage pregnancy.

The presence of married parents in the home also has an influence on the economic well-being of the family. Marriage alone can decrease the chance of childhood poverty by 80 per cent. It's not simply the combination of two incomes – research shows that married families earn more and save more.

In short, the American welfare state has created a cultural divide between low-income and middle-income Americans. The divide can be seen in many ways. For instance, less-educated women are more likely to be single mothers. Only 8.1 per cent of college graduates decide to have and raise children alone compared with the 65.2 per cent of high-school dropouts who become single mothers.

To be sure, the low-income family was not eroded by state welfare policies alone: changing social mores, particular those from the sexual revolution, have contributed to the poor's marital crisis in a profound way. Although there is ample evidence that married mothers and fathers play an irreplaceable role in the lives of their children, the positive message about marriage was not – and still is not – being told to those who need to hear it most. America's cultural leaders – including the clergy, policymakers, and even entertainment influencers – must inform and promote the indispensable function of marriage in the lives of children. If the poor truly have a preferential place in the Church, then American Catholics must make promoting marriage our top priority. 🍀

On the Extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy

By Bishop Mark Davies of Shrewsbury

My Dear Brother and Sisters,

I write to you on this Divine Mercy Sunday with the happy news that Pope Francis formally announces today a “Holy Year of Mercy” to begin on 8 December 2015 under the patronage of Mary, the Mother of Mercy. The message of mercy has been central to Pope Francis’s pontificate, as it was to that of Saint John Paul II, who inaugurated this Sunday after Easter as Mercy Sunday and who canonised the Polish visionary of God’s mercy, Saint Faustina Kowalska.

As we prepare for this Holy Year, it is important to remember God’s mercy is his unfailing attitude and actions towards the least deserving, and especially the spiritually poor. Mercy never abandons us in the misery of our sins by pretending sin doesn’t matter. This is not the mercy of God. We may easily give up on each other and believe ourselves incapable of the call to holiness; but God never ceases to call us and to offer us his grace, which is “the free and undeserved help that God gives to those who respond to his call” (CCC 1996). In the Gospel we see how Christ does not give up on Saint Thomas, despite all his refusals to accept Divine mercy (cf Jn 20:19-31). Likewise, Our Lord will never cease to call each of us to rise again from wherever sin has brought us down.

Our Christian life begins with an act of mercy, an act of rescue in baptism. And this work of rescue becomes the pattern of our life in Christ. Since our Christian lives are always lived at a crossroads, the *Catechism* states: “There are two ways: the one of life, the other of death” (CCC 1696). In the readings at Mass today Saint John tells us that loving God is keeping his commandments, “and his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the victory over the world – our faith” (1 Jn 5:3-4). The Church always puts before us the distinction between the way of Christ leading to life and the false path which leads to death. However, God’s mercy does not abandon us even if we follow the lure of the false path. His mercy goes before us; it also follows us, as Saint Augustine taught. This call is compared in the *Catechism* to “Jesus’ look of infinite mercy” that “drew tears of repentance from Peter”. It is this gaze of love that leads each of us through a process of “uninterrupted” conversion as God makes our hearts new (see CCC 1428-1432). The sacrament of penance and

reconciliation entrusted to the Church on Easter day is the merciful means by which we continue to choose life and bring all of our unruly thoughts, words and actions into conformity with Christ. We must give thanks today for this great Sacrament of Mercy!



Pope Francis has declared an Extraordinary Jubilee Year for the Church, calling it a ‘Holy Year of Mercy’. The year will begin on 8 December 2015, the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second Vatican Council, and conclude on 20 November 2016, the Feast of Christ the King. In a recent pastoral letter to the Diocese of Shrewsbury, Bishop Mark Davies reflected upon the Holy Father’s call to mercy.

The Father of Mercies continues to rescue us and helps us conform our thoughts, our words and our actions to the life of his Son, since it is only in this Divine life that we can ultimately find happiness. At the same time the Church teaches us how the gift of the Holy Spirit “renews us interiorly...” and “enlightens and strengthens us to live as ‘children of light’ through ‘all that is good and right and true’” (CCC 1695). Mother Church also sets before us a well-established path so we may unite ourselves to Christ and follow this way of mercy: the path is called the “works of mercy”. The works of mercy help us respond to the generous mercy of God. Many of us will have been taught them from our earliest years and we will return to them in the Holy Year ahead. The seven corporal works of mercy are:

1. Feed the hungry.
2. Give drink to the thirsty.
3. Clothe the naked.
4. Shelter the homeless.
5. Visit the sick.
6. Visit the imprisoned.
7. Bury the dead.

And the seven spiritual works of mercy are:

1. Counsel the doubtful.
2. Instruct the ignorant.
3. Admonish sinners.
4. Comfort the afflicted.
5. Forgive offences.
6. Bear wrongs patiently.
7. Pray for the living and the dead.

These works mark out the path by which we must each seek to be merciful “as our Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). On this Sunday of Divine Mercy – as we look forward to the Holy Year of Mercy – may we know in our lives the mercy of God and be able to wholeheartedly repeat that simple prayer of Saint Faustina: “Jesus, I trust in you.”

Wishing you the great joy of Easter,

Bishop Mark Davies of Shrewsbury, 12 April 2015



A Farewell to Holyrood

John Deighan has been the parliamentary officer for the Bishop's Conference of Scotland since the creation of the new Scottish Parliament in 1999. This month he began work as chief executive officer for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children Scotland. *Faith* magazine asked him to reflect upon his 16 years working at the heart of Holyrood.

In the middle of 1999 I expected that I would spend much of my time promoting the distinctive areas of the Church's teaching. Little did I realise that it would so much centre on the understanding of the family and sexuality, and particularly on the legal treatment of homosexuality. It seemed just chance that, in assessing what the new political institutions of Scotland would be focusing on, I stumbled upon one research paper that would give me an immediate insight into what lay ahead. This was a paper based on research conducted in 1998 and published as a Scottish Executive Crime and Criminal Justice Paper (Research Findings No 41) and entitled "The Experience of Violence and Harassment of Gay Men in the City of Edinburgh". What immediately struck me was the absurdity of the terminology and proposals in the paper – terms such as "heteronormativity" and "heterosexism", which I'd never encountered before. But most startling was the scale of the ambition of the writers, which included proposing the benefits of "the removal of all legal distinctions between homosexuality and heterosexuality".

Some research of my own on the issue quickly revealed a well-prepared social and political agenda for bringing those proposals to fruition. The effectiveness of that work is now evident. Not only has it been achieved remarkably quickly, but it has led in the space of a few short years to a situation in which those who hold to the previous understanding of family and sexual relationships risk losing their jobs and reputation should they happen to fall foul of the militant LGBT lobby.

The success of the social revolutionaries is an excellent study in how to bring about social change, albeit in this case change that has destabilised the very future of our society. What has been interesting is that our political classes are, by and large, indifferent to the importance of family life for the well-being of society. They have shown unthinkable negligence in failing to weigh up objectively arguments that might challenge the new orthodoxy – one which, seemingly overnight, has been imposed on our society.

The abandonment of the family is occurring largely for the sake of an exaggerated individual freedom which cannot, in the eyes of our social elites, be constrained even by gender identity or family structure. That mood has been absorbed even by people of faith who can think it judgemental to promote a truth if others claim it is offensive. But thus we rob future generations of the wisdom of our faith and cumulative wisdom gained over centuries of experience. It is easy to understand why Pope Benedict commented that he feared the collapse of reason more than the collapse of faith.

Another feature of the past 16 years has been the promotion of euthanasia and assisted suicide. Our generation's absolute

terror of suffering and the idolisation of personal autonomy make propaganda for killing the sick superficially appealing to the "worried well". However, these issues start with the disadvantage (for their proponents) of trying to overcome the bulwark of human rights laws which, since the end of the Second World War, have increasingly placed duties on nations to protect life and to outlaw any deliberate deprivation of life. The issue of abortion is, of course, the exception, based as it is on denying the personhood of the unborn. Proponents of assisted suicide or euthanasia have worked effectively to create the social culture for their future success. But it appears most likely that the attempt to introduce assisted suicide in Scotland will fail yet again in the Scottish Parliament.

Another feature of political change has been the increasing faith in politics as the solution, even in the face of political failure. It is a measure of how effectively Marxism introduced the idea of messianism into politics – the idea that somehow, despite the evidence, a political strategy and new laws will deliver a wonderful society for us all. No one believes this more than our generation of politicians, and in their efforts to bring about such a society they have taken to intervening ever more readily in our lives – all too often, unfortunately, with the approval of the majority of citizens. The warnings of Alexis de Tocqueville's study of democracy in America should be made widely available for those who are concerned about our political future.

The Scottish Government is not alone among advanced European democracies in legislating or creating new initiatives at every turn when some social problem arises. Eating, smoking, drinking, depression, teenage pregnancies, infertility, fitness, parenting... all now need some government minister or official to tell us how to live. That every child in Scotland has a government-appointed guardian shows how far we have come. Thanks to the breaking of social bonds in our families and communities, and the lack of self-control that a culture of indulgence promotes, we will continue to become more bureaucratic and inefficient in our governance, while at the same time creating the conditions whereby citizens become less capable of leading their own lives.

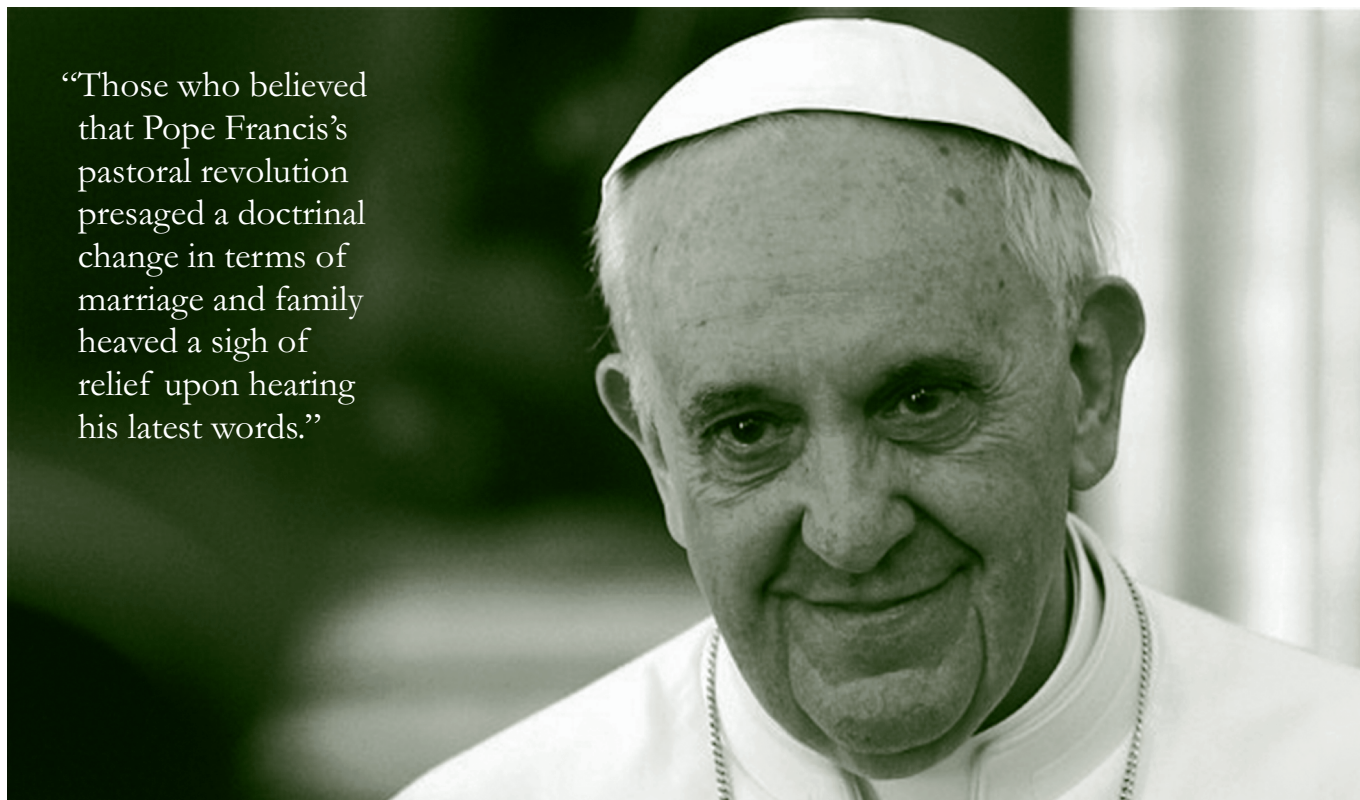
I realise that the situation can seem bleak. But despite appearances I am hopeful that we are on the brink of positive change. A new generation has grown in the midst of secularism and they have somehow remained loyal to the Catholic faith and the natural reason that it endorses. There is an opportunity to build from such a basis and to turn away from the dreadful darkness of our culture (spiritually and humanly) which is killing innocent children in the womb.

My new role will give me the opportunity to work with others in building a culture of life and to implement some of the lessons I've learned from others who have effected social change. Our success in defeating assisted suicide shows that mobilising good people and promoting the truth can be effective. I hope to do much of that in the future. ☸

John Deighan is the chief executive officer for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children Scotland.

Pope Francis and the Family: the Next Step

“Those who believed that Pope Francis’s pastoral revolution presaged a doctrinal change in terms of marriage and family heaved a sigh of relief upon hearing his latest words.”



Pope Francis and the family – it’s time for clarification. Wednesday 15 April was the deadline given to dioceses to return the questionnaire to the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops in preparation for the coming synod. Then, beginning on the same day, Pope Francis dedicated his address in two consecutive general audiences to the complementarity between man and woman. In his speeches, Pope Francis defended the traditional family, and attacked gender ideology, emphasising that “difference is the solution: it is not the problem”.

Those who believed that Pope Francis’ pastoral revolution presaged a doctrinal change in terms of marriage and family heaved a sigh of relief upon hearing his latest words. As far as family issues are concerned, it turns out that Pope Francis adheres to traditional Church teaching. His push toward a more pastoral approach does not necessarily mean he is going to water down doctrine, as was commonly thought. It now seems that those who were claiming the Pope’s support for such changes were probably trying to manipulate him.

It seems to be the fate of this papacy to be romanticised and mystified in some ways. Yet more in-depth analysis reveals that the truth about it is more trivial, and it is found in Pope Francis’s biography. The man who came “from the end of the world” was never fond of the Roman Curia, and probably saw in it a reflection of the Jesuits’ General Curia, which isolated him for a decade, before Cardinal Antonio Quarracino, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, plucked him from the peripheries and promoted him as his auxiliary bishop.

Viewed from the peripheries, the Roman Curia can seem a place of illicit dealings and general dysfunction. This is how the media depict it, wishing to draw attention to the Church’s shadowy side. It is seen this way, too, by some of the non-Italian clerics who, upon entering the curial ranks, have to work hard to understand mechanisms and languages so different from those they left behind. Local bishops, barely able to stand what they consider to be interference in the form of appointments and decisions made by Rome, also view the Roman Curia in a negative light.

From the perspective of the peripheries the Curia seems like a medieval relic, something unnecessary for the Church’s mission that can safely be abolished. Paradoxically, it is only by living within this institution that one can understand how it guarantees freedom for the Church.

Little by little Pope Francis has understood this point, as this anecdote may show. The new Italian President, Sergio Mattarella, went to the Vatican for a state visit on 18 April. The protocol for such a visit – which is also the legacy of historical relations between the Holy See and Italy – includes an exchange of public speeches, and requires that both the Pope and the President wear their designated official attire for state occasions.

According to a source, Pope Francis did not want the full ceremony to take place. He would have had to wear the red “mozzetta”, but he has not done so from the first day of his pontificate, nor does he do so when the occasion calls for it, as during the New Year’s reception of ambassadors accredited

“Now is the time for Pope Francis to carry these issues of complementarity into the international arena. And on these he will achieve consensus”

to the Holy See. The Italian President agreed not to wear his official dress, but his entourage asked that the protocol for a state visit, even one simplified in accord with Pope Francis's style, should still be observed.

Pressured by the recommendations of his diplomatic consultants, the Pope had to agree. Nevertheless, after the meeting, he became aware that by observing the proper protocol for a state visit he was able to address the Italian nation directly, whereas if only a private meeting had taken place between himself and the President, it would have remained confidential, and the details would not have been disclosed. So in the end the Pope understood that the full ceremony of a state visit allowed him to communicate directly and fully a message that otherwise would have been truncated within the confines of a cold communiqué agreed with the Italian state press office.

This anecdote does not mean that Pope Francis will always agree to perform his official role in the traditional way. Yet it is the latest signal that the Pope's “revolution” has step by step reverted to something more established. Those who had pushed for the revolution are very much aware of this fact.

On 13 April, Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga, co-ordinator of the Council of Cardinals, presented in Rome a new series of books on Pope Francis. In a short meeting with journalists after the presentation, the Cardinal spoke about the current reforms, and how they are progressing. One question concerned the Institute for Religious Works (IOR), better known as the Vatican Bank. Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga replied that everything was going well, that the reform was moving along. When someone observed aloud that he was among those who had wanted to abolish the IOR, the cardinal turned stone cold. Then he explained: “We understood that abolishing the Institute would have damaged religious congregations who would have sustained a financial loss. So we agreed that it was better to heal a sick person than to resurrect a dead one.”

Cardinal Rodríguez's words nailed the coffin shut on proposals to dismantle the Roman Curia that had begun circulating immediately after Pope Francis' election. Before the last meeting of the Council of Cardinals, Cardinal Rodríguez went to Madrid and took part in a round table with Spanish journalists organised by the Catholic weekly newspaper *Vida Nueva*. One of the questions asked was about the synod. The Cardinal explained that the synod's method is that of “observing, judging and acting” and that this method may also lead to a decision to add a third leg to the synod. “We do not know if at the end of the coming October synod, the process will end, or if the Pope will convoke a third synod. This could be the case, because the synod deals with very important issues...”

But even these words show that the hoped-for doctrinal revolution has stalled. As bishops' conferences from all over the world are electing their representatives for this year's

synod, it becomes clearer that the conservative line will be upheld by a wide majority of the participants. None of the bishops is against a pastoral approach; in many parts of the Church such an approach is already under way. But none of the bishops wants to denature the Church's teaching in favour of a major pastoral innovation.


Seemingly, Pope Francis does not want to do so either. His last two general audiences, dedicated to gender and to complementarity between man and woman, are but additions to the many similar pronouncements he has already made – for example, when in the Philippines he warned about the “ideological colonisation of the family”. Pope Francis's words on gender are on track with the anthropological struggle that the Church is fighting. As Msgr Livio Melina, president of the John Paul II Pontifical Institute on Marriage and Family, put it:

Man is not an isolated individual: he lives in a network of family relationships; his essence is to be a family. Inside these relations he is free; he defends his truth. When he is outside of this relationship he is simply an individual manipulated by powers, which grant him the hedonistic pleasure of sexuality, but which do not grant him to love truly and to be bound by love. In this reduction of man to sexuality, these powers can control the person. Even [the Marxist sociologist Herbert] Marcuse is aware of this reduction of human sexuality in order to control man.

“Pope Francis's words on gender are on track with the anthropological struggle that the Church is fighting”

This is the huge struggle being fought within the synod's debate on the family. This struggle is even wider than the media report, and goes beyond the issues of the divorced and remarried and of pastoral care for homosexual people.

Now is the time for Pope Francis to carry these issues into the international arena. And on these issues he will achieve consensus. It was while addressing the European Parliament in Strasbourg about the family that he earned the most sustained applause. He will certainly speak about the family before the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September.

Now that Pope Francis seems to have become aware of the importance of the Church's institutional component in fighting this battle, perspectives on his pontificate will obviously broaden. Perhaps curial reform, as well as the much vaunted doctrinal revolution, will find their proper place in this discussion. But this will not be the “core issue”. It will just be a path toward better functionality, one made within a wider vision and concept of mission. 

Andrea Gagliarducci is an Italian journalist and Vatican correspondent for the Catholic News Agency.

Spirituality and Religion in a Post-Secular Age

All the research shows that the spiritual is innate in human beings. It is not “caught” from others like an infection and it is not an epidemic virus invading and multiplying at the same time. Professor David Hay and Kate Hunt have shown how people who do not go to church have a lively spirituality and even a spiritual vocabulary. Similarly, David Hay, with another collaborator, Rebecca Nye, has established that children are naturally spiritual – even if this can be neutralised in them by unsympathetic adults! Before this, the Alister Hardy Institute in Oxford had attempted to find a scientific basis for the spiritual being “hard wired” into people.

All of this has implications for the rising tide of aggressive secularism and the “new” atheism. There is, at the moment, a highly organised attempt to drive religion out of the public sphere altogether. Anything and everything can be turned to its advantage by this campaign. So the consultation about schools, in the wake of the “Trojan Horse” events in Birmingham, led to a report focused on “fundamentalism” in Christian schools – as if that was the most important ideological danger facing the nation! Church schools are regularly accused of being socially selective if they have any religious criteria for admission, even if they also have criteria for serving the wider community in which they are set.

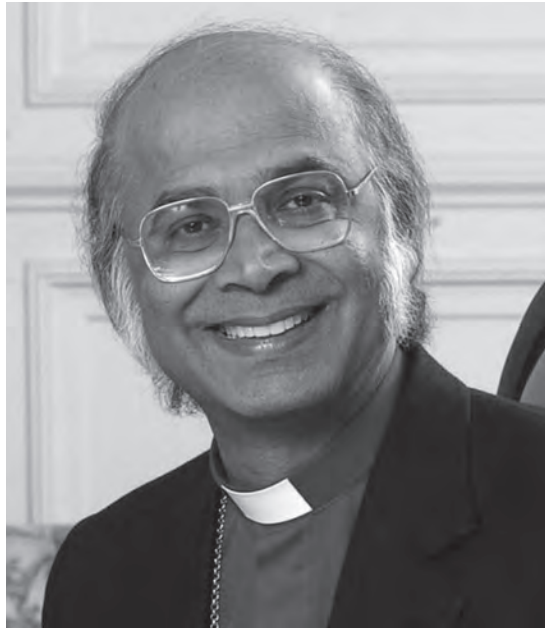
“There is, at the moment, a highly organised attempt to drive religion out of the public sphere altogether”

If churches (this does not seem to apply to people of other faiths) are to be service providers, for government or local authorities, their moral and spiritual integrity must be recognised and protected. The refusal to accept this is another attempt to force Christians on to the back foot. Despite a long tradition of acknowledging conscience, the failure of recent equality and other legislation to make room for conscience and the observance of faith at the work place and elsewhere is yet another feature of an attempted totalitarianism. But the spiritual will not be quenched. Efforts are continually made to redefine the spiritual to mean physical well-being or “mindfulness” or cultural activity such as music and poetry. But people still obstinately keep asking questions about the whereabouts of departed loved ones, the meaning and purpose of their

own lives, whether good will prevail over evil and whether we can know anything about the transcendent.

For these reasons, any kind of secular consensus will remain inherently unstable. This is, of course, an opportunity for the Church to show by word, sacrament and service that there are answers to ultimate human questions that are not, and cannot be, answered by the current scientism. For these reasons the Church, and

Christians, need to be equipped for a new era of apologetics in an unbelieving age.



There are, however, dangers in secular instability. It seems that the post-secular age is already upon us and that it is characterised, not by Christianity but by the *philosophia perennis*; that is, by the recurrent paganism which affirms the unity of all being and denies the vital biblical distinction between Creator and creature. It leads also to a rejection of any differences related to gender and, in the end, to the blurring of the boundaries between human and non-human.

Because we undoubtedly share many characteristics with animals (and even vegetables), it's argued that any claim to human distinctiveness is but “speciesism”. The monism of the new pagans leads also to obscuring the distinction between good and evil, light and darkness, the common good and personal fulfilment.

The Bible differs from other ancient religions of the East in holding that the Creator is immeasurably more than His creation; that He is personal but cannot be limited; that He is supremely intelligent, as evidenced by the intelligibility of the universe; and, above all, that He is good. In this, it also differs from the ancient paganisms of the West. Both East and West are coming together in this post-secular age, against the world view of the Bible and around the *philosophia perennis*, holding that all religions are but cultural and historical variations of this natural wisdom of the ages: that the divine is nothing more than a world-soul, and that we also are divine and can thus do anything, which intensifies this divinity.

Against this, the Bible offers a revealed religion which shows us that we are made in God's image and that this image is redeemed by him when corrupted by us. We are accountable to God as well as to one another. We can, indeed, partake of the divine nature, but only insofar as we respond to God's initiative in Jesus Christ, and in doing so

“The Bible offers a revealed religion which shows us that we are made in God’s image and that this image is redeemed by him when corrupted by us”

are incorporated into the new reality which arises out of his death and rising again – a reality which is referred to again and again as his Body. Christian divinisation is thus very different from its pagan counterpart.

One vulnerability of a post-secular age which we cannot overlook is whether it could lead to religious extremism. If people are looking not only for the spiritual within and a transcendent beyond but for a way of life, a charter of conduct and a community of belonging, might they turn to radical Islamism, especially as this is so well entrenched in our societies?

“One vulnerability of a post-secular age which we cannot overlook is whether it could lead to religious extremism”

This alerts us to the need for authentic corporate expression of the spiritual. The spiritual dimension is important to people and it often allows them to make sense of their own lives and to have some understanding of destiny. If this is left entirely to the individual, however, it will be stunted and may atrophy and die. We need one

another in this as in other areas of human experience; we need to learn from one another, to worship together and to bear witness together. Religion has nowadays become a bad word but it points to this solidarity of believers which belief needs if it is to survive and flourish.

Religion also points to the influence that awareness of the spiritual has had on most cultures and societies. Our laws, customs and values have usually been based on a spiritual vision of some kind. The secular claim that this is no longer needed because of democracy and the welfare state cannot be substantiated. In important areas of public policy regarding the human person, relationships, justice, conflict, the care of the poor etc, a spiritual and moral world view is still needed.

A post-secular world is full of opportunity for the Church and for Christians, but it also abounds in dangers for the human soul and for society at large. We should start engaging with it now in charity but also critically. ☸

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali is the Anglican bishop-emeritus of Rochester. He has both a Christian and a Muslim family background and is now president of the Oxford Centre for Training, Research, Advocacy and Dialogue.

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Book Reviews

It's Time for Newman

Newman on Vatican II by Ian Ker,
Oxford University Press, 167pp, £25.00

Thanks are due, surely, to “Donal, Elizabeth and Julie”, who persuaded Ian Ker to launch himself into print once more: the result is this excellent book.

The opening chapters deal with the continuing debate about Newman’s theological position, pre- and post-1845. Ker argues that Newman was hard to pigeon-hole in either the liberal or the conservative camp. This goes a long way to explain the volume of misunderstanding and opposition which arose then and still pervades his views. He was anti-rationalist and anti-latitudinarian, but that didn’t mean he was in any way obscurantist prior to his conversion. He valued both the pastoral commitment of vicars and, on the other hand, evangelical goodness. When he became a Catholic, he was neither liberal nor ultramontane – to the infurcation of many. In fact he represented the *via media* in both scenarios: he was neither Geneva nor Rome before his conversion, and was on the side of neither Döllinger nor Ward after.

Ker then turns to the question of the development of doctrine: the hermeneutic of change in continuity. For my money, this makes the book worth buying. There is a continuing debate that really Newman advocated a changing Church, quoting his famous phrase that “to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often”. Ker puts the phrase into context and demonstrates that Newman spent years honing his thoughts on the subject,



even from the time he was writing *Arians* in 1832. Christianity changes in order to remain the same, as it absorbs and differentiates by virtue of its inner dynamism: “Certain it is that the true faith never could come into contact with the heathen philosophies without exercising its right to arbitrate between them.” The seven tests which Newman supplies allows one to distinguish between true growth and corruption: the tests must be taken as a whole not piecemeal. For those who have trouble dealing with these, Ker analyses each test with reference to the stages in Newman’s own life.

The title says it all. This is primarily a work which rescues Vatican II from the clutches both of liberal commentators and of Lefebvrists – which may please neither. Newman himself was not in favour of committees and considered that Church councils occupied a place but not *the* place in Catholic ecclesiology. He would even call them “a dreary unlovely phenomenon”. His own bishop, who attended Vatican I, would more unctuously refer to “this august assembly”. Each council does not lead on to the next, so Vatican II cannot be seen as a precursor to Vatican III; rather, it explains and completes what went before.

The documents of Vatican II therefore represent change in continuity, not a programme for reform divorced from its connection with the living tradition. There is no rupture with the past, and those who talk of openness versus tradition have failed to understand the true nature of doctrinal development.

This also applies to the notion of religious freedom in the documents of Vatican II, to their notion of justice and peace, or the uniqueness of the Church in relation to non-Christian religions, or the role of the individual conscience in relation to the teaching of the Church. Ker uses the example of Callista, in Newman’s novel of that name, in her journey from paganism to Christianity. I had never read the novel from the psychological angle – much preferring, I will admit, Cardinal Wiseman’s *Fabiola* for the story element (which is, admittedly more Georgette Heyer than Edward Gibbon). Newman in fact worked painstakingly on the history and the local topography – so with Ker’s strong endorsement I will gladly re-appraise it.

Ker makes the point about the rise of ecclesial communities which have always existed in the Church – from the time of St Antony the Great to that of St Philip Neri’s Oratory. They are part of that dynamism which flourishes in private devotions, and in the practice of frequent Confession, that Newman as an Anglican called “the life of the parochial charge”.

To forget the charismatic element, or perversely to overemphasise it, leads inevitably to enthusiasm – that was the experience of Methodism in the 18th century and the cause of the rise of Pentecostal sects in the 19th. It can also be seen to explain the opposition to private devotions by certain liturgists (who have perhaps not fully absorbed *Sacrosanctum Concilium*). It should be remembered that the title of Newman’s *Rambler* article was “On Consulting the Faithful”, not the hierarchy or the laity.

We tend to forget that there has always been one Church, within which there is governance: all the parts are indispensable, and no one part should presume on its position. This applies whether vaunting charisms as the exclusive possession of certain chosen souls or seeking some sort of acceptable theological correctness: all are gathered to interact within the one body by the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Pondering Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, Arguello decided to assume that God did not exist and to live accordingly”

Newman would talk of “a vast assemblage of human beings with wilful intellects and wild passions, brought together into one by the beauty and the majesty of a Superhuman Power”. Pope Francis would remind us that the Holy Spirit is “the true provider and guarantor of true unity and harmony in the Church”. Ker recalls that it was the voice of a youngster in the crowd at Milan (not a cleric) which resulted in Ambrose being consecrated its bishop.

Newman believed in a creative conflict between authority and theological investigation – between freedom and the good of the whole community. Vatican II bore all the marks of that tension – especially in *Gaudium et Spes* with phrases like “the autonomy of earthly affairs” and “the signs of the times”, which we see surface in such intercessions as “Teach us to work for the good of all, whether the time is right or not”. Unfortunately, with unqualified expressions thrown about, there were unintended consequences, with which the Church has been wrestling ever since. The disputes have been as much about what Vatican II did *not* say as about what it did say.

With the passage of years we have seen a gradual return to that rather static “conformism” that issues guidance and pastoral plans, yet at the same time allows a “conscientious dissent” to flourish. It looks like a case of hedging one’s bets and hoping that out of the process will emerge a new vision of the Church, neatly packaged with something to please everyone.

In these islands we have in Blessed John Henry Newman one whose time has surely come. He faced up to contemporary theological problems and offered ways to analyse and deal with many of those that are now facing us. Ker is of the opinion that, once canonised, Newman should take his place as a Doctor of the Church, just as St Robert Bellarmine did at the time of the Counter-Reformation.

James Tolhurst

A Man On A Mission

The Kerygma: in the Shantytown with the Poor by Kiko Arguello, Ignatius Press, 151pp, £9.99

This is not a well-written book, but it tells an interesting and possibly important story. I use “possibly” because the whole venture is still in its early stages – Kiko Arguello is the founder of the Neocatechumenate, one of the New Movements in the Church. The importance and significance of these movements is only just beginning to be made clear: it’s all a work in progress. It seems likely that the “Neocats” are going to be of great value in the re-evangelisation of Europe, so it is interesting to read about how this particular movement began.

It’s an odd story, and oddly written. Arguello was brought up as a Catholic in a good family, with regular Mass attendance. But in the Spain of the late 1950s it was easy to become cynical about the faith and especially so when working in the world of art/theatre/TV, where people seemed to be asking deep and exciting questions that parents and a heavily Catholic establishment seemed unable to answer.

Pondering Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, Arguello decided to assume that God did not exist and to live accordingly: “Heaven was closed for me; it was as if an enormous slab of cement formed on top of me and life began to be very hard.” He pondered suicide – even though it was at this time (1959) that his work as an artist was prospering and he won a major national award for painting, becoming briefly a celebrity on TV and in the press.

Then, as he described it, through reading, and pondering “beauty, art, water, flowers, trees...” something began to happen: “God began to appear on the horizon, it was a faint light, like hope.” And thus began a journey which included a retreat in a desert, some work as a catechist, military service and then, back in Spain, an encounter with people living in a shanty town. From this last



experience emerged what was to be his life’s work – a new form of evangelisation, living with the shanty-dwellers, caring for disabled people abandoned by others, teaching, and sharing the faith.

Some of this makes for moving reading: the archbishop arriving somewhat warily to see the work, and the group singing psalms with him; a local church made available for regular Masses; the work spreading to Italy and specifically to a poor area on the outskirts of Rome.

And through all this came the emergence of the idea of a new *Kerygma*, a new way of proclaiming the Gospel to people who, living in a culture formed by centuries of Christianity, had nevertheless lost all effective contact with the Church. Essentially, this involved offering a new form of evangelisation, starting with basic catechesis while recognising that baptism had already occurred and that what was needed was a sort of profound awakening of something already offered by God.

It’s deep stuff but also straightforward Catholicism, and the book is both readable and challenging. But I’d have liked more – a lot more – structured presentation of information: names, dates, descriptions of specific activities. It’s all much too anecdotal, sometimes absurdly so, with random casual references to exciting developments, reporting of various conversations, and sudden abandonment of a narrative in favour of generalised commentary.

However, this book will introduce the



Book Reviews continued

Neocatechumenate to a readership in the wider Church: despite its poor style, it is an easy read and has an appealing message of joy and encouragement. Given the steady growth of this movement, its deep grounding in prayer and sacrifice, its passionate devotion to Christ, and its sense of mission with and through the Church, we can expect good things over the next years. This book, with its rather breathless pace and its enthusiasm, is the voice of a man on a mission.

Joanna Bogle

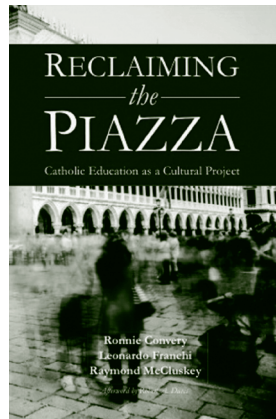
A Worthy Project – But for a Church in Crisis?

Reclaiming the Piazza by Ronnie Convery, Leonardo Franchi, and Raymond McCluskey, Gracewing, 180pp, £12.99

I am going to quote at length what the authors state at the beginning about the origins of this book and its purpose:

The book was born on a flight to Rome in 2010 when two of the authors, Ronnie Convery and Leonardo Franchi, were travelling to the bi-annual social communications conference in the University of the Holy Cross in Rome. During the flight, they had a long conversation about the need to rethink the way in which Catholic education was conceptualised in the light of Benedict XV's recent papal interventions on the subject.

In particular, they wondered what these rich papal insights could offer contemporary Catholic educators. Given that they were travelling to Italy, the discussion soon focused on the Church in Italy's innovative Progetto Culturale [cultural project], an initiative which is not well known beyond the borders of Italy. Was it possible, they asked, for the Progetto to act as a model, or prototype, for the Church's engagement with the wider world? If so, did it follow that the Progetto could refresh the wider Church's understanding of Catholic education?



The initial answer was yes but it would be necessary to understand the Progetto from the inside before coming to a more informed position. Over the next two years, Ronnie, Leonardo and Raymond McCluskey made several trips to Rome to find out more about the Progetto. While there is a substantial body of writing – including a fine website – on the working of the Progetto, we believe that this book offers the first English language commentary on its potential for other cultures.

I believe that final comment is correct: this is the first and only English language commentary on the project. Certainly, I know of no other plan to produce a commentary. Anyone, therefore, who wants to find out about the Progetto will find this book invaluable. The book has a subtitle that is relevant: “Catholic Education as a Cultural Project”. The authors are all Scotsmen with an academic “education” background. The book carries a foreword from His Grace the Archbishop of Glasgow. The educational system in Scotland is different from that of England and Wales, but, since the authors do not make detailed references to anything relevant only to that system, that does not matter to readers south of the border.

The book is at its best, as is often the case with books on education, when it is most specific. It was pleasing to see the recommendations that pupils should read Dante (“the fifth gospel”), study Catholic art, and listen to the many masterpieces of music which are Catholic. I have always found it disappointing when Catholic schools have not a single

example of the world's great art on their walls, when they offer for their pupils' reading some appalling modern “literature” and, for their listening, only banal commercial music.

And what is the relevance of this book? We all know that the Catholic Church in Britain and worldwide is in a state of crisis and is declining, with fewer Catholics and fewer priests. In Britain, and elsewhere, the law permits abortion and homosexual “marriages” and promotes immoral sex education while attacking genuine religious education. At the recent synod, the most grotesque contradictions to beliefs held since apostolic times were put forward by bishops and cardinals, causing great scandal to the laity. The Catholic Church in Scotland has gone through several painful and highly publicised scandals, some at the highest levels.

One has to say that the book shows scant awareness of the crisis in the Church; still less does it suggest what to do about it. There is – certainly in England – widespread criticism of school pupils' lack of knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith and, indeed, ignorance of basic doctrines. The number of pupils who practise the faith after they leave school is constantly declining. In most dioceses, vocations are only a small percentage of what they were before the Second Vatican Council. More and more young Catholics are living in sin, as it used to be called. There are still cases of child abuse in the Church and these are, apparently, so bad in England and Wales that the Catholic Church will not even publish detailed statistics but keeps them secret.

It may be objected that it is not the aim of the book to alleviate any of these problems in the Church – quite. It is well known how St Ignatius of Loyola castigated those priests at the University of Paris who sat in academic isolation when there were souls to be saved outside. Mention of that great saint brings to mind what he said about change: he sharply cautioned against changing law – any law – even when some improvement is possible, unless

“Both Rosmini and Newman are too complex to be understood simply in terms of ecclesiastical politics”

there is some “urgent necessity or substantial and obvious benefit”, since “the mere fact of change in law itself can be adverse to the public welfare and lessen the restraining power of the law”. Schools have been beleaguered by innovations. Would that modern politicians and church bureaucrats heeded this warning!

Eric Hester

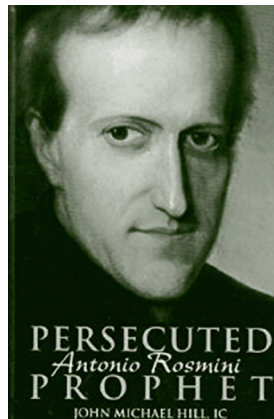
How ‘Progressive’ was Rosmini?

Antonio Rosmini: Persecuted Prophet by John Michael Hill IC, Gracewing, 287pp, £20.00, hardback

In his native Italy, Antonio Rosmini is a celebrated national figure, recognised by secular as well as religious institutions as one of the truly notable thinkers of the 19th century. In England, however, he is comparatively unknown. This is all the more regrettable since the Order of Charity (better known as the Rosminians), which he founded, played an important part in the “Second Spring” revival of Catholicism in this country during the Victorian period.

One could single out Rosmini’s disciple Luigi Gentili, who as well as being an indefatigable apostle of the faith between his arrival in London in 1835 and his death in 1848, introduced to this country the Roman collar, May devotions, public processions of the Blessed Sacrament, the *Quarant’ Ore* devotion, the use of pious medals and scapulars and many other Italianate practices unheard of in the sober days of Bishop Challoner and the vicars apostolic. But while Gentili stands out for his energy and zeal, other Rosminians too played a significant part in re-establishing the English Church on solid foundations, as Fr Nicholas Schofield’s recent biography of William Lockhart (also published by Gracewing) served to remind us.

Now Fr John Michael Hill, himself a Rosminian, has published this short introduction to his founder’s life and times. Those times were certainly interesting ones. Born shortly after the



French Revolution, in a part of northern Italy then administered by the Austrian Empire, Rosmini’s life would be shaped by the political and religious upheavals of 19th-century Europe. A devout and brilliant young man, ordained priest in 1821, he met Pope Pius VII in 1823 and was encouraged by the Sovereign Pontiff to work on the renewal of philosophy. Close – but not always easy – relations with the popes marked the rest of Rosmini’s life: he was nearly made a cardinal but also had his works condemned by Pius IX, and, posthumously, by Leo XIII. He also involved himself in political controversy (he was a supporter of Italian unification, while striving to retain a place for the temporal power of the popes), and ecclesiastical debate (it was largely his theological duels with the powerful Jesuit order which resulted in the condemnation of certain of his works and theses).

At the same time Rosmini cultivated an intense spiritual life, one of the fruits of which is his shortest but perhaps most profound work, *The Maxims of Christian Perfection*. These maxims can be summarised as (1) never to assume any external work without some positive manifestation of God’s will (the principle of passivity), and (2) at any clear sign from God, to undertake immediately the work he wills, putting aside any personal preference or repugnance (the principle of indifference). Rosmini’s personal holiness was recognised by the Church in solemn form when he was beatified in 2007.

Fr Hill gives us a very readable introduction to a man he clearly and understandably admires. But the

author’s enthusiasms occasionally mar the work. Not content with helping us to understand Rosmini in his own historical context, Fr Hill would have us see him as a “prophet” of the Second Vatican Council (understood in a certain way) and the contemporary Church. Rosmini must, therefore, be consistently presented as a “progressive” hero, whose life’s work was continually being foiled by ecclesiastical and political reactionaries. Here, English readers may be reminded of Rosmini’s great contemporary, John Henry Newman, whose biographers have not infrequently treated him in a similar way. In truth, both Rosmini and Newman are too complex to be understood simply in terms of ecclesiastical politics, and their writings are more subtle than those who wish to make use of them often allow.

For example, writing of Rosmini’s book *The Five Wounds of the Church*, in which Rosmini describes the obstacles an exclusively Latin liturgy can pose for effective evangelisation, Fr Hill not only proposes his hero as an early proponent of the vernacular Mass, but goes on to add (in a rather sly footnote) that Rosmini would also have been opposed to “the deliberate use of archaic language” of which “the new vernacular translations of the Mass are an example”.

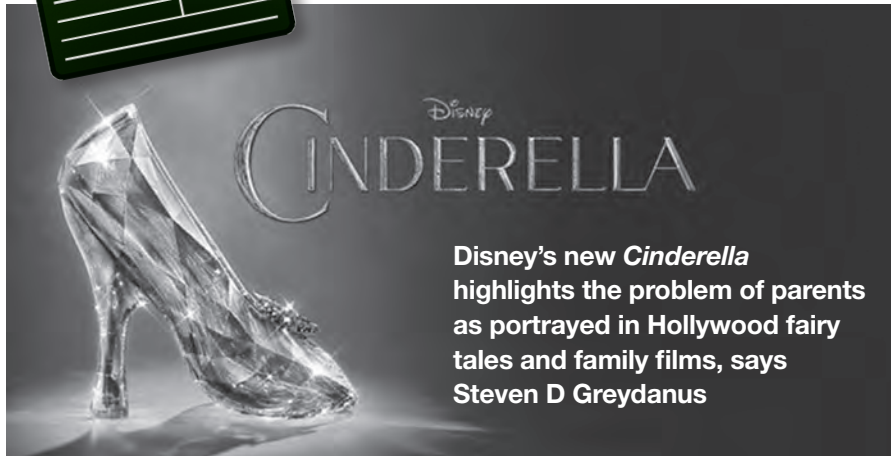
However, when we actually read the text of *The Five Wounds*, we find there that Rosmini concludes: “Putting the sacred rites into the vernacular would induce greater problems than the remedies imposed,” and would be “a cure worse than the disease”. Moreover, he goes on to praise the ancient Latin orations for giving “an other-worldly, superhuman atmosphere through their sense of age and mystery”, which rather suggests that he was neither as favourable towards a vernacular Mass, nor as opposed to the use of “archaic language”, as Fr Hill so confidently declares.

Such flaws aside, many will enjoy this well-produced and competent little work. One day, perhaps, Rosmini will get the English biography he truly deserves.

Richard Whinder



Film Review



Disney's new live-action *Cinderella* opens with a scenario that has become vanishingly rare in Hollywood fairy tales and other family entertainment these days: a happy, intact family.

It doesn't last, of course. Poor Cinderella is bereaved of her mother while still a child, and of her father as a young lady, and goes on to suffer a great deal from her cruel stepmother and stepsisters.

Still, the fact that the filmmakers bothered to establish a baseline of an idyllic family – a family essentially free of internal conflict, if not tragic external circumstances and unfortunate decisions – along with Prince Charming's healthy relationship with his own father makes for a more pro-family picture than the vast majority of recent Hollywood fairy tales and family films.

Cinderella comes by its orphaned heroine and cruel stepmother themes honestly, from traditional source material reflecting patterns common in fairy-tale literature. Dark and disturbing elements have always been a part of the European fairy-tale tradition, and, despite the 19th-century tendency toward sanitising fairy tales for children, generations of children have absorbed from fairy tales a picture of the world that is both tragic and heroic.

On the other hand, the fairy-tale tradition also includes examples of happier parent-child relationships, for example in the tale of *Sleeping Beauty* as told by Charles Perrault and the

Brothers Grimm and honoured in the 1959 animated Disney version, with Aurora's loving, doting father.

In the current strain of dark, revisionist Hollywood fairy tales, positive parental stereotypes are virtually unheard of. In particular, the father-daughter relationship has been seen solely through a dark lens, while mothers have been almost universally absent, either actually or functionally.

For example, Aurora's loving father was transformed in last year's *Maleficent* into a monstrous villain who brutally mutilates innocent Maleficent, hacking off her wings in what amounts to a metaphorical rape.

In Catherine Hardwicke's *Red Riding Hood*, the heroine's father is a literal monster, a bloodthirsty werewolf whom the heroine herself must ultimately slay. (*Red Riding Hood* is also notable for its repellent depiction of Catholicism, with its odious monster-hunting cleric and obsequious parish priest.)

The Snow White movie *Mirror Mirror* offered a more redemptive twist on the same theme: Snow's father is transformed into a menacing dragon who nearly kills her, but Snow, using her father's own dagger, cuts a magical chain around its neck, freeing him to love her again.

The corresponding character in that same year's *Snow White and the Huntsman* isn't so lucky: he's stabbed to death before his daughter's eyes by

the evil Queen on their wedding night. The heroine of Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* likewise loses her sympathetic, playful father in the first act (her mother is less sympathetic). At least these fathers are only dead, not villains or monsters.

The situation is also bleak in the animation world. Almost the only notable example of a major Hollywood animated film in the last decade centrally about a happy, intact family with sympathetic, present parents is the Pixar fairy tale *Brave*.

Just as remarkably, *Brave* focuses on the mother-daughter relationship – and while it's a conflicted relationship, and the mother is transformed into an increasingly feral bear, it's ultimately sympathetic to both characters' points of view. (Not coincidentally, *Brave* was the brainchild of a female filmmaker, Brenda Chapman.)

Both of the last two Disney fairy tales, *Tangled* and *Frozen*, depict heroines whose parents vanish from their lives in the first act. Rapunzel in *Tangled* never knows her parents, having been kidnapped as a baby. That's true to the fairy tale, and at least the parents, though they never speak and remain blank archetypes even after being reunited with their daughter at the climax, are sympathetic figures.

Frozen, on the other hand, offers a more mixed picture. Elsa and Anna's parents, who die while the girls are young, are loving and well-meaning, but their misguided parenting strategy regarding Elsa's powers ruins both daughters' lives. Misunderstanding the guidance of a magical adviser, they teach Elsa to fear and suppress who she is – “conceal, don't feel” – effectively closeting her differentness from a world of fear and hate.

The burden of unreasonable parental expectations on misunderstood offspring is a far more notable theme in other cartoons, such as DreamWorks' popular *How to Train Your Dragon*. Hiccup's father, Stoick the Vast,

“Cinderella comes by its orphaned heroine and cruel stepmother themes honestly, from traditional source material reflecting patterns common in fairy-tale literature”

embodies one of the most familiar negative paternal archetypes: the overbearing, authoritarian father who unfairly expects his offspring to conform to arbitrary or misguided norms, though by the end he has been humbled and repents of his oppressive attitude.

This is a familiar stereotype going back to Ariel's father King Triton in *The Little Mermaid* and Mr Darling in *Peter Pan*. On the other hand, in the past such negative paternal types were offset by positive examples, such as heroic Pongo in *101 Dalmatians* (1961) and Aurora's father in *Sleeping Beauty*. Positive father figures in recent animated films have become vanishingly rare.

Another paternal stereotype common in animated films is the ridiculous father who is pathetic, bumbling and unable to care for his offspring, if not needing to be cared for himself. Older examples include the fathers of Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, Jasmine in *Aladdin* and Jane in *Tarzan*.

Recent examples include the buffoonish father voiced by Nicolas Cage in

DreamWorks' *The Croods* and the truly odious, cretinous father of Winnie in last year's *The Boxtrolls* from Laika – one of the very few animated fathers who isn't offered even a fig leaf of redemption in the last act. *The Boxtrolls* also includes two more sympathetic father figures: one insane and tragic, the other caring but timid and weak.

As bad as most of these family-film fathers are, in a sense the mothers fare worse. Whether the fathers are good, bad, indifferent or absent, they matter as characters far more than the mothers, who are overwhelmingly absent, either actually or functionally. In the world of contemporary Hollywood family films, Father knows worst, yet it's still largely a man's world.

Winnie in *The Boxtrolls* has a mother who's just as useless as her father, but the mother's uselessness is dramatically and emotionally irrelevant. There's a lot of hand-wringing about what a father is supposed to be, but none about what a mother is supposed to be.

Literally or functionally absent mothers are also found in *Maleficent*, *How to*

Train Your Dragon, *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*, *Kung Fu Panda* and many others. (Hiccup's mother returns in last year's *How to Train Your Dragon 2*, but her reasons for missing the first two decades of her son's life are not exactly a tribute to maternal love.)

Individually, none of these portraits of parental failure is particularly troubling. Cumulatively, in the absence of compelling positive parental figures, they add up to a disturbing composite picture.

There are good reasons for introducing parent-child conflict into family films, depriving child protagonists of a parental safety net, depicting single-parent households, etc. There's no good reason that positive depictions of healthy, intact families in family films should be an endangered species.

Steven D Greydanus is film critic for the National Catholic Register and creator of DecentFilms.com.

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"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph 4:15)

Hazel McCann (1933-2015)



Many in *Faith* knew Hazel McCann, who died in March. A committed supporter of the movement for many years, she helped run the Folkestone youth group and was sacristan at *Faith* summer sessions.

Born on the 27 October 1933 in London, Hazel was the only child of her devoted parents, Nata (Julie) and Ronald Curtis. Remarkably, in view of her later ministry at Our Lady Help of Christians Church, Folkestone, they had married on 24 May, the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians. Although not particularly religious, her parents had her baptised in 1934, on 22 July, the feast of St Mary Magdalen.

Evacuated from London as soon as war broke out in 1939, Hazel had various homes as an evacuee. The turning point in her life came when she was sent to school at St Gilda's convent in Chard, Somerset, run by the Sisters of Christian Instruction (the St Gilda's sisters). Here she discovered Jesus Christ and his Church. She could see the tabernacle lamp burning in the church from her dorm; her lifelong love of Jesus in the Eucharist had begun. After some negotiations with her parents she was received into the church as a teenager and there began a life of dedication to Our Lord.

Returning to London, she completed sixth-form studies at Coloma Convent, Croydon, and after a brief stint in an office trained to be a teacher, commencing a lifelong ministry to young people. She completed a degree in English at King's College London as a mature student, and then returned to teaching. She met her husband, Jim McCann, also a teacher, and they were married in 1969. Marrying late in life they were surprised and overjoyed by the arrival of two children in quick succession: Christina Jane in 1970 and Madeleine Louise in 1971. A new stage of devoted motherhood began, where all her commitment, creativity, religious and educational experience combined in creating a loving family home with a distinctly Christian ethos. From carefully chosen prayer books and collecting flowers to put in front of statues, to trips to Aylesford Priory and quiet early morning Masses on holiday, the love of God was woven into the fabric of their everyday lives.

Another turning point came in 1979 when the family moved to Folkestone into the parish of Our Lady Help of Christians and became involved in parish life. In 1984, Fr Roger Nesbitt was appointed parish priest and a deep friendship and fruitful co-operation began. Fr Nesbitt started a youth ministry which benefited many, including Hazel's children.

As the children grew up, her work in the parish developed. Always ready to help with practical tasks like cleaning, sorting and arranging, she also took on increasing responsibility for the youth group and the catechesis of children and young people. Her gifts and experience were particularly valuable in

the youth ministry and in parish catechesis, work to which she became dedicated. She also brought communion to the sick and housebound, a work which was very important to her, and took on the role of parish sacristan, a welcoming face for crowds of altar servers (and their younger siblings, the "pre-servers" who were allowed to help clear the sanctuary after Mass!). All this work brought her into contact with many people at both the centre and the fringes of parish life, and through it she exercised her characteristic gift for friendship – becoming for some like a sister or mother. The best of mothers to her children, she also quietly lived out a Marian vocation of spiritual motherhood.

Through Fr Nesbitt she came into contact with the theology of Edward Holloway and the work of the *Faith* movement, becoming a committed supporter, practically and spiritually. She befriended and encouraged many of its members, acting as sacristan at the Summer Session (and in pre-Woldingham days preparing vestments, cottas and even a portable tabernacle!) For years she also helped proofread this magazine.

Hazel was practical, hard-working, and unassuming. Her work flowed from an unshakeable faith, a contagious fire that once lit in childhood never went out. Sustained by prayer, especially before the Blessed Sacrament and in the Divine Office of the Church, and by the sacramental life, she was immersed in theology, particularly spiritual and mystical theology; she also retained her love of literature.

The late 1990s and early 2000s brought significant change: the arrival of grandchildren, Madeleine's entrance into religious life and Jim's death from pancreatic cancer. A deep friendship developed with Madeleine's new family, the sisters at St Cecilia's Abbey, Ryde, on the Isle of Wight. Despite deteriorating osteoarthritis, much of her work at church went on and she continued to work as a sacristan until she fell seriously ill in early 2012. Although she made a full recovery from this illness, she was no longer able to walk and moved into a residential care home, just outside Folkestone.

In the spring of 2013 a room became available at Villa Maria, run by the Marist Sisters in Hythe, Kent. Here, though no longer even able to stand, she benefited from being part of the spiritual community, attending Mass and prayers in the chapel in a wheelchair. She celebrated a fantastic 80th birthday here with close friends and family. She retained all her other faculties, never complained, and remained a strong and independent spirit, right until the last.

Her final illness was sudden and brief. Admitted to hospital in the early hours of 3 March, she was anointed that evening. She died peacefully the following afternoon, one daughter praying at her bedside, the other praying at St Cecilia's Abbey. Her funeral was at Our Lady Help of Christians Church on 27 March and she was interred next to her mother in the churchyard of St Mary and St Eanswythe (a local Folkestone saint to whom Hazel had devotion), on a site where Christian worship has been offered since AD 630. ☦

Deo Gratias! May she rest in peace.

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