DOMINICANA

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DOMINICANA

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Dominicana is a semi-annual journal of theology, philosophy, and culture published by the Dominican Student Brothers of the Province of St. Joseph. Founded in 1916 at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC, the journal originally ran until 1968, and was refounded in 2011.

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ARGUMENT

Of making many books there is no end," says Qoheleth, and the perpetual proliferation of periodicals is a case in point. Why add another to the newsstands of the world? Ninety-five years ago, our predecessors at the Dominican House of Studies undertook an ambitious, not to say reckless, new project: the publication of a journal produced by the student brothers in formation aimed at communicating the truths of the faith that they had mined through laborious study and polished to crystalline luster with patient contemplation. The dedicatory remarks with which they simultaneously declared their purpose and challenged themselves to rise to greater heights are worth reproducing here in full:

> Recognizing that journalism has become an important factor in the propagation of Christian truth, and inspired by the traditions of an Order ever zealous for the written word, whose members have not infrequently immortalized their names in the pages of Catholic literature, the Novices of the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, D.C., urged on by the wishes of their Reverend Superiors, in order to fit themselves for this particular and important branch of apostolic labor, have decided to issue a Quarterly.
>
> In doing so, however, they are well aware how futile would be even their best efforts if not aided by the all powerful force of prayer; accordingly before attempting to lay even the foundation stones of this new enterprise, they humbly dedicate their labors to JESUS, MARY, JOSEPH and DOMINIC, beseeching at the same time the aid and protection of these heavenly patrons.

Ten years later, a promising student brother named Br. Walter Farrell, O.P. (who would go on to found *The Thomist* in 1939) wrote a brief introductory note celebrating the growth of the journal, in which he judiciously noted that, having quoted these same lines, "the dedication and petition for assistance given above were more than the spontaneous outburst of humility; they were the fruit of a real necessity."

Nor were these humble prayers without effect. Writing in 1941 on the occasion of *Dominicana*'s twenty-fifth anniversary, the editors joyfully re-dedicated the journal to the protection of those same four illustrious patrons, giving thanks for the many blessings bestowed upon the fledgling efforts of so many Dominican students.

With great regret, the House of Studies said farewell to *Dominicana* in 1968, after fifty-three years of publication. This year, the student brothers at the House of Studies decided to restore the journal, publishing a first issue in the Spring of 2011. The volume you are currently reading is the fruition of our communal desire to engage our contemporaries with the same intellectual rigor, energy, and creativity that our predecessors displayed, adapting their approaches to the needs and exigencies of our times.

Dominicana is a journal of ideas, not as purely abstract entities, but as realities lived and encountered in the light of contemplation. The content of the journal wells out of the heart of our charism, which is as much a mode of seeing as it is a mode of being; to be formed as a Dominican is to learn to see God by seeing the world point toward Him, and to share the fruit of that vision with those whom we meet. Thus *Dominicana* is one aspect of our effort to live the motto of our Order: *contemplari et contemplata aliis tradere*—to contemplate and to hand on to others the fruits of contemplation.

That being said, neither the editors nor the contributors claim professional expertise or theological mastery at our crafts. As students, we wrestle with ideas rather like Jacob strove with the angel at Jabbok, hoping that the long struggle will bring us some new vision of the face of God, however haltingly we may express it. An editorial board of priests has graciously agreed to review the articles contained herein, scouring them for relativism, laxism, rigorism,

proportionalism, rubricism, and the other manifold woes that afflict theological writing. All errors remain our own.

If you enjoy what you find in these pages, we invite you to subscribe, either online at www.dominicanablog.com/journal or by check (payable to "Dominican Studentate") mailed to: *Dominicana* editor, 487 Michigan Ave NE, Washington, D.C. 20017. For individuals, subscriptions are $8/yr for online access or $15/yr for the print journal. Priories and convents may subscribe to the print journal for $20/yr, and institutions may subscribe for $25/yr. *Dominicana* publishes semi-annually, in the Winter and the Summer.

Dominicana is, as always, published *permissu superiorum*. We would especially like to thank Fr. Joseph Alobaidi, Master of Students, and his assistants, Fr. Andrew Hofer and Fr. John Baptist Ku for their enthusiasm and support as the student brothers undertake this great endeavor. We also thank the members of our editorial board for taking the time to review and comment on the articles.

"Of making many books there is no end," says Qoheleth. But what lover can keep silent about his love? Through the gracious intercession of our patrons, may we imitate the Bride in the Song of Songs, endlessly searching the highways and byways of the world for the Beloved, handing on to others the glimpses we catch of him along the way.

Br. Innocent Smith, O.P., Editor
Br. Gabriel Torretta, O.P., Associate Editor

OUR CONSCIENCES, OUR SELVES

Albert Duggan, O.P.

Many have come to regard freedom of conscience as a threat to individual rights. This has played itself out most recently in the debate over the implementation of federal health-care reform legislation that would require most private health-insurance plans to cover artificial contraception and sterilization procedures, since federal guidelines classify them as essential "preventive services" for women. What is most worrisome is that there is little allowance made for insurers and health-care institutions to refuse to offer such services on moral or religious grounds.

This case calls forth the broader question of conscience and the extent to which individuals and organizations should be allowed to refuse to offer services that violate their consciences. These days, this question seems to be debated most vigorously in the area of health care, but it is relevant to many other professions as well. Those opposed to protections for conscientious objection argue that when health-care providers refuse to offer a service or procedure on moral grounds (e.g., a physician who refuses to refer a patient for an elective hysterectomy, or a pharmacist who refuses to fill a prescription for emergency contraception), they deny women their "right" to such services.

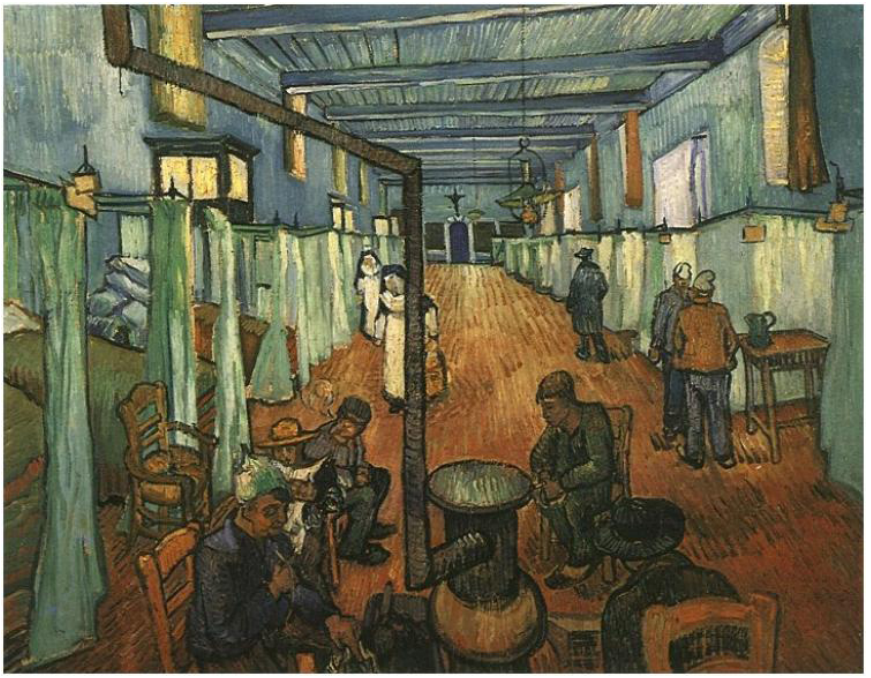
It is true that a health-care worker's moral objection can pose a barrier to a patient accessing these services. But why is it suggested that one person's conscience must give way in deference to another's rights? Part of the answer may rest with a mistaken understanding of what conscience is and why it cannot simply be "set aside" when it poses an inconvenience. So let us step back from the particulars of the current debate and take a good, hard look at what conscience is, and why it should be regarded as inviolable.

A certain amount of suspicion surrounding conscience is understandable. Ever since the 1940 debut of Disney's animated movie *Pinocchio*, the caricature of conscience as a nagging, moralistic voice, coming from the outside and constraining individual freedom, is nearly impossible to shake. Although most would grant that someone's conscience generally makes him "do the right thing," there remains a deep-seated worry that it does so only by imposing moral laws on him from the outside. Put another way, conscience expresses someone else's will (God's? the Church's?), not one's own.

In a culture where this conception of conscience predominates, it is no wonder that people become suspicious when an appeal to conscience is made. An individual's conscience is seen as little more than a covert agent for the Church's moral teaching, and so honoring a person's conscientious refusal to provide a certain service to someone else unjustly extends the Church's grasp to those who might not care for her influence. A Catholic physician's refusal to prescribe birth-control pills, for example, is seen as the Church's intrusion into the physician-patient relationship—an apparently troubling prospect, especially when the patient is not Catholic.

It is unfortunate that the opponents of conscientious objection would portray it this way. Such an account of conscience is alien to the thought of St. Thomas. His account of the Christian moral life does not give precedence to moral laws and commandments, though these have an important place. Rather, he begins with the *interior* principles of action, most notably the human faculties of intellect and will, which show us to be made after the image and likeness of God. In fact, nowhere does St. Thomas have a treatise on something called "conscience," although its existence is implied in his discussion of what goes into making a free, human act, and it also plays a supporting role in his treatise on prudence, the virtue that governs our practical reason.

If we called upon St. Thomas to explain why conscience must be respected, he would probably not appeal immediately to the importance of following the moral law, but would first consider the special dignity and integrity of a *human act*. A human act is a product of intellect and will, an exercise of our special God-given powers of



Vincent Van Gogh - Ward in the Hospital in Arles

knowing and loving. As such, our actions reflect who we are on a deep level.

A moral action, on St. Thomas' account, is not simply a matter of conforming to a moral law. This is necessary, but not sufficient. A moral action entails doing something good, for the right reasons, under the right circumstances. On his account, a person's conscience is what alerts him to the fact that something about a proposed course of action doesn't measure up: either the action is wrong in and of itself, or it is being done for the wrong reasons, or the circumstances are inappropriate.

Given all of this, we can begin to see why conscience must be treated as inviolable. The opposing argument goes something like this: "The law says I have a right to do such-and-such. You don't approve of my doing this, so you're appealing to *your* conscience to tell *me* what I can and can't do." But this is a mistaken description of what conscience does. One person's conscience cannot impose itself

directly on the will of another. Its proper role is to evaluate one's *own* actions.

In the case where a health-care worker refuses to provide a controversial service (e.g., sterilization), his conscience is making a judgment about his own participation in the action. A doctor who refuses to perform this procedure (or even to refer a patient to another doctor who would perform it) is in essence saying that *his own* action would be immoral, because it would contribute to something he knows to be wrong.

Even if someone else would be ultimately responsible for the action, he himself cannot cooperate with it, because it would imply approval of (or at least indifference toward) something that he considers to be seriously wrong. While he recognizes that his refusal might not necessarily prevent the action from going forward, he himself refuses to cooperate, because only then can he rest assured that what he has done (or *not* done, as the case may be) accords with God's law and is at the same time rooted in his own deepest self.

Consequently, upholding the primacy of conscience is no small matter. A society that forces its citizens to set aside their consciences for the convenience of others is, not to put too fine a point on it, tending toward a subtle form of dehumanization. Under the guise of protecting the supposed rights of some, it is effacing the dignity of others, preventing them from acting in accord with their true selves.

Albert Duggan entered the Order of Preachers in 2007. God willing, he will be ordained to the diaconate in March 2012.



Eugene Delacroix -
A Mortally Wounded Brigand Quenches His Thirst

SAINTS, CRIMINALS, AND THE BLOOD

Raymund Snyder, O.P.

St. Therese of Lisieux is renowned as a model of child-like innocence, so it may seem surprising that the first person to convert through her potent intercession, Henri Pranzini, was a criminal sentenced to death. St. Catherine of Siena likewise attended to three criminals sentenced to the same fate and by her fervent prayer obtained their conversion. One of these criminals, Niccolo di Toldo, she even accompanied up the execution scaffold, catching his head in her hands as it was cut from his body, rejoicing to see her white scapular spattered with his blood.

Why did Therese, the "Doctor of the Little Way" and light of purity and innocence, adopt as her first spiritual "child" a man whose sins were so great she could only mention them indirectly as "some horrible crimes"? And likewise, why did Catherine, the Seraphic virgin, take such an interest in criminals that she even rejoiced in di Toldo's blood? Either of these accounts seems unlikely enough on its own, so why do we find virtually the same experience shared by these two *doctrices* of the Church?

Saints and Sinners

Besides their graphic nature, what makes us most uncomfortable about these accounts of conversion is the interest our two saints took in their respective criminals. They were absolutely devoted to these men and threw their entire selves into interceding for them. It is shocking, perhaps, to find that Therese is not the property of the pious, or that Catherine's mystical prayer is not directed solely to spiritual doctrine. Their compassion no doubt arose primarily from divine charity, but I would like to focus on the other major source of their compassion: the recognition of their own sinfulness.

Although both of these women lived a devout life from their youth,

they did not see a chasm between themselves and their sinful spiritual children. Catherine regarded herself as "a miserable sinner." In one of her visions, the Lord gave St. Mary Magdalene to Catherine as a sort of mother. Her confessor, Bl. Raymund of Capua, remarks that in response to this gift, Catherine could only say that "a sinner had been given as daughter to another who had also once been a sinner." Catherine saw herself as a sinner on par with the Magdalene and for this reason accepted her as a mother.

Therese also made a similar comparison of herself to St. Mary Magdalene, but with her own characteristic boldness: "I know that without Him, I could have fallen as low as St. Mary Magdalene... but I also know that Jesus *has forgiven me more* than *St. Mary Magdalene* since He forgave me *in advance* by preventing me from falling."

Although Therese recognizes that her sins were not as grave as those of the Magdalene, she does not believe this gives her some sort of privilege over the Magdalene or any other sinner (including Pranzini). To explain this, she uses the image of a physician and father. A child who trips and falls on a stone and is later healed by his physician-father will be grateful indeed. However, so too will a child who understands that the stone was removed from his path before he got there due to his father's loving foresight. She explains: "Well, I am this child, the object of the foreseeing love of a Father who has not sent His Word to save the just, but sinners. He wants me to love Him because He has forgiven me not much but ALL."

Therese recognizes that God gives his merciful grace in different ways. The grace that flows from our Lord's death and resurrection has preserved her from great sins and has redeemed the greatest of sinners. Knowing that Christ died for both of them, she was prompted by grace to participate in the distribution of grace, offering her heart to soften Pranzini's hardened heart.

Compassion in the Blood of Christ

The blood flowing from the wounds of Christ brings these saints and sinners together. In the accounts given by both Catherine and Therese, the blood of Christ is central. Immediately following the execution of di Toldo, Catherine saw his soul departing and go-

ing into the wound in the side of Christ:

> Oh how boundlessly sweet it was to see God's goodness! With what tenderness and love he awaited that soul when it had left its body—the eye of his mercy turned toward it—when it came to enter into his side bathed in its own blood, which found its worth in the blood of God's Son!

Catherine saw di Toldo being literally taken up into Christ's sufferings. It is from this same wound in the side of Christ that Catherine, in another of her visions, saw Our Lord draw out his own heart and place it within her chest. On another occasion, Our Lord invited her to drink from his side to her heart's content. As her confessor describes: "She did not need to be invited twice, and drank long from the rivers of life at their source in the holy side; and such sweetness ascended into her soul that she thought she must die of love."

Catherine finds herself at home with her brother, the repentant di Toldo, within the wound of Christ, the wound that has healed them both. The blood of Christ gives value to di Toldo's blood and is the nourishing source of Catherine's zeal.

In a similar way, Therese's compassion for Pranzini was grounded in the wounds of Christ. As she recalls, it was on Christmas of 1886 that she received the grace of a "complete conversion," when her father commented that this would be the last year she would receive presents in her shoes. At this revelation of childish loss, she says that Jesus accomplished in an instant what she was "unable to do in ten years" on her own (I doubt that discovering the fiction of Santa was such a decisive moment of conversion in any of our lives!).

One day shortly thereafter Therese was struck by an image of the blood dripping from the wounds of Christ, or rather, by the fact that his sacred blood was falling to the ground without anyone to catch it:

> I was resolved to remain in spirit at the foot of the Cross and to receive the divine dew. I understood I was then to pour it out upon souls. The cry of Jesus on the Cross sounded con-

> tinually in my heart: "*I thirst!*"... As yet, it was not the souls of priests that attracted me, but those of *great sinners*; I *burned* with the desire to snatch them from the eternal flames.

The grace of conversion that Therese received on Christmas was given a definitive direction by this later insight about the blood of Christ. The following summer her own conversion would bear its first fruit in Pranzini's conversion. When he mounted the scaffold to be executed, Pranzini seized a crucifix and kissed the sacred wounds three times. Therese remarks that not only was this the sign of the conversion for which she had begged, but it was also "a perfect replica of the grace Jesus had given me when He attracted me to pray for sinners." Saint and sinner drink from the same source: the blood flowing from Christ's wounds.

I Thirst

It shocks our sensibilities to see two women who are generally the subjects of pious iconography associated with criminal blood. However, they rejoiced in this connection because they both saw themselves as sinners, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb who was slain. Jesus, too, suffered the fate of a criminal, and as he hung thirsting on the cross, he too obtained the immediate conversion of the sinner who hung next to him. Likewise, Our Lord sought out the adulterous woman at the well to show her how much he thirsted for her soul. Therese and Catherine's pursuit of souls is truly a sharing in the saving action of Jesus Christ. By imitating Christ, they manifest to us this sublime truth: our thirst for Jesus begins and ends with Jesus' thirst for us.

Raymund Snyder entered the Order of Preachers in 2010.

IS MARRIAGE A'CHANGIN'?

Thomas More Garrett, O.P.

Bob Dylan famously sang that "the times, they are a'changin'." Sometimes the vastness of the change that comes with time can be best appreciated through conversation between the young and the old. For example, did you ever ask your grandparents whether they could have imagined at your age that a certain this or that would have taken place in their lifetimes? Perhaps those who were young in the '60s recall asking their grandparents whether they thought they would live to see a man walk on the moon. A grandson today might ask his grandfather the same concerning the Internet.

A similar type of conversation between junior and senior friars is not unusual. While shared wonder over novel developments can often be fodder for pleasant banter, this summer one such discussion in which I was engaged took on a more serious tone. In the final days of June, not long before folks arranged the fireworks and flag-bearing fire trucks in preparation for the Fourth of July, the legislature in New York made that state the latest to redefine marriage to include couples of the same sex. In the midst of the barrage of parades and pageants, I asked a more seasoned friar one afternoon whether he ever thought that he would live to see same-sex "marriage" endorsed, and indeed celebrated, by the state.

His silent expression of disbelief conveyed his surprise concerning the outcome of recent events. I imagine that some surprise would characterize the response from any person of a certain age, regardless of his or her view concerning homosexuality. Press accounts reported astonishment even among the ranks of the well-funded, highly organized, nationwide lobby intent on eroding the exclusive nature of the relationship of man and woman joined as husband and wife.

Yet there is more at issue than the state's definition of marriage. Without some action to curb the excess of the vocal minority pushing for the complete normalization of homosexuality, our ability to live our faith outside of the confines of our homes or churches will become a thing of the past.

That the practice of the faith will be confined to one's home or church is a bold claim, especially in the United States, where freedom of religion served as an inspiration for our nation's very founding. But the assertion is warranted all the same. The gay-rights movement has done more than threaten the unique character of marriage in order to provide special rights for people who happen to be sexually attracted to persons of the same sex. In states that have sanctioned same-sex "marriage" or have enacted marriage-equivalency statutes, the threat of legal action menaces individuals who want their lives to reflect a commitment to the beliefs that they hold dear.

One ready example is the impact that an evolving definition of "marriage" has on the responsibilities of certain public offices. For example, town clerks in Vermont and New York have been forced to resign for being unable to leave their morality at home and issue "marriage" licenses to same-sex couples. For these individuals, the victory of the gay-rights movement has disqualified them from public service, at least in their former capacity, and deprived them of their livelihood and professional commitment.

The occupational threat presented by a change in the definition of "marriage" extends to private business owners as well. Shortly after Illinois' civil-union law went into effect earlier this year, at least two homosexual couples initiated separate legal actions against owners of private businesses where the businesses declined the use of their facilities for "commitment ceremonies." These events are far from unique, and some similar actions have already been decided against the private owner. For example, a Methodist organization lost its New Jersey state tax-exemption for refusing to lease a private facility, used largely for Sunday church services and youth programs, for purposes of a civil-partnership ceremony.

Moreover, the threat to freedom of religion that arises from same-sex marriage extends even outside those jurisdictions where



Henri Toulouse-Lautrec - In Bed

the same-sex lobby has succeeded in pushing legislators or judges into redefining marriage. Consider a few recent examples: A photographer was fined $7,000 by the New Mexico Human Rights Commission for declining to photograph a same-sex "commitment ceremony;" graduate students in Michigan and Georgia have been dismissed from universities for refusing to counsel homosexuals in furtherance of a same-sex sexual relationship; and a newspaper reporter in Maine was fired after sending private emails expressing opposition to the legalization of same-sex "marriage."

These aren't the only cases where people who were unwilling to keep silent about homosexual behavior have faced social and legal reprisals—the number of similar events continues to grow in America, leaving aside the even more severe threat to freedom of religion in Western Europe. You can find further information concerning instances such as these both inside and outside the United States, as well as a wealth of additional materials on this topic, at the websites of the National Organization for Marriage

(www.nationformarriage.org) or the United States Bishops Conference (www.marriageuniqueforareason.org).

The continuation of the same-sex marriage trend will narrow the ability of faithful Catholics to participate in the economy and society in general. Indeed, entire professions and offices of public service may become inaccessible to individuals with a Catholic sense of morality.

The supporters of same-sex "marriage" adopted their own little twist to Dylan's lyrical commentary on time and change in embracing the slogan "It's time." Perhaps you have heard the phrase used in this context yourself recently. Be sure to understand the consequences of what this motto implies, even beyond the approval of same-sex "marriage." If we are not content with leaving our faith at home when we leave for work or for school, this slogan means that it's time for us to change as well.

Thomas More Garrett entered the Order of Preachers in 2008.

Disputed Questions:

Preaching and the Internet

The Internet is an indispensable part of modern life, and discussions of the New Evangelization speak about it endlessly. The Pontifical Council for Social Communications has released two documents about it, Ethics in Internet *(2002) and* The Church and Internet *(2002), and both John Paul II and Benedict XVI have spoken about its use. Over the summer, Pope Benedict even sent his first tweet. But how is the Church to make use of this conflicted medium? What is the role of the Internet in evangelization?*

MEETING CHRIST ON GOOGLE

Clement Dickie, O.P.

Every Dominican is familiar with the story of St. Dominic and the innkeeper. Holy Father Dominic spent all night talking with an innkeeper in what is now southern France until the man converted from the Cathar heresy to the true faith. The need to spread the Gospel by personal engagement remains in the modern world, but now the Internet has replaced the inn and the marketplace of the past as the locus for informal exchanges of ideas. If we are to share the faith with modern men in developed countries, the Church must be online.

A preacher's online presence should have at least one of three goals: helping people to learn about God, helping them get to church, and exhorting them to holiness. All of these goals can be accomplished with a little hard work. However, oftentimes Christians online provide a counter-witness to the Gospel or develop an interior focus that narrows our thinking and causes us to lose sight of others' souls. Above all, the online preacher must remember that, as with St.

Dominic in the inn, sharing the Gospel means making a personal connection.

The Internet is fast becoming the first place people go to find answers for their questions about basically everything. There is no question—at least in the developed world—that many people use the Internet to satisfy their initial curiosity about God. But the Catholic Church has yet to fully accept the evangelical challenge of the Internet; for instance, even though Catholics believe that the Church has been entrusted with the revelation of God to his people, Google searches for 'God' and 'Jesus' yield no Catholic results on the first page. In order to help people come to know God, we have to be the ones providing answers to the ultimate questions online.

But this evangelical imperative must be balanced by a sober awareness of the limits of the Internet. Simply put, it is not possible to worship God *on* the Internet, because the Internet is not really a place. By using analogies to physical things, we intuit how to use this vast system of computers wired together with a series of complicated switches. We talk of 'sites' having 'addresses' that we can use to 'visit' them. We call this amalgamation of files 'cyberspace' and order goods by 'placing' them in 'shopping carts.' All of this can sometimes lead us into thinking that there is an online world as real and substantive as the 'brick and mortar' world around us. However, the Internet is only a metaphorical place. When I visit a bulletin board on the Web, I am really alone in the computer room, not surrounded by a full room of interlocutors.

Why does this seeming technicality matter? Because it reminds us that our emphasis on the Internet has be about communicating the Gospel and providing tools that believers can use to bring them closer to Christ in the real world. Creating a virtual sacred space is of little value, since a person cannot be virtually saved. Healthy online interaction with the Church should lead to in-person interaction with other Christians, with the Mass, and with the sacraments.

Catholic sites that are working on this project do exist, but this is an area that could use more work. Catholic Answers (catholic.com) and New Advent (newadvent.org) are prominent examples of suc-

cessful Catholic evangelization online. The two sites illustrate the great range of possibilities for Catholics making informational use of the Web, and the limits of current models thereof.

Catholic Answers is specifically engaged in apologetics, and seeks to answer frequently asked questions about Catholicism. Someone new to the faith, or just learning about the faith he has had since childhood, can learn quite a bit, quickly. However, question-based resources are usually exhausted just as a quickly.

New Advent, at the opposite end, mostly provides undigested but comprehensive resources for Catholics by hosting digitized texts that are out of copyright, including St. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae*, the old *Catholic Encyclopedia*, and works of the Fathers. The Vatican's own website functions this way for recent (since Pope Leo XIII) magisterial documents. Providing easy electronic access to information about the faith is a great step toward a new evangelization, but these texts do not always speak for themselves. The Church faces the perennial task of interpreting the great tradition of Catholic literature for the needs of the present day.

There is also a need to provide organized information in accessible, digested prose for the mass market, a field that remains underrepresented. Beyond specifically Catholic apostolates, there is also a need for committed Catholics to contribute to open sources of information like Wikipedia and Yahoo Answers.

But the Church's evangelical task will fail if it stops at mere apologetics. The Internet should facilitate an encounter with Jesus Christ in the sacraments. It should be a door that opens into real-world practice of the faith, not just an interesting mental picture that people stop to debate about before moving on.

The Church's ability to make this real-world connection has thus far been inadequate. For instance, getting accurate information from local parish, shrine, and convent websites is generally a superhuman task; oftentimes the front pages are so woefully out-of-date that you aren't even sure if the church is open any more, let alone whether Mass is still at 7. Attentiveness to these practical matters is a sine qua non of effective Internet evangelization, which should always end by moving people from the computer to the pew.



Pope Benedict XVI sends his first tweet (AP Photo)

The third use for the Internet is exhorting to holiness. I mean for this to be a broad category, including both direct exhortation and demonstrations of the possibility of living in relationship with God. If the work of preaching on the Internet does not enkindle or increase a burning desire for God in the hearts of those who see it, it will fail in its goal. The life of holiness must be integrated, and must give body and soul to the love of God, so fidelity in this realm is bound up closely with fidelity in the other two dimensions of online preaching.

The true Internet preacher must engage in all three of these activities. He must inform, facilitate, and exhort seamlessly. While each of these roles, taken individually, involves mainly providing resources, preaching is a personal task. Online preaching must engage rather than disconnect the preacher from his audience.

The preacher should take advantage of the opportunities for personal contact available in social media like blogs, Facebook, Google+, etc. The standard static website creates an air of stiffness appropriate

for conveying facts, not for connecting with people. Moreover, the social media offer tools that everyone can use to spread the Good News. When anyone reads a good article or a good blog post or hears about a good event, he can instantly share it with everyone he knows. This technique actually adds to the effectiveness of online communication, because the work of the online preacher is being passed along by personal connections, from friend to friend, or at least acquaintance to acquaintance.

Effective preachers make connections between the spiritual and the temporal. Blogging, which relies heavily on links, is all about making connections. Online preachers have the perfect forum to show people the spiritual reality behind what they see around them. Connections between the news and Jesus Christ are just the beginning of what is possible.

Movements of the heart require a personal touch. It is for this reason that the social Web is a more fertile ground than more formal websites. The ability to reach people one-on-one across the globe is a great tool, even if nothing online can substitute for contact in the real world.

There are, however, some real pitfalls when entering the online discussion, of which would-be Internet preachers should be aware.

Most people engaged in online ministry use re-purposed content either in whole or in part. Priests post their Sunday homilies, magazines their articles, and lecturers their videos, all of which were originally made for a different format. All of these things can be good in moderation, but true online content requires a different approach.

Re-purposed content can be the beginning of something interesting for the Web, but it will have to be translated into the snappier, more personal style suitable for digital readers. People don't spend time with an online text. Online there are myriad distractions, and blobs of text have a way of washing over the user. The competition for attention is fierce. Content for the Internet should get the point across quickly and repeatedly while remaining interesting.

But the biggest danger is losing perspective. The World Wide Web,

the most visible part of the Internet, may allow for truly global communication, but that does not mean that the whole world is actually listening. Speaking analogously, most Internet users travel between a few virtual small towns. Only a few sites have a broad audience online, while most fill a tiny niche—the so-called "long tail." Even some of the most popular sites—Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.—can be thought of as amalgamations of many smaller user bases. On Facebook you see what your 'friends' have posted, and on YouTube the videos recommended for you. A responsible approach to the Internet needs to understand this dynamic of online audiences.

Because there are so many online content producers, most serve a narrow audience, with each niche having its own relatively major and minor players, who will be unknown to those outside. For example, Fr. John Zuhlsdorf, the blogger behind *What Does the Prayer Really say?*, may seem to be ubiquitous to the connected Catholic blogger. He is often cited (a simple Google search reveals more than 27,000 links to posts he has written and Alexa reports that 1,140 separate sites link to his), and he consistently wins Catholic blog awards that are based on audience votes.

Yet mention Fr. Z. outside of the Internet and most Catholics would have no idea who you are talking about. It's not hard to figure out why. Fr. Z.'s website is ranked 160,770th on the Internet and 47,343th in the US according to Alexa. While that is pretty high given that there are millions of websites out there, it still makes him a marginal media figure at best.

Why do I mention this? Certainly not to belittle the work of Fr. Zuhlsdorf, who has built up quite a following over the years, but to emphasize that when we engage in the online conversation, we are talking to a narrow slice of the world, even if that small slice can contain a large number of people in aggregate (Fr. Z.'s website counter has logged over 17 million visitors).

The self-selecting members of the Catholic blogosphere need to be preached to and reminded of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, but those preachers need to recognize that their audience is probably less intellectually diverse than 7 AM mass at a suburban parish. As Fr. Zuhlsdorf himself put it, "We who live in echo chambers, and blogs,

should have a care not to think we are being universally affirmed."

The social Internet—that is blogs, Facebook, My Space, Twitter, bulletin boards, and the more old-fashioned usenet groups and chat rooms—tends to create networks of like-minded readers (and often their direct opposition), who develop linguistic shorthand, common perceptions about the larger world, and converging opinions about various matters of taste. More importantly this loyal readership knows everything that is going on in these online spaces. An idea might originate on one site and be commented on in dozens of blogs and hundreds of Facebook pages. The echo-chamber effect makes these ideas seem more popular than they are, and makes their originators seem more prophetic and important than they really are.

As a result, pettiness, cliquishness, and gossip are also real risks within the 'walls' of an online social community. Open forums seem to suffer from this particularly. 'Flame wars' can break out between narrowly separated factions that cause positive harm to the reputations of both the issue at hand and the hosting website. Anyone opening such a forum should be mindful of these dangers and monitor postings closely.

Should every preacher have a blog? Of course not. The proliferation of vanity blogs is not a laudable phenomenon. Fortunately vanity blogs tend to die of their own weight. Anyone who isn't going to update regularly with interesting content shouldn't create a blog. But preachers with a unique perspective and with accessible prose can make a real contribution by entering into the online dialogue. The holy desire to avoid the vanity and distraction that come with modern communication must be mitigated by a zeal for our contemporaries' salvation.

Commenting on the YOUCAT, the new Youth Catechism, Pope Benedict XVI urges young people to "study it in the quiet of your room; read it with a friend; form study groups and networks; share with each other on the Internet. By all means continue to talk with each other about your faith." This simple exhortation should stand as a guide to Internet preachers about how their ministry can truly change the world: by informing people about the faith, guiding

them to Mass and the sacraments, and exhorting them to holiness, we can transform the small villages of Internet Catholicism into vibrant communities of the faithful who share ideas on the Internet and share their lives in the world, brought by true personal contact into unity in the eternal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Clement Dickie entered the Order of Preachers in 2009.

SURFING THE NET FOR JESUS?

Innocent Smith, O.P.

A good way to begin a fight among Catholics of a certain perspective would be to declare: "If Chesterton were alive today, he would be a blogger." Notice what dangerous ground we are on, treading the delicate fissure between our imagined visions of Chesterton the conservative, who stands up for everything good and holy and decadent, and Chesterton the innovator, the journalist of Fleet Street who disgorges daily essays of higher or lower quality using the latest media technology. Which side of our Chestertonian self-projection will prevail when it encounters "the Internet"? Regardless, what stance are we to take ourselves? Are we to use this technology, or to shun it?

We might make a few distinctions immediately. First, we should consider our own state in life: a religious, such as myself, may have a different prudential response to technology than a layman or a cleric. We should make further subdivisions within each category: with religious, for instance, between those who have a primarily contemplative charism, those who have an active charism, and those who may be blessed with a synthesis of the two. If the Internet gives us the opportunity of virtually traversing the globe and communicating freely with anyone else who happens to have an Internet connection, the proper mode of use will be different for one whose vocation

is indeed to travel the globe than for one who is called to holiness in a very particular place, and not primarily to a verbal proclamation of the faith.

In this essay I will not dare to proclaim the proper use of the Internet for everyone, or indeed anyone, but will merely offer some reflections on the role of the Internet and other tools of mass media in the Church's task of preaching.

Vatican II, the only ecumenical council to be conducted within the era of modern communication technology, explicitly urges pastors to use instruments of communication in service of their mission of instructing and guiding the faithful: "Pastors should hasten, therefore, to fulfill their duty in this respect, one which is intimately linked with their ordinary preaching responsibility" (*Inter mirifica* 13; cf. IM 3). The Council thus clearly indicates that we are justified in using technology as an aspect of our preaching mission. This affirmation leads us to a deeper consideration of what preaching is in itself, which will in turn give us further indications on the role of technology within this effort.

The mandate to preach

Before his Ascension, Jesus gave the apostles the mandate to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15). We can see at once that this mandate challenges us to envisage the task of preaching as having a wider scope than we might expect; our preaching is not restricted to those who are immediately on hand, but should rather be extended to everyone whom we might possibly encounter. Vatican II reminds us that "the influence of the mass media passes beyond national boundaries and makes individuals, so to speak, citizens of human society as a whole" (IM 22); "through better means of communication, distances between peoples have been almost eliminated" (*Apostolicam actuositatem* 8). Modern communication methods are thus invaluable if we are to preach to the whole of creation as St. Paul exhorted Timothy: "Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching" (2 Tim 4:2).

Preaching and the spoken word

In the present context of discussing the role of the Internet in preaching, it is important to reiterate that the primary medium of preaching is the spoken word heard in person. For St. Paul, "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rm 10:17). Christ, like Socrates and Pythagoras, preached to his disciples by word and example, not by writing. The purpose of Christ's preaching was to imprint his doctrine upon the hearts of his hearers, and to spread the message of salvation to the Gentiles by means of his Jewish apostles. As St. Paul writes to the Corinthians,

> You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on your hearts, to be known and read by all men; and you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts (2 Cor 3:2-3).

Christ "published (*promulgavit*) [the gospel] by his own lips, to be a universal source of saving truth to all peoples" (*Dei Verbum* 5). Christ instituted his disciples as witnesses to his spoken word, instructing them, as we have seen, to repeat this word throughout all the earth. Thus, "the apostles handed on, by their own preaching and examples and by their dispositions, whatever they had received from Christ's lips, his way of life, or his works, or had learned by the prompting of the Holy Spirit" (DV 7). This preaching of Christ was handed on by the apostles both through the appointment of successors who could continue to hand on the faith by their own word and example, and through committing the message of salvation to writing under the interior guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture and technology

In our present context, we might emphasize that the act of writing out the message of Jesus with pen and ink was a decision to utilize the best contemporary means of communication. St. Paul supplemented his oral preaching by writing letters to the Christian communities, writing out (or dictating) his ideas under the guidance

of the Spirit in a script accessible to his readers and transmitted to them by whatever systems of distribution he may have had at hand. Although we are not blessed with the same infallible guidance of the Spirit when we use technical means to convey the message of Jesus, we are nonetheless engaged in the same task of preaching Christ using whatever means are available.

On the other hand, despite the infinite riches the scriptures contain, they could not reveal everything that their human authors desired to convey. Take for instance Paul's acknowledgment in his First Letter to the Thessalonians that he has been "praying earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith" (1 Thes 3:10). In his Second Letter to the same community, he urges the Thessalonians to "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter " (2 Thes 2:15).

Although he offers much insight in his two letters to this community, there are some aspects of the faith that he seems to want to communicate in person rather than through the written word. The apostle John likewise writes in one letter that "though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink, but I hope to come to see you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete" (2 John 12), and in another that "I had much to write to you, but I would rather not write with pen and ink; I hope to see you soon, and we will talk together face to face" (3 John 13-14).

Just as writing was at times too limited for the level of intimate communication desired by the apostles, so too, in our more limited context, there are many aspects of the faith for which technology cannot serve as an adequate medium. The deposit of faith "includes everything that helps the people of God to live a holy life and to grow in faith. In this way the church, in its teaching, life, and worship, perpetuates and hands on to every generation all that it is and all that it believes" (DV 8). The transmission of the faith is not exhausted by the transmission of the verbal content of the faith, for life and worship are best taught by example.

Here we might recall the remark of Cardinal Lustiger that "there is no Christian existence without the sacraments and the liturgy;

without them, Christianity becomes only an ideology." This is very important for the question of the use of technology in ministry. If the digital aspect of the presentation of the faith comes to dominate or displace the sacramental life of the Church, then Christianity will soon devolve into an ideology.

This is a particular danger, ironically, when it is a question of media related to the liturgy or the sacraments, for instance a blog that reports about beautiful liturgies with sumptuous photography, or a television channel that broadcasts exemplary liturgies; reporting of this sort has a proper role, but there is a constant danger that it may inadvertently (or sadly, in some cases, intentionally) lure its readers away from actual participation in the liturgy: they don't celebrate the Mass beautifully where I live, so I would rather just skip the liturgy and look at pictures of a better one on the Internet.

The useful and the self-indulgent

The documents of the Second Vatican Council reveal a nuanced view of the media: "The Church recognizes that these media, if properly utilized, can be of great service to mankind, since they greatly contribute to men's entertainment and instruction as well as to the spread and support of the Kingdom of God. The Church recognizes, too, that men can employ these media contrary to the plan of the Creator and to their own loss" (IM 2).

Despite this inherent danger, the Council clearly teaches that these tools of communication are to be used within the work of evangelization:

> The Catholic Church, since it was founded by Christ our Lord to bear salvation to all men and thus is obliged to preach the Gospel, considers it one of its duties to announce the Good News of salvation also with the help of the media of social communication and to instruct men in their proper use (IM 3).

After making this affirmation, however, the Council makes an important clarification: "It is, therefore, an inherent right of the Church

to have at its disposal and to employ any of these media *insofar as they are necessary or useful* for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of souls" (IM 3).

Technology is not an end in itself, but a tool, and is to be employed not universally and in every circumstance, but in ways that are in accord with the actual needs of a particular situation. Thus, it is perpetually important to reevaluate our own use of technology, to make sure that we are using these media insofar as they are truly necessary or useful, and not insofar as we are amused or distracted by their delights. In this regard, it is significant that the *Constitutions of the Order of Preachers* states that "the brothers may have books and equipment (*instrumenta varia*) for personal use" (LCO 38, §1), but warns that "the brothers should beware of acquiring novelties (*novitatibus*) or comfortable life-styles" (LCO 34, §1).

This is not to say that we cannot ever use the Internet in a recreational way, by reading articles, listening to music, or watching YouTube videos about cats, but we should be sensitive to the boundaries between recreational Internet use and ministerial use. The line might sometimes be blurry—if I contribute to a debate on a Catholic blog that I am reading, there might be something of both at work—but it is important to be honest with myself about which form of use I am presently engaged in. The reason for this is to avoid self-deception about the extent of my actual ministry: I might feel like I'm doing "work," but may simply be indulging myself.

The instruments of travail

It is important for individuals engaged in preaching on the Internet to carefully evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the various tools available and to adjust their use accordingly. Many Internet content platforms allow for a direct interaction between the author and the reader that is unlike any other form of media. This has certain advantages: it can help a writer to focus his content on what his readers are most responsive to, or to address questions that arise about a particular topic.

It also has disadvantages: the time necessary to moderate and respond to comments can be extensive, and often comment boxes be-



Viktor Hertz - Surfing the Web

come cesspools of gossip and ignorant pronouncements. These factors should be carefully weighed to see whether the costs outweigh the benefits in an individual case.

Another distinctive feature of the Internet is that it allows one to mix many different forms of media: video, text, music, and so forth. This can allow for dynamic and engaging presentations, but it also has the danger of leading the preacher to focus more on the form than the content of his message, and it can render his contributions prematurely obsolete because of subsequent advances in technology. Why should I listen to a preacher who has such a primitive editing technique for his YouTube video? Can someone who still has a moving gif on his website possibly have something relevant to say to me?

A related factor is the extent to which a preacher uses the various statistics that are available for different types of websites: views for a video, incoming links for a blog, and so forth. Like comments on a website, these too can be helpful tools, but also have the danger of leading the preacher to focus on superficially measurable results over less tangible effects such as the conversion of hearts. Although these tools can tell me if *no one* has read or watched my piece, they themselves can't tell me whether my contribution has actually helped anyone or not. Further, the preacher must be careful that these statistics not become a point of pride. If I am constantly concerned with how many hits I am getting, I should ask myself whom I am writing for: the people, or myself?

We should recall the warning of St. Paul: "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear" (Eph 4:29). We are to preach the word whether the time is opportune or inopportune, but our mode and message should always be well ordered in relation to the actual needs of the situation, and should never devolve into self-indulgence.

In this regard, we should remember that proper boundaries are always necessary in ministry, and thus we should be wary of crossing lines in our ministerial use of the Internet that we would be more careful about in the context of our official duties at a parish or apostolate–for instance by inappropriately focusing attention on our own

personality or activities. We must bear in mind, as the Council acknowledges in a different context, that "not all knowledge is helpful" (IM 5).

For the priest or religious engaged in the apostolate of preaching, the Internet offers us many useful tools that should not be ignored, but it also imposes limitations and burdens that must be carefully considered. Above all, it is necessary to develop a synthesis in which technology assists the whole ministry of the priest, rather than becoming an end in itself that diminishes the vital link between the ministry of the word and the ministry of the sacraments. Preaching for the salvation of souls is a true ministry; surfing the net is not.

Innocent Smith entered the Order of Preachers in 2008.

Thoughts from the Rhineland

TROUBLED TONGUES

Jordan Schmidt, O.P.

Dawn broke on the jagged karst mountains of Liu Pan Shui city, illuminating the rising mist from the Ming Bai reservoir. The silhouettes of the campus buildings flanked the oversized Chinese flag to the right and left—what an odd skyline that was. This was the last time I was to look upon it; in a few hours I would be evacuated, shipped back to the United States. The SARS epidemic had forced the shutdown of the Peace Corps in China.

In those quiet morning hours I became pensive. Naturally, I thought of the friends I had made and the many wonderful experiences that I had. But I also began to think of those things that never made it into the brochure: the long stretches of isolation, the complete lack of community, the lack of spiritual support, the waiban officer who followed me to the non-denominational church where I tried to make some friends, and the subtle reminders about the prohibition on proselytizing.

At that moment it dawned on me that I had been wrong. I thought I could subsist on my own. I thought that I didn't need support from my fellow Americans, from my fellow Christians, from anyone. I was completely wrong. The result? I suffered. My own fault, I admit. But I suffered nonetheless. That was okay, though. I was going home to do what I had promised God I would two years earlier. I was going to join the seminary.

At the outset of my formation, I experienced intense spiritual refreshment, which brought on a kind of euphoria. I was thankful for the life of prayer. I was thankful for the sacraments. I was thank-

ful for the community. The rapid and dramatic change of going from a communist country hostile to the faith to the intense life of formation at the seminary made me aware that we are radically communal beings. That is, we live our lives in spiritual and physical dependence on one another, and we need relationships with others to thrive. This realization developed into a desire for an even more profound and intense communal life, particularly in the liturgy, which was to lead me to the Dominicans three years later.

If I had to characterize my spiritual experience over the past ten years, then, I suppose I would say that it has been the continuous awareness of the providential hand of God directing my life and drawing me closer to him *through other people*. It strikes me as a mysterious and awesome thing that God has elected to use human beings to enact his saving plan.

Every Christian receives a new birth and is brought to maturity in his faith through his relationships with other people. We are given the faith through other believers, at birth or later in life. After our initiation into the Church, God continues to bestow his grace upon us through our relationships to other believers, whether they be priests, religious, family, friends, or other acquaintances in the Church. These relationships form a scaffolding around our relationship with God; they are not the most important thing, nor can they replace our relationship with God. However, God has elected to use them to build and shape our relationship with him.

This is truly good news, but there is another side to this coin. Perhaps it is my pessimistic northern-European heritage coming through, but lately I've been struck by how precarious, how delicate this scaffolding is. The great gift and the joy that community is can become a great weapon and burden when it is twisted and undermined by sin.

This is not typically a dramatic betrayal of Biblical proportions as in the cases of Cain, Absalom, or Judas. Rather, it happens most often, as St. James teaches us, on a small scale and with the tongue, which cannot be tamed by any human being and has an uncannily destructive power despite its small size. James points to what is



František Bílek - Moses

perhaps the most ironic quality of human speech: we use the same tongue to bless God and to curse and revile other human beings whom God has made in his own likeness.

Each of us has the potential to be a conduit for God's grace in another person's life, through preaching, through prayerful support, or simply by our example. At the same time, though, each of us has the potential to cause great pain in the life of another through our words and actions. The psalmist voices this rather beautifully:

For it is not an enemy that reviled me–
that I could bear –
Not a foe who viewed me with contempt,
from that I could hide.
But it was you, my other self,
my comrade and friend,
You, whose company I enjoyed,
at whose side I walked in the house of God.

These words, though perhaps originally penned to describe the intrigue of a political traitor and religious apostate in exilic Israel, apply equally well to the ambivalence that we often feel toward our own friends and fellow believers when they betray us with their tongue. The psalm reflects the particular pain and frustration that arises when we are assaulted by the words of those whom we trust, especially those with whom we worship and profess a common faith. The most difficult part is that we as Christians cannot wholeheartedly follow the psalmist in his response:

Let death take them;
Let them go down alive to Sheol,
For evil is in their homes and bellies.

Christ exhorts us to forgive those who hurt us and to bear sufferings and wounds patiently. This is not to say that wanton detraction ought to be tolerated with impunity, but it is to say that—lest we misinterpret what God is teaching us through the psalmist here—we are not free to write off others within our community even if they seriously offend us.

That we are not to share literally in the psalmist's response is a good thing, as most of us are perhaps more readily identifiable with the friend who betrays than the psalmist who is betrayed. We would certainly do well to examine ourselves as to whether we have reviled our friends in word or in deed, and to seek reconciliation.

Here I am reminded of the words that each brother utters before making profession to our Order. When asked by the one receiving vows, "What do you seek?", the brother responds, "God's mercy and yours." This refers to the mercy that each member of the community shows to every other member, which is only possible because it is rooted in the mercy of God himself.

It is precisely this mercy that is necessary to repair the damage that we regularly do to our scaffolding of relationships. It is this mercy that is strong enough to forgive the slights, the jokes that misfired, the arguments about the thousand and one banal things that seemed so important at the time, and the petty gossip that can be so

destructive of a community of believers. But it is also this mercy that is the principle of regeneration and healing that enables even those relationships that have been more burdensome than joyous to show us the way to God. And that is perhaps the most beautiful thing that I've seen in the past ten years.

Jordan Schmidt entered the Order of Preachers in 2006. God willing, he will be ordained to the priesthood in May 2012.

The Locutorium

MONITORING MODERNITY

An interview with Fr. James V. Schall, S.J. by Boniface Endorf, O.P.



Sandro Botticelli -
A Young Man Being Introduced to the Seven Liberal Arts

In Distinctiveness of Christianity *(Ignatius Press, 1982) you wrote that one of the most pressing problems confronting the Church was an erosion of Christian Intelligence, a failure to trust in reason's ability to reach truth and to understand truth in a manner consonant with*

Christian Revelation. What is the state of this problem two decades later? Have the efforts of Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI to deal with this problem borne fruit in the academy or the wider culture?

What is quite clear to me, as I have frequently said, is that Catholicism has never been intellectually stronger or culturally weaker. What is striking about the Catholic Church, especially under John Paul II and Benedict XVI, is that no political or academic leader in the world can match them either in general brilliance, dynamism, or, in the case of John Paul II, heroism. The papacy, clearly, has existed with mediocre and even bad popes. But it has not been doing this for the last century or more. What we are seeing, however, is a refusal, including among many Catholics, to come to grips with the force of Catholic intelligence.

The reason for this refusal, I think, is not primarily intellectual, but moral. In the post-Vatican II years, especially, many took their cue about intelligence from one or the other movement of modernity, at first Marxism, then ideological secularism, then simply conformity with a relativist culture. Once anyone has habituated himself to such views, once he has lived consciously the consequences of these views, his soul becomes closed to any alternative. This is especially true if he is a cleric or an academic, I think. Almost the only thing that can arouse them, as David Walsh explained in his *After Ideology*, is finally seeing and suffering the pain that the ideas themselves lead to. Not a few die unaware or unrepentant.

Christ's remark that the truth would make us free did not necessarily mean that we wanted the truth if it required the changing of our ways, especially if we have gained a reputation for views that are, at one point or another, against some basic principle of Catholicism. We often underestimate, I think, the allure of fame and the force of envy in our souls.

No doubt, as you suggest, the impact of these popes has been terrific. What we lack are equally learned bishops and priests. There is a Catholic lay intelligentsia that has established colleges, written important books, and developed websites that are often brilliant. The older, established academic institutions have been relatively unaf-

fected by papal movements or inspirations. They are in a kind of ghetto of academic correctness that will not consider the whole hypothesis on which modernity in effect is based."

Where could renewal of Christian intelligence arise? What role should religious orders, especially the Dominicans and Jesuits, play in such a renewal? What about Church universities?

I think that I remain a Platonist or Augustinian here. It can only arise in the souls of young men and women who are moved or called out of themselves to consider *what is*, the truth of things. John Paul II often spoke of the fate of the rich young man in the Gospels who, even having lived a good life, turned away from something higher. Ignatius of Loyola and Francis Xavier at the University of Paris saw the same thing. I suspect our western culture is full of such "turn-aways."

Looking at Church history from the Middle Ages, we might assume that the vanguard of this reform of soul would come from such Orders. I am very pleased to see the intellectual activity in your province of the Dominicans. You Dominicans have never had many colleges or universities to speak of. But your *studia* give you a certain freedom and independence to start anywhere there is an innovative initiative. And I think an argument can be made that the presence on college campuses of a dynamic Order that is not just pastoral can make a difference.

But ultimately, religious orders at times need renewals and are not, as such, guaranteed to last.

I am also, though cautiously, sympathetic with the online university efforts of the late Ralph McInerny as well as those of Fr. Joseph Fessio, S.J., Professor Peter Redpath, and others. I do not think this avenue is a cure-all, but it may be a significant help. After all, in online and on-other sorts of things like Kindle and iPads we have access to much of what we need. I would add that Father Robert Spitzer, S.J.'s Magis Institute is of great innovative importance, as is Jennifer Roback Morse's Ruth Institute and Helen Hitchcock's Women for Faith and Family.

Sometimes, within universities themselves, promising attention to the Catholic mind can occur. Professor Thomas Smith and his colleagues at Villanova do well, as do the programs at the Universities of St. Thomas in St. Paul and Houston and what Anne Carson Daly does at Belmont Abbey College. I like what many of the smaller and newer colleges that do not hesitate to call themselves Catholic are doing.

But there is a lot of empty space. The School of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America has been the most important single source of intellectual life in the Church, but I would add that Catholic University Press, Ignatius Press, and St. Augustine's Press have almost single-handedly kept before us the classical intellectual tradition of Catholicism.

Programs, institutes, and schools have to be formed but they are never enough by themselves. We need a constant flow of well-prepared young scholars and sensible teachers. I have always been struck by the effect of one or two good teachers on whole generations. I think of Francis Slade at St Francis College, Daniel Mahoney at Assumption, Russell Hittinger at the University of Tulsa, and so many others.

I would note, too, that much of Catholic intelligence today is found outside the schools. Individuals like George Weigel, Michael Novak, Tom Bethel, Kenneth Masugi, Patrick Riley, Robert Royal, Mark Henrie and others take up many projects that would never arise in the universities, or they treat them in a way that is free of many academic prejudices. And there is life in some of the seminaries—Mt. St. Mary's, the Josephinum, St. Charles, St. Thomas in Denver. Certainly *First Things* has been a force. Many of the journals are now online."

How can one best present the truths of philosophy to a skeptical culture that rejects absolute truth claims?

Your key word is 'best.' Plato is filled with young and old men who have truth presented to them but, in the end, they reject it and walk away. The premise of your question is something like that:

'If we could present 'the truth of philosophy' in the right way, the skeptics would turn to absolute truth.' The skeptics' problem is not just intellectual, as I suggested earlier. Probably the two most successful writers to deal with this issue in recent times are C.S. Lewis and Chesterton. What they both did brilliantly, I think, was to take the premises of modern skepticism and relativism and carry them to their logical conclusions as in fact amusingly untenable. Probably the best at this type of polemic today is Hadley Arkes.

If we read much Augustine, we will be sure that people who reject absolute truth will always abound. We were never promised that the basic truths of philosophy would be accepted, even when they are well presented, perhaps especially when they are well presented. Plato said again and again that most people would look on philosophy as a waste of time or as foolish. Aristotle said that if we are brought up well, with virtue, we will see first principles more easily when we are old enough to grasp their meaning. He implied by this, I think, that if we are not well disposed to the truth, we will not accept it when it is presented to us.

In this sense, Socrates' emphasis on ignorance as being the only cause of error needs to be modified so that there is a volitional component to our intellectual problems. We see where the logic of truth is leading us and we do not want to go there. So we turn aside to concoct some other theory to justify our actions.

Where does that leave us? We are only asked to pursue the truth, to stand for it, present it when we can. We are to be aware that it can well be rejected even if true. This concern does not mean that some ways are not better than others, some teachers or writers not more effective than others. But it does mean that every age will have its form of rejection of the truth."

Which author from western tradition would be most effective in speaking to modern man about ancient wisdom? Whose thought would resonate particularly strongly in the modern mind and awaken it to those truths that have been forgotten?

Again, I wonder if we can assume that the modern mind will respond to any Christian initiative. We tend to think that the problem is with us, as if unbelievers are just waiting for us to come up with the right formula and they will believe. It does not work this way. There is something in the modern mind that is not eager for the truth if the truth is indeed Christian, as it is.

This is a hard saying, I suppose. It is written off as 'arrogant' because, it is claimed, all things are relative. They aren't. We want to be ecumenical. We love 'dialogue.' The Church has never been more open to or prepared for dialogue. But no one really wants to dialogue if it means changing one's soul. They want us to agree with them that nothing can be true. On such dubious grounds, they consider us backward if we don't. Many of us are converted to this new relativist view, especially many Catholics in public and academic life. We underrate the power of 'the world.'

Still, to answer your question about those in our tradition, the principal book remains Augustine's *Confessions*. I have been rather taken with the *Apologies* of St. Justin Martyr, the first philosopher to become Christian. I have heard a bishop say that he thought his successors would spend much time in jail, martyred, or underground in this country. All the elements of a legal and probably physical persecution are now in order. Justin makes good reading in this context. I also like Irenaeus of Lyons. We no longer are willing to talk of 'heresies.' He is. The culture wants us to agree that every religion is equal, that all say the same thing, that it does not matter what you think or hold, as long as it is not the truth. Since the truth is the only thing worth holding, we are on a crash course. But many will fall away."

You have written that one of Christianity's major vocations is 'to preserve the very possibility of the full growth of eros (Distinctiveness of Christianity, 205).' You continue that this issue is central to Christianity's 'eternal struggle against the Manicheans.' How are the current political and cultural struggles over the family and marriage a part of that 'eternal struggle?' How can we appropriate the strategies used by past Christians in the current debate?

Actually, this question flows from the previous one. Decades ago, I wrote a book, *Human Dignity & Human Numbers*, in which I spelled out the logic of the undermining of *eros*.

We can roughly say that 90% of the disorders in society and the consequent problems with faith come from not understanding or not following what *eros* is. The issue is called 'Manichean' in the classical sense that, if we separated body and soul, we could maintain that nothing we did with the body, as it were, made any difference to our souls. Thus, Manicheanism seemed like a charter of liberty. Once launched on this path, every logical step took us away from what *eros* is.

The sequence is really amazingly logical and clear. We begin by separating intercourse and childbearing. Since intercourse has no intrinsic relation to children, it is for its own sake. When it is so separated, it need not be a relation of man and woman. If children accidently result, they are not wanted and can be disposed of.

Since childbearing is not related to intercourse between a man and woman in a stable family for the good of the child, we can proceed to "beget" or produce children outside intercourse. Children become products not of *eros,* but of scientific calculation. Science proposes that it can 'improve' the breeding. It can also propose producing varieties of slaves with human and non-human genes.

Children then become products of science, technology, and politics. Politics decides what 'sort' of a child we want to bring forth. Not the child of John and Suzie, but the 'perfect' child, of designer genes. And since the child is really a product of science and state policy, the government will educate them in its own image. We take literally Plato's scheme in Book V of the *Republic*. We carry out C.S. Lewis' *Abolition of Man* and Huxley's *Brave New World* and hardly notice.

In this context, *eros* is left as a kind of recreation. It has no lasting tendency to *Eros* itself. A product-less *eros* is intrinsically frustrating. *Eros* loses its charms when it loses its purpose. Make no doubt of it, the only organization in the world today that defends and understands *eros* is the Church, paradoxical as it sounds."

Do you see any signs of renewal in religious life in America? What are

the key issues any renewal of religious life must face in our current culture? How can they best be met?

One curious sign is the number of vocations that are coming from immigrant groups—Filipinos, Vietnamese, Africans, Mexicans and other Latinos. Of course, in Latin America itself, the Pentecostals seem to be having a field day converting Catholics. On the other hand, there is an amazing, quiet conversion of Pentecostal and other Protestant ministers to Catholicism. Once Pentecostals realize they have to deal with reason, the Church is the real alternative. Their major roadblock is unbelieving Catholics.

Probably the most important single step to reform is the clarity with which the Church in seminaries and schools makes it clear that homosexuals are not to be ordained. Along with this concern is the full Christological reason why women are not ordained. It has nothing to do with 'fairness' or 'rights,' but with the Incarnation and its relation to the distinction of the sexes as itself a good.

Widespread confusion on the issue of who is to be ordained has kept many a seminary empty or sparsely populated. Once the clergy seems to approve this form of life, the normal way as indicated in the previous question will reject it. Marriage and priesthood go together in their separate ways. No real marriages, no future clergy. *Eros* and *agape* meet.

At present we are very close, through government policy, to having to close our schools and hospitals and other institutions over this issue. The effort to eliminate the Church on this basis is relentless on both the national and international scale. It is something rarely faced head-on. Ironically, the sex-abuse scandals were, in fact, mostly over this issue, though that was not clear. The Church found itself caught in a dilemma: it had to pay the price for abuses rooted in homosexuality and at the same time not be accused of being against the new way of life. We allowed the issue to be framed as if it were primarily a 'religious' question, which, like the abortion issue, it is not.

It is sometimes said that 'conservative' orders or dioceses are experiencing new life. It is a misnomer. The most radical events in our culture are conversions to orthodox Catholicism and vocations to

a way of life that is neither liberal nor conservative, nor even measured by either term. It may mean a large-scale numerical decline of Catholics while souls are reoriented to a proper order. The basic issue is the fidelity of the Church to what is handed down and to what is true. Once that fidelity is put in doubt in a country, a diocese, or an order, as it would be by large-scale capitulation to the culture on these issues, no real Church will remain.

Popular narratives of contemporary Catholicism often pit a dying older 'liberal' generation against a rising young 'conservative' generation, But the struggles of the 'JPII' generation of priests and the widespread departure of youth from the faith suggests that there are some problems with that story. What do you think the major struggles facing the Church are internally and externally? How can Catholics best confront them? What pitfalls must they avoid?

Robert Royal and Father Barron remarked on the press coverage of World Youth Day in Madrid. Here we had a million-and-a-half young folks with nary a reference to it except in terms of Spanish politics or opposition to the Church. No other event in the world of that proportion could have taken place for any cause and been deliberately ignored. That is itself significant. The world chooses to ignore. A case can be made that this inattention is a good thing. Many things in fact happened in the Spirit that are not visible to the world.

On the flight to Spain, Benedict remarked: 'These World Youth Days are a sign, a cascade of light; they give visibility to the faith and to God's presence in the world, and thus create the courage to be believers. Believers often feel isolated in this world, almost lost. Here they see that they are not alone, that there is a great network of faith, a great community of believers in the world, that it is beautiful to live this universal friendship.'

Benedict XVI is not a pessimist and he is certainly not blind. He knows the score, probably more than any other public figure of our time. He also told some young nuns in Madrid: 'We see a certain 'eclipse of God' taking place, a kind of amnesia which, albeit not an outright rejection of Christianity, is nonetheless a denial of the trea-

sure of our faith, a denial that could lead to the loss of our deepest identity. In a world of relativism and mediocrity, we need that radicalism to which your consecration, as a way of belonging to the God who is loved above all things, bears witness.' It was in this talk that Benedict used the phrase 'Gospel Radicalism,' not 'Gospel Liberalism' or 'Gospel Conservatism.'

What is most important for the Church is the appointment of courageous, intelligent, savvy, and believing bishops. My sense is that the Church has been a bit lopsided in recent decades with brilliant popes but too few bishops that similarly stand out. Of course, these same popes appoint the bishops, but I think it is becoming quite clear that this governing duty is the major task of the papacy. We are going to need courageous bishops in almost every diocese.

If we look around the world, to China, to the Muslim States, to India, to Europe itself, there are few places that are any longer open to any kind of free and open missionary work. Latin America is more a Protestant mission. People talk of a third-world Christianity. There may be something to it. I suspect that Benedict thinks that the crucial struggle is over the soul of Europe. Belloc's famous "Europe is the faith" makes more sense when the popes worry about Europe's massive loss of faith.

The major 'pitfall' to be avoided is, I think, that of not standing for, making clear, and defining the truth. The truths at issue are, curiously, often those of natural philosophy and not revelation. All recent popes have understood this, from *Humani Generis,* to *Pacem in Terris*, *Humanae Vitae, Fides et Ratio, Spe Salvi*, and the "Regensburg Lecture." Chesterton was quite right. It will be the Church who last defends reason and the proposition that the grass is green and the sky is blue, that men are men and women are women. It is simply not true that the Church has not understood and responded to the major intellectual disorders of our time. As I said in the beginning, intellectual understanding is also a function of how we live and how we want to live. The central issue, in this sense, is, ironically, 'choice.' We are back at Genesis, almost literally.

To conclude briefly, I would offer one piece of advice. Read Benedict's *Jesus of Nazareth*. No reading can better give the grounds of

what we are. It is quite clear in this book that the man we know as Jesus of Nazareth is what He said He was—the Son of God. As the pope says, once we understand that God actually was man in this world, actually was God, nothing will be the same, not even His rejection.

Thanks for these questions and for letting me think about them. My answers are opinions, to be sure. I am most pleased to hear of this publication of yours. I have written in the *Angelicum* and *New Blackfriars*. It is always an honor.

Boniface Endorf entered the Order of Preachers in 2008.

THEOLOGICAL METHOD AND THE MAGISTERIUM OF THE CHURCH

✠ *J. Augustine Di Noia, O.P.*

Is it possible to say anything new on the topic of the Magisterium and theology? The topic has been subjected to such intense study in the years since the publication of *Humanae Vitae* (1968) that one would seem to be compelled to do no more than summarize and repeat what has already been said by others.

Much of the recent discussion has been preoccupied with the problem of theological dissent regarding the Church's teaching on sexual morality. Here I will have very little to say about public dissent as such—except to note at the outset that the generalized tension between the Magisterium and theologians typical of recent decades is both unprecedented and anomalous. The normal situation is that Catholic theologians acknowledge the authority of the Magisterium for their work. It is a mistake to allow the condition of public dissent to frame or dominate any account of the relationship between theology and the Magisterium.

When the problem of dissent is bracketed, at least for the purposes of discussion, it turns out that there may indeed be something new to say on our topic. If it is true that the doctrine of the Magisterium as we know it today was articulated in contention with modernity, then it may be expected that new developments in understanding the Magisterium and theology will emerge on the frontiers, where modern preoccupations with the principle of autonomous reason are in retreat in the face of the recovery of the communal and traditional contexts of all rational activity that is characteristic of current philosophy. I believe this to be the case and I shall try to sketch what appear to me to be the most significant elements in the new situation for a deepened understanding of the relationship between the Magisterium and theology.

Perhaps the simplest way for me to characterize the new situation is to offer a rather mundane analogy. Imagine a theological symposium underway on a beautiful spring afternoon. Imagine further that the participants decide to decamp to the college playing fields in order to have a game of softball. (Perhaps some of them could do little more than watch from the sidelines!) Suppose that after the captains and teams have been selected, someone asks about the rules to be followed in the game. Perhaps he says, "In Cincinnati, where I grew up, we played this way." But then someone else objects, "No, in Boston we play the game this way." And I say, "Well, in the Bronx, we play this way." And so on. The point of this simple analogy is that a debate about the rules of the game may consume all the time allowed for the game itself. It may turn out, in other words, that their disagreement about the rules of the game would prevent the symposium participants from actually playing the game itself, while agreement about and acceptance of some set of rules would make the game of softball possible on the afternoon in question.

Naturally, for perceptive readers, this analogy will bring the name of Wittgenstein to mind. But there is no need to invoke or defend the entire apparatus of Wittgenstein's philosophy of forms of life and language games to note in the analogy of our hypothetical softball game a deep and important truth about human activities. The rules, far from being a constraint, create the space in which a particular communal and social activity can proceed. To be sure, the rules impose limits. But these limits define possibilities like softball and baseball, soccer and rugby, or chess and bridge, to mention just a few of the more mundane human activities enabled by particular sets of rules. On this view of the matter, the rules are significant because they make the game possible. A disagreement about the rules, as we know from experience, brings the game to a halt, whereas the presumption of an agreement about the rules on the part of all the players is a necessary condition for the game to proceed.

This suggestive analogy goes part of the way in explaining why, in my view, it is a mistake to allow discussion of the doctrine of the Magisterium to be dominated and shaped by publicly dissenting theologians. Dissent about the *authority* with which a doctrine is

taught (like a disagreement about the rules of a game) distracts our attention from the far more important issue of the *truth* of what is being taught (playing the game itself).

Thus, for example, with regard to the Church's teaching about the immorality of artificial contraception, dissenting theologians force us to defend the infallibility of the ordinary magisterium, as represented by the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, instead of focusing on the real issue of the Catholic teaching on sexuality. Or, to cite the example of the reservation of Holy Orders to men, we find ourselves enmeshed in controversies about the authority of *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* rather than in the more important task of developing the theology of the natural signification of the maleness of the priest who represents both the victim and the one who offers sacrifice.

When I worked as the executive director of the doctrinal office of the United States episcopal conference, the first question that journalists inevitably posed with regard to new magisterial documents like *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae* was "Is it infallible?" My answer was: "The far more important question is: is it *true*?"

The tendency to give questions about the authority of religious doctrines priority over questions about their truth is characteristic not just of dissenting theologians. It has been typical of modernity itself, and is matched in philosophy by the preoccupation with epistemology and methodology. A refreshing element in the new situation has been a refusal to allow questions about the reliability of the foundations or sources of truth to distract attention from the more substantive issue of truth itself. This reordering of priorities helps us to understand and interpret the history of the formulation of the doctrine of the Magisterium as it has evolved since the nineteenth century.

For the most part, the Church's teaching is directed to the glory of God and to leading us to holiness—the present and future enjoyment of ultimate communion with the Blessed Trinity and with other persons in lives of ever-deepening charity. Through her teaching activities—through the family, through catechesis, through preaching, through the Magisterium, through theology—the Church seeks to cultivate the intellectual and moral dispositions necessary for this

enjoyment, to enhance understanding of its profound meaning, and to commend it to others.

The whole ensemble of Catholic doctrine—the *depositum fidei*—embraces all the teachings that together serve to shape and direct our lives toward holiness. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* demonstrates, such doctrines answer questions about what must be believed, how divine grace transforms us through the liturgy and the sacraments, which courses of action should be pursued and which shunned, which interior dispositions must be cultivated and which avoided, and so on, in order to enjoy the life of ultimate communion to the full. Much of the teaching activity of the Church, including the authoritative teaching of the Magisterium, is concerned with questions of this kind.

But another range of questions can arise. These are concerned not with what must be believed and undertaken in order to grow in the life of grace and charity, but rather how it can be known reliably that such things *should be* believed and undertaken.

Recent philosophical analysis of the nature of religious doctrines helps us to distinguish these two types of questions, and as well us to understand how the modern preoccupation with the authority and sources of truth compelled the Church to articulate the largely implicit doctrine of the Magisterium over the course of the past two centuries.

The philosopher of religion, William A. Christian, has suggested (in his book *Doctrines of Religious Communities*) that, in response to the two different kinds of questions sketched above, the teaching activities of religious communities generate two types of doctrines: *primary doctrines*, in which a religion commends the beliefs and practices that constitute its distinctive pattern of life, and *governing doctrines*, in which a community states the sources for its primary doctrines.

According to Christian's analysis, governing doctrines respond to such questions as the following: Is this really a doctrine of our community? What procedures do we have for deciding? Is this doctrine more important than other doctrines? Is it consistent with them? Is it appropriate to develop understandings that seem implicit

in our doctrines? Should these also be considered doctrines? Who in the community is authorized to decide? In his study of different religious traditions like Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, and others, Christian explores these different types of questions, which generate what he calls "doctrines about doctrines" or, more simply, governing doctrines.

The history of the Catholic Church has afforded many occasions for developing and invoking governing doctrines. Particularly germane to our topic is the fact that questions about the authenticity of its primary doctrines have been pressed upon the Church almost without interruption for the past two hundred years. Thus, for example, more explicit attention has been devoted by the Magisterium to the doctrine of revelation during this period than in all the previous centuries taken together.

Throughout this period, the Church has gradually formulated a range of previously implicit governing doctrines to affirm that her primary doctrines authentically express what is contained in Scripture and Tradition, that Scripture and Tradition themselves constitute the single source of revelation, that revelation involves a real divine communication mediated by Christ, the prophets, and apostles, that the scriptural record of this revelation is divinely inspired, that the liturgical and doctrinal tradition embodies communally authorized readings of Scripture, and that the Church under the Successor of Peter is divinely guided in its formulation of primary doctrines of faith and morals.

The increasingly explicit formulations of the doctrine of the Magisterium over the past two centuries is part of a response to the growing need for a clear articulation of the governing doctrines of the Catholic faith. In circumstances in which the authenticity of Catholic doctrines was a matter of persistent and unrelenting controversy, it was natural that doctrinal developments addressing this issue should take place along several fronts at once: the nature of revelation, the interpretation of Scripture, the authority of Tradition, and the scope of the Church's teaching office. Each of these topics was central to the agenda of Vatican Council I and, in varying degrees, has remained prominent.

In the Constitutions on Divine Revelation and the Church, Vatican Council II attained a new level in this developing articulation. While reaffirming the central teachings of Vatican I, these constitutions located the teaching office of the Church in the broad context of the governing doctrines that make explicit her conviction that the truth she possesses and transmits is itself a *gift* to be received in faith, hope, and love.

From the vantage point of the beginning of the twenty-first century, it seems clear that the definition of papal infallibility at Vatican I was but an early stage in the Church's continuing endeavor to articulate a consistent set of governing doctrines in the face of modern challenges. Viewed in this context, the nineteenth-century emphasis on the official Magisterium and the twentieth-century prominence of the papal Magisterium will appear not as an unwarranted inflation of papal power at the expense of other teaching authorities in the Church, but as a necessary aspect of a developing articulation of her governing doctrines in response to the challenges posed by modernity's exaltation of autonomous reason.

In the face of such a challenge, the Church must affirm her faith that human beings cannot create the truth, but must receive it as a gift. Despite the continuing influence of modernist cultural assumptions of religious individualism and autonomy, the atmosphere generated by more recent intellectual trends is somewhat more receptive to Catholic convictions about the communally and traditionally constituted sources of truth.

The fundamental strategy, as pursued by thinkers like Alasdair MacIntyre, is to recover a truth that was repressed in modernity: Tradition is not an enemy of reason but a child of reason. Rational activities in all fields—from the natural sciences to philosophy, the arts, and the humanities—are not constrained or obstructed, but, on the contrary, enabled and directed by a wide range of traditions and by the communities that develop and transmit them. According to this view, rational inquiry is itself tradition- and community-dependent. Communities of scientific, philosophical, theological, and other kinds of scholars conserve and transform traditions of inquiry

that cumulatively enlarge and deepen various bodies of knowledge, and at the same time they undertake to initiate and cultivate new generations of students to continue in their footsteps.

This perspective is helpful for understanding the relationship between the Magisterium and theology. On this view, the Magisterium acts not to constrain but to enable theological inquiry to proceed. With Scripture and Tradition, it is one of the conditions for the very possibility of theology. The 1990 Instruction prepared by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, entitled "The Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian"—surely one of the most significant official documents on the relation of theology to the Magisterium—recognizes and affirms this.

Although the documents of the Second Vatican Council mentioned theology and theologians at various points—perhaps most notably in the Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum* 23-24), the Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium* 23), and the Decree on Priestly Formation (*Optatam Totius* 12, 14-16), the council did not make this theme the focus of an extended treatment. Given the impact that the council had on the work of theologians, this may come as something of a surprise.

Reprising significant elements of the Catholic tradition as articulated in conciliar and post-conciliar teaching, the Instruction forcefully argues that the theologian's vocation is a properly ecclesial one, and that the bonds of ecclesial communion implied by this relationship can be expressed juridically. As is well known, the Instruction takes up in turn the divine gift of truth, the vocation of the theologian, and the role of the Magisterium. Under its consideration of the role of the Magisterium, the Instruction gives extended attention to the problem of theological dissent.

But what is particularly noteworthy is that the Instruction begins, not with the Magisterium, but with the gift of divine truth. Indeed, the Instruction's Latin title is *Donum Veritatis*, "the gift of truth." Because theology is not simply an ancillary function of the Magisterium, we need to locate the theologian and the work of theology in the broader context of the life of Church, precisely as she is the locus of a truth which she did not generate, but which she received

as a gift. At the center of this truth is the person of Jesus Christ, who reveals the divine desire to draw us into the communion of trinitarian love and, moreover, who enables us to enjoy this communion.

The function of the Magisterium is to guard and teach in its entirety the truth that the Church received as a gift and is bound to hand on. For this reason, according to then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Instruction "treats the ecclesial mission of the theologian not in a duality of Magisterium-theology, but rather in the framework of a triangular relationship defined by the people of God, bearer of the *sensus fidei*, the Magisterium, and theology." In different ways, therefore, both the Magisterium and theology are servants of a prior truth, received in the Church as a gift.

Perhaps the most important contribution of the Instruction is to have secured in this way what Pope Benedict has called the "ecclesial identity of theology" and, correspondingly, the ecclesial vocation of the theologian. In the words of the Instruction itself:

> Among the vocations awakened... by the Spirit in the Church is that of the theologian…, [whose] role is to pursue in a particular way an ever-deeper understanding of the Word of God found in the inspired Scriptures and handed on by the living Tradition of the Church..., [which he does] in communion with the Magisterium, which has been charged with the responsibility of preserving the deposit of faith (*Donum Veritatis* 6).

The theological vocation responds to the intrinsic dynamic of faith, which "appeals to reason" and "beckons reason... to come to understand what it has believed" (6). In this way, "theological science responds to the invitation of truth as it seeks to understand the faith" (6). But the theological vocation also responds to the dynamic of love, for "in the act of faith, man knows God's goodness and begins to love Him... [and] is ever desirous of a better knowledge of the beloved" (7).

The gift of truth received in the Church thus establishes both the context for the vocation and mission of the theologian, and the

framework for the actual practice of the discipline of theology. This ecclesially received truth, as articulated in the deposit of faith and handed on by the Magisterium, constitutes not an *extrinsic* authority that poses odious limits on an inquiry that would otherwise be free, but an *intrinsic* source and measure that gives theology its identity and finality as an intellectual activity.

Examined independently of the assent of faith and the mediation of the ecclesial community, the texts, institutions, rites, and beliefs of the Catholic Church can be the focus of the humanistic, philosophical, and social-scientific inquiries that together constitute the field of religious studies. But Christian theology is a different kind of inquiry. Cut off from an embrace of the truth that provides its subject matter and indicates the methods appropriate to its study, theology as the Church has always understood it loses its specific character as a scientific inquiry of a certain type. Its precise scope is to seek the intelligibility of a truth received in faith by the theologian who is himself a member of the ecclesial community that is "the place of truth," as Cardinal Walter Kasper has called it.

The theologian is thus free to seek the truth within limits imposed, not by an intrusive external authority, but by the nature of his discipline as such. As the Instruction points out: "Freedom of research, which the academic community holds most precious, means an openness to accepting the truth that emerges at the end of an investigation in which no element has intruded that is foreign to the methodology corresponding to the object under study" (12).

Theology cannot "deny its own foundations," to use the words of Cardinal Avery Dulles, for the acceptance of the authority of Scripture and doctrines in theology is "not a limitation but rather the charter of its existence and freedom to be itself." The freedom of inquiry proper to theology is, according to the Instruction, the "hallmark of a rational discipline whose object is given by Revelation, handed on and interpreted in the Church under the authority of the Magisterium, and received by faith. These givens have the force of principles. To eliminate them would mean to cease doing theology" (12). The principles of theology are derived from revelation, and constitute the discipline as such. In accepting them, the theologian is

simply being true to the nature of his subject, and to his vocation as a scholar in this field.

These elements of the Instruction's account of theology and its relation to the Magisterium are contested wherever what George Lindbeck somewhere termed the "individualistic foundational rationalism" of modernity holds sway. But, as the Instruction demonstrates, the Church has a solid, well-substantiated, and historically warranted rationale for its account of the nature of theology as an intellectual discipline of a particular sort, and of the inner connection between this discipline and magisterial teaching.

It is central to the convictions of the Catholic Church, and indeed of the Christian tradition as such, to give priority to a theonomous rather than to an autonomous rationality. While it is true that the basis for this understanding is itself a properly theological one that is rooted in fundamental Christian convictions about the gift of truth and its reception in the ecclesial community, in the light certain postmodern intellectual trends, the Church's claims about the "situatedness" of theology are perfectly intelligible. The Instruction, in effect, constitutes an extended argument for the community- and tradition-dependent character of theology. Whatever other challenges it may pose, the present intellectual climate is, to a certain extent, more favorable to the defense of the principle of theonomous rationality that is crucial for the Catholic understanding of theology.

We may note that this conclusion is also supported by recent philosophical studies of the nature of authority. Although it is true that Catholic theology is notably dependent on the authority of the Magisterium, it would be a mistake to exaggerate the singularity of theology at this point. Authoritative criteria and professional bodies exist in almost all intellectual disciplines. Authorities function to maintain the quality and standards of many of these disciplines. According to a recent philosophical analysis of authority by Richard T. De George, "the acceptance of a certain degree of authority—which those subject to it regard as more or less legitimate, which they accept more or less easily, and which they challenge only exceptionally—is the normal state of affairs." In this sense, the Catholic understand-

ing of the relationship of theology to the Magisterium has formal parallels to other academic disciplines, in which authorities serve to foster rather than undermine intellectual and scholarly integrity.

Recent philosophical developments, as *Fides et Ratio* demonstrates, are not an unmixed blessing. Perhaps the most significant danger of postmodern intellectual trends is that, in stressing the cultural and social contexts of truth, they lead to relativism about truth itself. This is a real danger, but to deal with it thoroughly would require another paper. Here my objective has been to show that certain elements in the new philosophical situation are helpful in understanding and defending the Catholic vision of the relationship between the Magisterium and theology.

* * *

I presented an earlier version of this brief paper in Rome in 2004 at a meeting of the Pontifical Academy of Theology, which appeared in Italian in the journal of the Pontifical Academy of Theology, *PATH* 3 (2004) 57-68. It is a privilege to have been invited by the editors to adapt it for publication here in *Dominicana*, a journal on which I served as book-review editor when I was a Dominican student brother over forty years ago, and whose revival now fulfills a hope I have long cherished.



Guercino - St Peter Weeping before the Virgin

Gesta doctrinamque

*Let the brothers reflect on and make known the teaching and achievements (*gesta doctrinamque*) of those in the family of St. Dominic who have gone before them, while not forgetting to pray for them. (Cf. LCO 16).*

THE TEARS OF BROTHER THOMAS

André Duval, O.P.

It happened rather frequently that Brother Thomas would cry while at prayer," some of his first biographers loved to repeat.[1] Was this merely the banal observation of a mediaeval hagiographer? No, for an eyewitness gave a specific account of the event, reporting that one could see tears streaming down Brother Thomas' cheeks at Compline during Lent when the responsory of the *Media vita in morte sumus* was chanted: "In the midst of life, we are in death."[2] But we still wonder why.

When he speaks of religious emotion, St. Thomas does not dismiss the possibility of a certain tenderness of the heart that is capable of provoking tears. There aren't only tears of sadness, he observes; there are those tears of joy that parents and friends pour forth when they meet again after a prolonged and painful separation.[3] Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus. Was this not due to his human condition?[4] And in his own agony, did Jesus not exploit the language of tears?[5]

But why did he—Brother Thomas—weep at Compline during Lent?

In the Dominican liturgy, up until recently, during the third and fourth week of Lent the *Media vita* was chanted at Compline before and after the *Nunc dimittis* according to a Gregorian melody.[6] The responsory, which combines a verse of Psalm 70 (71) with the triple adoration of the Seraphim in the vision of the prophet Isaiah (Cf. Is.

6:3) as a refrain, could be translated in the following way:

(Choir) Media vita in morte sumus: Quem quærimus adiutorem nisi te, Domine, qui pro peccatis nostris iuste irasceris?	(Choir) In the midst of life we are in death. To whom do we look for help but to you, Lord, whose anger, with good reason, is enkindled because of our sins?
* Sancte Deus, sancte fortis, sancte et misericors Salvator, amaræ morti ne tradas nos.	* Holy God, holy Mighty One, holy and merciful Savior, give us not over to bitter death!
(Cantor) Ne proicias nos in tempore senectutis: cum defecerit virtus nostra, ne derelinquas nos, Domine.	(Cantor) Do not reject us now that we are old; when our strength fails do not forsake us, Lord.
(Choir) Sancte Deus, &c.	(Choir) Holy God, etc.

Let us imagine the Dominican liturgy of Compline on a Lenten evening at Saint Jacques in Paris, Viterbo, or Naples. All of the brothers of the priory are gathered in the chapel, including all those who, like Brother Thomas, were not able to take part in the other liturgical celebrations of the day because they were busy teaching or preaching. They are together as if at a celebration, religiously inaugurating the silence of the night with one last goodbye to Our Lady.

The brothers had gone to the Refectory beforehand to have some very light nourishment, as it is Lent, and to listen to a reading from the Church Fathers. Brother Thomas appreciated the reading of the *Conferences* of Cassian that Saint Dominic, too, was familiar with, and from which he learned the ways of the purification of the heart.

Now, in the main Church, Psalm 90 (91) is chanted: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High and abides in the shade of the Almighty says to the Lord: 'My refuge, my stronghold, my God in whom I trust!'" Next, there is a verse from the Prophet Jeremiah, the last words of which already announce the theme of the *Media vita*: "Do not forsake us, O Lord" (Cf. Jer. 14:9). Then a brief response:

"Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit," or, depending on the day, "In peace I will lie down and sleep comes at once." Each is free to sing this in his own voice, or to hear these words on the lips of Christ on the Cross.

The hymn that follows here, which was proper to the Dominican liturgy and to certain Parisian churches, evokes Christ in the enveloping melody of the phrase, "O Christ, you are the light and day." Thus, the whole movement of Compline ascends towards Christ, all the way to the Canticle of Simeon: "Lord, now you let your servant go in peace, your word has been fulfilled." And then comes the singing of the *Media vita*.

To those who were looking at him, Brother Thomas seemed like he wasn't even there, but rather absorbed, as if in a rapture, with tears flowing down his cheeks. This great scholar, whose constant labor we know, whose erudition and even more whose rightness of judgment we admire, whose absent-mindedness and naivety we recount with a smile—we watch weeping!

Why did he weep? By what contrast of sadness and joy, by what deep feeling of consolation was he moved to tears?

The chant was certainly not the direct cause of this emotion; nevertheless, it wasn't irrelevant. What Brother Thomas had written about was borne out here in his personal experience: the chant carried, extended, and enriched in him the intimate reverberation of the words.[7] Which words so touched his heart? Without ceding to unfounded hypotheses, it suffices to ask Thomas himself in his own writings. God knows that Saint Thomas shows the utmost discretion when it comes to revealing personal information. Nevertheless, here or there, he gives himself away, suggesting to us what moved him especially in the *Media vita*.

His reaction does not proceed simply from the instinctive recoil of man confronting death, or of the disquiet of an old age that always comes too soon. It's the reaction of a Christian formed in the school of Saint Augustine, aware of his sinful condition, who beseeches the grace of God. Without divine help, the sinner is incapable of not sinning again. This is why we say *et ne nos inducas in tentationem*

(and lead is not into temptation), and why, as Saint Thomas adds when commenting on this last petition of the *Our Father*, we chant: "Do not reject us now that we are old; when our strength fails do not forsake us, Lord."[8]

But was there something to weep about? Was Brother Thomas tormented by the conviction of his sins—but what sins?—to the point of trembling at the thought of being forever abandoned to an irreversible decay? Such is not his humility.

He is so moved only because he knows he is already forgiven—saved; that is the unimaginable way in which the divine mercy that moved him so deeply is manifested. "To whom do we look for help but to you, Lord, whose anger, with good reason, is enkindled because of our sins?" But already he is no longer preoccupied with himself, captivated as he is by the image of the Crucified One whom he adores while chanting: "Holy God, holy Mighty One, holy and merciful Savior..."

The words of the *Media vita* express the petitions of the human race that are realized in the promises of salvation. They summon Thomas who, as a theologian and a disciple of Saint Augustine, is especially attentive to recognizing in the Psalms the prophetic formulation of the state of Christ's soul in his passion. When this supplication of the sinner is sung, asking the Lord not to *abandon* him, what St. Thomas hears is the cry of agony of Him who became sin for us: "My God, my God, why have you *abandoned* me?"

Commenting on the twenty-seventh chapter of Saint Matthew, where the verse of Psalm 21 (22) is placed on the lips of Jesus on the Cross, and meditating with Origen on this cry—the *voce magna*—where all the mysteries are found enshrouded, Brother Thomas intends to recall in the memory of his heart the words and the chant of the *Media vita*: "Holy God, holy Mighty One, holy and merciful Savior..." He immediately transcribes in his commentary, at this very spot, the verse of Isaiah expressing the adoration of the Seraphim (Cf. Is. 6:3).

Thus, according to his own writings, this is what moved Brother Thomas to tears during the singing of the responsory. He could say

here that verse from Deuteronomy which he takes up in his Office of the Blessed Sacrament: "Is there any Nation under heaven whose God is so close to his people?" (Cf. Deut 4:7). He weeps because he is overwhelmed by the inconceivable tenderness of God for man!

"What is God," he used to ask when, yet a child, he would question the monks of Monte Cassino who were his teachers. What vigils, lectures, analyses, and commentaries did he not later devote to probing the mystery of mysteries, to finally confess that, on his own, man can only say what God is not?

But God has *spoken*! The Word was made flesh, and now Brother Thomas adores the singing of the *responsory*. This Man who, at the peak of his life, grappling with death because he had taken upon himself the sin of the world, shouts his agony to Him who alone can deliver him from this death—this Man is his God, the One who emptied Himself, but was exalted, and received the name that is above all names.

These are the mixed emotions of sadness and joy that the singing of the *Media vita* gave birth to deep within the religious soul of Brother Thomas Aquinas, to the point of provoking his tears: disquiet in the face of death, compassion in the face of the sorrowful passion of Jesus, and very sweet joy because it is through the Savior's cry of anguish that the reconciliation of humanity with God our Father is accomplished; it is there that we can adore "the appearance of the goodness of God our Savior and his love for men" (Titus 3:4).

"No other help but You, no other Savior but You, Lord: *nisi Te, Domine*." While at the Naples priory he wrote the articles of the *Summa theologiae* on the Passion and the Resurrection. There, in front of an image of the Crucified, Brother Thomas declared: "For me, there is no other reward but You, Lord, *nisi Te, Domine*."

Long labors and a somewhat favored knowledge are necessary for anyone who wants to take Saint Thomas Aquinas as a guide for his reflection on the faith, but everyone can join him in the innermost intimacy of his prayer, in the secret of his tears. At the heart of all of our distress, whatever it may be, in these diverse forms of confrontation with death through which we must pass, Saint Thomas invites

us to cry out to the Lord, to find the echo of our own sufferings in the saving cry of Jesus Crucified; he proposes that we search for peace in the adoration of him who became sin for us.

> Holy God, holy Mighty One, holy and merciful Savior,
> give us not over to bitter death,
> *You who will one day be our complete happiness.*

(Tr. Cassian Derbes, O.P.)

Fr. André Duval (1912-2005) was a Dominican friar of the Province of France. This essay first appeared in French as «Les Larmes de Frère Thomas», La Vie Spirituelle*, vol. 147, n ° 707 (11/1993) 721-725. It is translated here with the gracious permission of the editors of* La Vie Spirituelle.

Cassian Derbes entered the Order of Preachers in 2009.

Endnotes

1. Peter Calo, *Vita S. Thomae Aquinatis*, nn. 10, 13, 16, 17, 18, 28. (D. Prümmer, *Fontes vitae S. Thomae Aquinatis*, Toulouse, s.d., p. 29, 32, 35, 37, 38, 48).
2. William de Tocco, *Vita S. Thomae Aquinatis*, XXIX (D. Prümmer, op. cit., p. 103-104).
3. *Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 82, a. 4, ad 3.
4. *In Ioann. Evangelium*, XI, Lect. 5, nn. 7-8.
5. *In Epist. Ad Haebreos*, V, 7-8.
6. *Editor's note:* In the medieval form of the Dominican Rite, the *Media vita* is sung as an antiphon to the *Nunc dimittis* in the form of a responsory, an uncommon phenomenon characteristic of certain medieval rites. Before the *Nunc dimitis* canticle, only the incipit

Media vita is sung; after the canticle, the full text of the *Media vita* antiphon is sung, followed by the verse *Ne proicias*, and concluded by a repetition of the respond *Sancte Deus*. In the Ordinary Form of the Dominican liturgy, as provided for by the *Proprium Officiorum Ordinis Praedicatorum* (Rome: Santa Sabina, 1982), the *Media vita* is sung as a responsory on Saturdays, Sundays, Solemnities and Feasts during Lent and throughout Holy Week.

7. See ST II-II, q. 91, a. 2, ad 5.

8. *Collatio in orationem dominicam*, petitio 6a.

Ex Nihilo

Original Prose and Poetry

THE RELIQUARY

Augustine Marie Reisenauer, O.P.

You can sleep in my bed, Jo. I'll take the couch," Jacob instructed as he set his little sister's suitcase and backpack down on his bedroom floor. "I don't suppose it will be more than a night or two, maybe three at most."

"Okay," she almost whispered from across the apartment where she lingered at its entrance, not yet having crossed the doorway.

"Well, come on in. Don't be a stranger. You've been over before, no?"

"Yes, but only two times. The first time you took me to Adventure Universe but you forgot the discount coupons so we had to come back here to get them. The second time I remember that Mom didn't tell me why she let me come, and I remember that I could only stay long enough to play crazy eights with you and Miranda. And I also remember that I won."

He unconsciously winced at the mention of her name. "You would remember that. Say, if you need to use the bathroom there's one right here. And here we come to the kitchen. Do you want something to drink? I think I have some kid drinks. Well," Jacob corrected himself as he peered into the refrigerator, "I can offer you some milk or some water."

"No, thanks. I'm not that thirsty. But I am hungry. Really hungry. When are we going to eat?"

Jacob checked his watch. It was a quarter past seven, although with all the trauma of the day it could have easily been midnight. When his mother had called him at work, he knew instantly that something was amiss, if not a wreck. She never, or hardly ever, called him; never at work.

"Jacob, Mom. Listen. Gramps had a fainting episode at home... something wrong in his head. I'm on my way with him in the ambulance to the hospital in Westchester. I need you to pick Josephine up from school after her practice. She's still at Beacon Elementary. I need you to take care of her. I'm going to stay with Gramps. I'll let you know how things go."

As the situation unfolded, his only remaining grandparent had a ruptured brain aneurysm and had to undergo an emergency surgery. Even after the operation, Gramps' condition remained fragile and his outcome uncertain. He still remained unconscious under the anesthesia. The neurosurgeon told his mom, who then told Jacob, that these next several hours were critical. Nothing much else they could do. They would just have to wait and keep vigil and see how things would develop.

"We can eat now if you're so hungry. Let's see." Jacob rechecked the refrigerator and then the pantry and then a few cupboards and drawers. "Do you want a peanut butter sandwich, with or without maple syrup—sorry, no jelly—or a bowl of cereal? I have either Tasty Shapes or whole oats."

"Jacob! Don't you remember? I'm allergic to peanuts. And cereal isn't good to have for dinner. Even a kid knows that!"

"Well, those are the choices. That is, unless you want to wait. I can order us a pizza."

"I can wait… but not long. I'm really hungry. Coach made us run extra hard today because yesterday we lost to a team we were supposed to beat. That was their first win of the season."

"Okay, I'll order a pizza. Delivery shouldn't take more than a half hour. What kind do you want?"

"Cheese."

"Plain cheese? Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all."

After ordering a half-cheese, half-supreme-meat pizza, Jacob told his sister, "It'll be here in an hour. I forgot that it's Friday night, after all. Do you want some ice cream while we wait? I think I have at least that."

Josephine grimaced. "Mom would never let me have dessert before dinner."

"But Mom isn't here."

"But just because she isn't here doesn't mean I can do whatever I want."

"Jo, I'm not going to argue with you. I'm just trying to take care of you. Since you're starving and since the pizza won't be here for a while, I thought some ice cream might help take the edge off your appetite."

"Thanks, but no thanks. I can wait."

"Suit yourself. Hey, come here. I want to show you something."

Josephine went over to the kitchen windowsill where her brother was standing. He pointed to a fishbowl containing two goldfish.

"I got them last week. Aren't they the most magnificent color? The one with the bulging eyes is named Jack and the one with the puckered lips is named Jill."

"They *both* have bulging eyes and puckered lips."

"I know. I can't tell them apart, to be honest. I just hope that one is a boy and the other a girl. I want them to have little fishes, lots of little fishes."

"Remember when Jesus took the two fishes and said some prayers and fed all those hungry people?"

"What does that have to do with my goldfish?"

"I don't know. I just remembered those two fishes. And I'm hungry."

"Well, I can't do anything more about that than what I've already done. Let's see. Maybe we can do something. What shall we do? Do you want to play a game or do your homework or watch a movie?"

"No, none of those. I'm too worried about Gramps. Can you call Mom?"

"Jo, I just spoke with her right before I picked you up. Nothing had changed since he got out of surgery and I don't expect much has

changed since then. Mom will call us if it does. It won't help if we keep calling her. We're just going to have to wait. Okay?"

Josephine heaved a sigh. She sauntered over to the couch in the living room, plopped herself down, and closed her eyes.

"You okay?" Jacob asked.



Unknown German Goldsmith - Arm Reliquary of St Lawrence

She nodded in silence without opening her eyes.

"I'll be back in a bit. I'm going to put some clean sheets on the bed and get some fresh towels out for you and check on a couple of things."

He returned about fifteen minutes later to find Josephine still on the couch, unmoved and eyes shut. He went over to her carefully so as not to wake her if indeed she had fallen asleep. As he gently sat himself down next to her, she opened her eyes and looked straight ahead at the hutch. Ensconced in the middle of the hutch was the television. Even though it was turned off, Josephine's eyes focused on its blank, black screen as though it were turned on. After a few minutes of watching nothing on the television, her eyes began to wander about and notice the various items arranged on the shelves of the hutch.

The display was rather eclectic, but for all that, it was peculiarly united in color. Towards the bottom of the hutch, there was a framed picture of Jacob as boy, not much older than Josephine, catching rainbow trout with his father. Next to it was the lure that appeared in the picture. On the shelf up from that,

there were two ticket stubs to the theater, a brochure and map of manicured gardens, and some sporting equipment. Above that were a broken corkscrew and a handful of corks, a couple of novels, and a cookbook lying open as if someone were taking a short break from mixing waffle batter. Scattered throughout the hutch was an assortment of beauty products, including fingernail polish, lipstick, eyeliner, a hairbrush and toothbrush, and a compact with a monarch butterfly decorating its cover; and wardrobe items, including a pair of high heels and slippers, a skirt and pajama pants, two blouses, a hoodie, sunglasses, half a dozen bracelets, a topaz earrings-and-necklace set, and leather driving gloves. Most of these articles, particularly the worn ones, were orange. However, none were the bright and brilliant tone of tangerine. They appeared rather rusted, the burnt orange of the setting sun, but devoid of its splendor.

After roving over these various things, put on display like souvenirs purchased not so much to impress visitors as to remind oneself of past travels, Josephine's eyes came to rest on a black-and-white photograph propped up by itself in the exact center of the top shelf. The photograph captured Jacob's face and part of some woman's next to him. She wasn't easily identifiable since, from the slanted angle at which the picture had been snapped, her face was cut off above the chin. Jacob's eyes were closed and his expression somber, like someone who had been in a funeral home for much longer than expected. But one couldn't tell whether the woman was smiling or frowning or similarly straight-faced. Around Jacob and the woman there was no visible background. The photograph had been taken at night.

"That was her, wasn't it?" Josephine broke the silence. "And those were her things, weren't they?"

Jacob nodded.

"Miranda Plume," his sister said. "I remember liking her the few times that I met her. I remember I wanted to be like her when I grew up. I thought she was beautiful."

"She is beautiful," Jacob said dreamily.

"And those were her beautiful things, her makeup, her jewelry, her clothes."

"They're what she left here and hasn't come back for yet. For a

while, I left them right where they were, in the corner of the bedroom, in the bathroom toiletry cabinet. But then, as she kept not coming back, not even to retrieve her things, I began to collect them together and place them in the hutch. I don't know why, but it seemed better to have them in one place rather than lying all around. And I couldn't just give them away. I wouldn't even imagine throwing them out. Each of them contains a memory of Miranda. The time we went to see *The Glass Menagerie*, but had to leave after the opening scene because she got sick. The time we drove nearly all night to make it to the Plumes' lake cabin for sunrise, then spent the whole next day sleeping. But as more and more time comes and goes, I'm starting to remember these memories less and less. Already I've forgotten whether we actually played tennis or whether I just bought her that racquet in the hope that someday we might. And I can't seem to remember any occasion when she wore that pleated blouse."

"I remember that Miranda always had the most beautiful clothes and the most beautiful makeup. I once thought she was a beauty queen. I didn't know then why Mom didn't see her in the same way."

"Me either. And I still don't."

"Gramps liked her."

"But his liking her probably aggravated Mom even more. You're too young to appreciate the history between them when it came to relationships in the family. She was always on one side, he on the other. What she thought atrocious, he thought fabulous. What she wanted joined together, he wanted driven far apart. Uncle Edward and Auntie Barbara, for example. Even when Dad left for good with that other woman, not so long after you were born, Gramps took his son's side. He thought, and probably still thinks, that Mom drove him away with all her expectations, her standards, her unbending rules and cantankerous principles. And now, as things have turned out, I'm not so loath to think so myself."

"Jacob, don't turn Mom into the bad guy. Don't you feel bad for her? Don't you feel bad for the way Dad up and left her, up and left *us*? I bet it hurt her as much when Dad left as it hurt you when Miranda left. Maybe even more."

He didn't respond. Instead, he got up suddenly from the couch

and went straight into the kitchen. He headed for the freezer and dished himself out a bowl of ice cream and poured himself a generous portion of vodka. He sat hunched over on the counter facing the window with his back to the living room where Josephine remained alone. Jacob started gulping down the ice cream and the vodka together without much pause to appreciate either one. His relentless pace was abetted by his refusal to release either dessert or drink from his grasp. If he got a headache, his brisk and muddled ingestion would have precluded him from recognizing whether it had come from the ice cream or the alcohol. But it didn't seem to matter much to Jacob. He was engrossed in what he had set before himself. When both the bowl and the glass were empty, Jacob sat for what could have been three minutes or thirty, staring blankly at the empty dishes.

All of a sudden, something snapped him back to present reality. It wasn't anything altogether from the outside, like the backfire of a car engine or the siren of an ambulance or the voice of his little sister. It was something more from the inside, a lackluster flash of orange within his mind that at once faded into darkness. Jacob reentered the present and lifted up his eyes. As they came to rest on the goldfish, he noticed how, in the background light of the setting sun streaming in through the window, the two fish appeared to be flying rather than swimming. From his perspective, the light of sunset somehow vaporized the visible contours of the fishbowl and the goldfish now seemed to drift their way through the atmosphere. It seemed that nothing was keeping them back from floating through the window and leaving nothing but a memory of their existence, if that.

The doorbell rang.

"It's the pizza," Jacob said to the adjacent room. "I'll get it, Jo. Sit tight."

When he returned to the living room with the pizza and some water, he found Josephine lying curled up on the couch outfitted in the pajama pants and hoodie that had been shelved in the hutch. Her arms and legs came up short of the length of the sleeves and leggings. Somehow this gave him the impression, not so much that the clothes were too big for her little body, but rather that her body was

too small for the perfectly sized clothes.

"What are you doing wearing those?" Jacob interrogated.

"I'm cold."

"Didn't Mom teach you how to ask?"

"I did. Don't you remember? You said, 'Suit yourself.' So I suited myself."

"I did not."

"Yes, you did. I went into the kitchen and you were sitting on the counter eating your ice cream and drinking your water. I asked, 'Can I wear some of her clothes?' and you said, 'Suit yourself.' Don't you remember?"

"Not in the least. How strange. But it doesn't matter now. Take those things off before you spill grease and sauce all over them."

"But I'm cold."

"Don't you have some warm clothes in your suitcase?"

"No."

"I suppose you wouldn't. Why didn't you pack any?"

"You helped me pack."

"Fine, I'll get you some of my clothes."

Jacob retrieved from his bedroom a pair of sweatpants and a long-sleeved shirt with the face of a tiger on its front. He handed them to his sister in exchange for Miranda's clothes which he promptly and meticulously re-enshrined in their proper place in the hutch. After Josephine got dressed in them, Jacob rolled up the sleeves for her so that she could eat more easily and less messily.

"Alright," Jacob said opening the lid of the pizza box. He served Josephine a piece of cheese pizza and himself a couple pieces loaded to overflowing with all kinds of meat from all kinds of parts of all kinds of animals. "Bon appétit."

Jacob began to devour the pile of meat.

"That's the shortest grace I've ever heard," Josephine complained. "And you didn't even make the sign of the cross."

"That's because it wasn't grace," Jacob managed to say without letting too much meat fall from his overfull mouth. "All I said was 'May you have a delectable, delicious, and altogether yummy meal.' Nothing else. Nothing else to say really."

"Mom always prays before we eat."

"Well, this isn't her place. It's mine. When we eat here, we don't have to say grace."

Josephine remained silent. After a minute or so, she picked up her cheese slice. She said, "Thank you," and began to eat.

Although she hadn't looked at him when she said this, Jacob nevertheless responded, "You're welcome. I hope your cheese slice is as tasty as all this savory meat."

Except for a couple of slices of plain cheese, they finished the pizza, eaten mostly in a heavy silence. After dinner, as they sat on the couch, each absorbed in their own thoughts, Jacob's phone rang in the bedroom. Their mother called to inform them that Gramps had taken a turn for the worse and his condition was rapidly deteriorating. Although they were doing all that they humanly could, the doctors didn't expect him to survive through the night. She would call again should anything change. Her voice sounded like it was on the edge of breaking down and bursting into speechlessness.

"Mom, are you okay?" Jacob asked.

"How can I be okay?" she responded from half a world away. "For a long time, I haven't been okay. But I've grown used to it. I've grown used to Gramps and your father and now you not being with me, not being on my side. I have no one else now but Josephine. Take care of her for me. Listen, I'll let you know how things turn out with your grandfather. And Jacob…"

"Yes, Mom?"

"I… I want you to know…" There was an uncomfortable pause. "Just take care of Josephine."

"Okay."

He hung up the phone and returned to his sister in the living room. She was holding the framed picture of their father and Jacob as a boy, which she had taken from the hutch. Josephine spoke first.

"Gramps is going to die, isn't he?"

"Maybe. It doesn't look good, but we'll have to wait and see. Mom will let us know."

"I'm worried."

"I know. I am too. Nothing much we can do, though. Hey, maybe you should try to get some sleep. It's rather late for you and, besides, there's not much sense in staying awake worrying."

Josephine returned the picture to the hutch and started sauntering off to the bedroom. Before she got there, though, Jacob stopped her.

"Jo."

"Yes?"

"Give me a holler if you need anything, okay?"

"Okay."

"And Jo…"

"Yes?"

"Don't forget to say your prayers. Mom would want you to say them."

As Jacob lay on the couch in the darkened living room, waiting impatiently for sleep to put an end to this day he would rather forget, his mind went back to Miranda. He somehow came to the night he was planning on proposing to her, the night captured on the single remaining photograph that he had of her. She had taken all the others with her when she left, but somehow overlooked this one. Perhaps she didn't recognize her own chin. Perhaps she did, but didn't mind leaving such a small portion of her face for him, a portion that would increase more and more for him the longer she remained away. It increased in proportion as the rest of her decreased and receded from his memory.

Little by little, Jacob had begun to find it difficult to recall particular episodes in their life together. Then, the more familiar things she often would say or do began to fade. Soon enough, even her features and appearance started to pass into oblivion. In a desperate attempt to stop, or at least hinder, the peeling away of his grasp of her, he clung to the tokens of her presence, not the least of which was the portrait of her chin, the last vestige of the beautiful body he had once so delighted in.

Jacob focused on her chin that night, motionless and emotionless, unmoving and unwilling to reveal a smile or a frown, to forecast a

yes or a no to the question he was unable to ask her. Before he had the chance, Miranda, from out of the blue, told him she was leaving. She didn't attempt to give either an explanation or an apology. She bluntly said that that was the way it had to be. She needed space to drift. And so she drifted. She abruptly departed from him that night and slowly began to fade away from his memory. Her still chin was the last of the day's contents that occupied his mind as sleep finally overtook him.

Sometime in the middle of the night, Jacob awoke to his little sister's shriek. He jumped up and hastened into the bedroom. He switched on the light to find Josephine sitting upright in bed, visibly shaken, her face streaming with tears.

"Jo, are you okay? What's the matter?" he asked as he sat down beside her and put his arms around her trembling body.

"It's Dad," she said through sobs. "Dad's gone. The thing in his head…"

"No, Jo. Not Dad. Gramps," Jacob tried to correct her, thinking she was confused. "It's Gramps who has the thing in his head. But we're still waiting to hear from Mom if he's okay. He isn't gone yet. Listen, forget about it and try to get some shuteye."

Jacob kissed her forehead, laid her back down on the bed, and tucked her back in. As he turned out the light, he reassured her, "It's all okay. Everything will be okay."

Without turning on any lights, he went into the kitchen, opened the freezer, and groped around in the darkness for the bottle of vodka. Taking several swigs, he sauntered over to where he thought the window might be. The night was so dark that he wanted to see whether the moon hadn't in fact passed out of existence, and whether the orange glow from the street lights hadn't been blown out. He could see nothing. He wasn't even sure he was anywhere near the window.

But as he turned around, lifting the bottle for another swig, he accidentally knocked it into something. He heard the sound of glass clinking and then of glass crashing on the floor. Jacob felt the lukewarm water on his bare feet and began to feel the pricks of pain

from where the shards of broken glass had pierced them, releasing the blood within. After this curt hiatus, still standing in the pool of water becoming ever more mingled with blood, Jacob continued to lift the bottle to his lips. He took several more swigs of vodka as he listened in vain for the sound of something flopping.

Augustine Reisenauer entered the Order of Preachers in 2006. God-willing, he will be ordained to the priesthood in May 2012.

SONNET

Gabriel Torretta, O.P.

At the city limits a traffic jam
Stood stuck facing a battered metal sign:
"All Exits – Lodging, Gas, and Food" – then some
Logos to tempt all man's desires in time.
The long-traveled longed to stop but didn't dare,
Afraid perhaps of bedding down too soon;
Others, wrenched from hope of home, seized despair –
Poor exiles, driven mad by plenty's tune.
The city spat its own into the fray,
Who clogged, then blocked the route in feverish flight
From cold, unrestful rest and bitter play,
Fleeing unquenched desire with all their might.
Lanes, too, like graves, one day will yield their dead.
Dying, want and hope will as love be wed.

Gabriel Torretta entered the Order of Preachers in 2008.

Friars' Bookshelf



St. Dominic and the Devil
Pietro della Vecchia, c. 1630

THE WAY OF KINGS

Brandon Sanderson, *The Way of Kings*. New York: Tor Fantasy, 2011.

Is Brandon Sanderson's *The Way of Kings* an "epic fantasy" novel? Given its length (over 1200 pages and only the first in a projected ten-volume series) and the fact that benchmark fantasy publisher Tor released it, the answer might seem obvious. But in fact, the book illustrates why most books billing themselves as fantasy miss the point of the genre and devolve into "sci-fi with swords."

Sanderson's novel introduces readers to a vast world of varied cultures, intricate politics, detailed mythology, and, of course, magic, as the stories of four main characters are interwoven. The world of Roshar is dominated by "highstorms"—brutal tempests originating from an unknown point in the east that scourge the land as they

travel west, infusing gems with mysterious "stormlight."

The dominant religion of this world teaches that Roshar began as a fall-back position for the forces of the Almighty—led by his ten Heralds and their powerful Knights Radiant—after being expelled from the Tranquiline Halls by the nightmarish "Voidbringers." The Heralds attempted to retake their former abode and left Roshar in the hands of the Knights Radiant. After years of service, these Knights, in turn, cast down their magical armaments and abandoned the people. Centuries later, it is in this betrayed, buffeted world that readers meet the novel's main characters.

Kaladin "Stormblessed" is a surgeon's son turned soldier, turned slave, turned "bridgeman" in the army of the King of Alethkar. These bridgemen lead the army's charge, carrying and setting bridges so the soldiers can ford a series of massive chasms. Kaladin's story jumps from past to present as readers learn how this charismatic twenty-year-old—who is also a spear master—came to be where he is.

Shallan Davar is a young woman whose mission is to become the ward of Jasnah Kholin, the most renowned scholar of the age, and also its most notorious heretic. While appearing to study under Jasnah's tutelage, her real goal is to steal her mistress' magical Soulcaster, which has the power to transmute one object into another. Shallan's moral struggle is set within the broader context of Jasnah's research, and both have repercussions for the overall plot and the other main characters.

Szeth-son-son-Vallano is perhaps the book's most intriguing character. He is a "Truthless," one who is obliged unconditionally to do the bidding of his master. Most often, this means assassination, since Szeth is the deadliest individual in the book. Not only is he able to draw stormlight from gems to perform incredible feats of magic, but he is also a "shardbearer," possessing one of the mythical swords once carried by the Knights Radiant. A pacifist, he weeps as he is forced to kill.

Lastly, there is Dalinar Kholin, Highprince of Alethkar and uncle to the King. A shardbearer, a peerless general, and a legendary warrior, he has strange visions whenever highstorms strike. This, com-

bined with the fact that he lives by ancient codes of nobility outlined in a text called *The Way of Kings*, makes him a pariah. His mission from the Almighty is to "unite them," (though the referent is unclear) and by the end of the book his story has met up with Kaladin's.

The book is surprisingly well paced—presuming that readers don't have television-induced attention spans—and Sanderson does a good job interweaving plots and avoiding meandering descriptions. He's certainly gifted at creating worlds, and he gives the book a grand scope without necessitating a twenty-page glossary. This should suffice to show that the book is truly epic.

But *The Way of Kings* is not truly fantasy. Rather than charge headlong into the murky waters of defining fantasy over and against science fiction, I'll make a more modest—and hopefully less controversial—proposal: whatever its definition may be, true fantasy has its roots in fairy tale. *The Way of Kings* does not.

In particular, there are two traits of the fairy tale that save the fantasy genre from being merely sci-fi at the Ren-Fest. First, fairy tales presuppose that the fantastic or ineffable is an indispensable part of the real. As a genre, science fiction demands no such presupposition (even if individual works of sci-fi, like Lewis' Space Trilogy, do). The second trait is equally important: fairy tale does not posit a hypothetical. Instead, it makes a fact claim (or at least a belief claim) about the nature of the real world. Science-fiction stories are "what if" stories. Fairy tales are "once upon a time."

While this trait need not be as explicit in fantasy as it is in a full-blooded fairy tale, it must at least be implicit if it is to maintain its roots in the latter. Tolkien goes to great lengths to identify Middle-Earth and the real world (despite the massive physical differences between the two), and even the story of Lloyd Alexander's Prydain Chronicles is told in such a way that there is no reason to think it isn't our world in a mythic age. This must be so, because while sci-fi is inherently "futuristic" (and so potential), fantasy and fairy tale look to the past, which was once actual. When it comes to Sanderson's *The Way of Kings*, however, there is neither an explicit link nor an implicit connection between Roshar and our world. The reader

has the distinct sense of being immersed in a hypothetical of grand scale.

If *The Way of Kings* makes no claim to reality, even less does it uphold the wonderful and the ineffable as an essential part of the real. The most noticeable characteristic of fantasy is magic, and Sanderson's magic is clearly a "system." It has detailed rules, making it a techne in the original sense of the word (an art or craft). As such, it is indistinguishable in all but appearance from the technological feats of science fiction. Not so with the magic of Gandalf (or the miracles of the Saints).

The Way of Kings entertains readers with a "what if" of epic proportions. It does not ask readers to believe in Roshar, but only to follow the playing-out of its internal logic. It does not claim that the ineffable is a part of the real, and, in fact, Sanderson goes much further: the ineffable, if it must be present at all, cannot play any pivotal role in the plot. Indeed, according to "Sanderson's First Law" (as he calls it elsewhere), "an author's ability to solve conflict with magic is directly proportional to how well the reader understands said magic." Only what can be comprehended has a place in the resolution of human drama. The final answer must not involve mystery.

Thus, *The Way of Kings* is an epic work of sci-fi, with swords. The characters are interesting, the battles are thrilling, the magic system is clever, and the plot proceeds like a well-oiled machine. But whatever this world of Sanderson's may be, it is not our world (implicitly or explicitly), and there is no room for what cannot be explained therein. Everything of significance must be comprehended and circumscribed, and thus the roots of fairy tale have been dug up and the leaves of fantasy scattered.

Philip Neri Reese, O.P.

Philip Neri Reese entered the Order of Preachers in 2009.

THE POET AS BELIEVER

Aidan Nichols, *The Poet as Believer: A Theological Study of Paul Claudel*. Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011.

Aidan Nichols' recent book, *The Poet as Believer: A Theological Study of Paul Claudel*, appears as an installment in the *Ashgate Studies in Theology, Imagination and the Arts* series from Ashgate Press. (Nichols' earlier book, *Redeeming Beauty: Soundings in Sacred Aesthetics*, appeared in the same series.) In this present work, Nichols explores the theological dimensions of the French poet Paul Claudel (1868-1955) by examining a selection of his poems, essays, and dramatic plays. Claudel figures importantly in certain strands of twentieth-century theology with which Nichols is sympathetic; Nichols himself says the notion of Claudel as a theologian originated with Henri de Lubac.

The majority of the book is organized according to theological theme, rather than chronology of composition. Chapters four through seven are liturgically organized, the first around the theme of the Mass and the others according to the rhythms of the (pre-1962) Roman Calendar that re-contextualized Claudel's life and experiences after his conversion. The final chapters deal with the Virgin Mary and Claudel's spiritual approach to Biblical exegesis, while the last chapter provides a brief treatment of Claudel's theatrical plays (for which he is most widely acclaimed).

Although historical trajectory does not structure his analysis, Nichols does rely heavily on personal-historical context in his analysis of each aspect of Claudel's work. Nichols begins with a brief historical preface, which becomes a running subtext for the following chapters. In this much he exhibits a deep sensitivity for the significance of Claudel's personal struggles and the cultural milieu that shaped them.

Paul Claudel was born in rural France at a time when Catholicism was still culturally intact. He traveled abroad early in life, and spent the majority of his working life as a French diplomat. He was stationed in places such as China and Prague, and was eventually appointed French ambassador to Denmark and finally to the United States. Nichols' theological treatment of Claudel's work is careful to take into account the full scope of these public and private dimensions of Claudel's life experience.

Educated in Paris as a young man, Claudel assimilated the agnosticism he found among the Parisian intelligentsia, sinking for a time into a kind of materialism. Deeply disaffected by the Kantian explanations of his professors, he even contemplated suicide in 1895. Nichols points out the similarities between Claudel and Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, whose conversion would track along similar lines only a few years later.

For Nichols, Claudel's work is an example of what he calls 'literary modernism.' In his youth, Claudel was influenced by French symbolism, a movement in both literature and the visual arts that is characterized by an emphasis on emotion, experience and transcendence. Nichols believes that the effects of this can still be observed long after Claudel parted ways with the secularist intelligentsia of his day. Claudel reports that it was his encounter with the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud that first shook the foundations of his materialism and opened him to the possibility of the metaphysical and the religious. Although Rimbaud himself was decidedly heterodox, Nichols observes that even after Claudel's return to Catholicism, the stylistic influence of Rimbaud can still be felt strongly.

Nichols attempts to distance Claudel from theological modernism to some degree, however, periodically making reference to Claudel's criticism of Modernist thinkers such as Loisy and his distaste for the excesses of historical-critical scholarship. For Nichols, Claudel's task as a Catholic and a twentieth-century poet is daunting:

> The modern poetic subject, if he or she wishes to be catholic in both the lower case and upper case senses of that word,

> has to come to terms with an almost unmanageable freight of tradition in an inhospitable climate of pragmatism and positivism as well as secularity.

Nichols portrays Claudel as one who has given voice to the Church's faith and tradition within a mode of discourse that remains intelligible – and therefore culturally present – to modern men. Nichols argues effectively for a theologically informed reading of Claudel's poetry, defending Claudel from those who would wrestle him into more conventional literary categories and downplay the import of his Catholicism. In short, Nichols presents Claudel as a model for Catholic poets who find themselves in modern times.

But what is Claudel's relationship to theology? At times, Nichols seems to position Claudel alongside theologians such as Balthasar and de Lubac as a kind of poetic counterpart to the *Ressourcement* movement. While it is easy to appreciate the affinities that exist between Claudel and the *Nouvelle Theologie*, one wonders if this is in fact a relationship of necessity. In making these associations Nichols raises questions about the relationship between poetry, theology, and culture that he could not rightly be expected to resolve in the space of this book.

However, some readers may be tempted to explore other possibilities. How would Claudel appear if viewed through more traditional Augustinian or Thomistic categories? Questions of this kind lend themselves to no certain answers, and there may be no single lens through which to view his work. But precisely because of the living, unsystematizable complexity of his art, it is clear that future generations of Catholic thinkers will continue to appreciate the cultural resonance and spiritual penetration of Claudel the poet, and perhaps even Claudel the theologian.

Reginald Mary Lynch, O.P.

Reginald Lynch entered the Order of Preachers in 2007. God willing, he will be ordained to the diaconate in March 2012.

THE INHERITANCE OF ROME

Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages 400-1000.* New York: Penguin, 2010.

The problem with many accounts of the Middle Ages is that they are not really about the Middle Ages. Authors often use the period to begin a story about the rise of modernity: moral decadence leads to political collapse and the "triumph of barbarism and religion." In The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages 400-1000, Chris Wickham, Chichele Professor of Medieval History at Oxford University, rejects all such "teleological" readings and tells the story of the Early Middle Ages on its own terms.

Economic interactions drive Wickham's account. The approach has weaknesses, but it enables him to cover all of Rome's successor states. The popular take on this period has a Franco-Norman focus, but the history of early medieval Europe involves so much more. The Roman Empire, for instance, not only survived in the East, but also reconquered much of its old western territory. It remained a player in Italy until the fall of the Exarchate of Ravenna in 751 and the other Norman Invasion (of Sicily) in the eleventh century. The Empire was also both a trading partner with the West and its buffer against Arab advance. Thus, the continuation of the Empire is important both in itself and for understanding the Franco-Norman world. This conclusion also holds for the Arabs, Goths, Slavs, and many other groups. Wickham tells their stories and ties them together by pointing out their economic interconnections.

Wickham divides the early Middle Ages into three periods. At the beginning of the fifth century, Rome dominated Western Europe and the Mediterranean. This ended in the fifth century in the West and in the seventh century in the East, when Persian and Arab conquests left the eastern Empire in dire straits. The second period was one of "polycentric power." By 700 the main players were Merovingian

Francia, Visigothic Spain, Lombard Italy, the Umayyad Caliphate, and a reeling Byzantine Empire (the reconfiguration brought about by the seventh-century conquests finally makes this term appropriate). The late-eighth and early-ninth century saw a third transition to a situation where three powers dominated: the Abbasid Caliphate, the Carolingians, and the Byzantine Empire. By the mid-tenth century, the first two of these were seriously weakened, while the latter was growing in strength.

These three periods were delineated by three transformations: the breakup of the Roman Empire in the West, the Arab conquest in the East, and the rise of moralizing politics (which Wickham defines as a "political program aimed at bringing a whole people… closer to salvation") in the Carolingian world. Three further transitions marked the end of the early Middle Ages: the failure of public power in Western Europe, the growth of stable polities between the Frankish and Byzantine territories (which organized against their encroachments but imitated their style), and the breakup of the Abbasid Caliphate (which enabled the Byzantine Empire to reach the historical height of its power).

Wickham's typical concerns are on display in his account of the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. Reacting against older polemical accounts, some modern historians have emphasized continuities before and after 476. These historians reject the account of waves of invading "barbarians" capitalizing on the decadence of fifth-century Rome. Instead, they emphasize how the new groups' trading and living with Romans had a Romanizing effect. In fact, post-Roman leaders consciously adopted the Roman cultural and legal heritage.

Wickham agrees with this, but only up to a point. "Over and over again 'barbarian' armies occupied Roman provinces, which they ran in Roman ways; so nothing changed; but everything changed." The engine for this change was the breakdown of trade networks and tax collection. Both of these favored a complex, centralized economy as well as a military hierarchy and civil bureaucracy that was independent of the local aristocracy and could subsume it. When the trade

and tax systems of the Empire broke down in the West, local landowning became the source of power and wealth. Consequently, politics became more localized as well. Ethnic identity, which is more fluid than we often admit, followed.

In the Arab conquest of the Eastern Roman Empire, the same economic dynamics worked in the opposite direction. The caliph chose not to settle his troops as a landowning aristocracy, but as garrisons in cities. The Umayyads left the Roman tax system intact to pay for this. This system promoted centralized rule, but also kept the Arabs relatively aloof from the local population. Egyptian social history, for instance, can be written with almost no reference to Arabs up to the year 800. What drove Islamicization (and Arabization) was the need for local power brokers to bridge the gap between Arab elites and native populations. The new religion (at least at this stage) spread through client-patron networks.

While Wickham's focus on economic interactions illuminates, his treatment of religion obfuscates. Socio-economic interactions are, for him, the real drivers of history. Religious figures are only interesting as participants in these. So, for instance, the ecumenical councils are important because politically prominent bishops, men like St. Athanasius or St. Cyril of Alexandria, needed a definition of God, and could whip up the masses to get it. But, somehow, we are also to believe that the very same masses did not share the outlook of their "rigorist" leaders.

The problem is that a people's convictions about ultimate realities do shape their aspirations and choices; this creates culture and drives history. The rigorists were not imitated in their ascesis, but they were influential. The masses did follow St. Cyril of Alexandria, for instance, and he did lead them in some pretty rowdy political fights, but he did this because of his prior conviction about our salvation in Christ. Similarly, the success of the moralizing style of Carolingian politics should lead us to suspect that belief shapes culture in critical ways.

Nevertheless, Wickham has provided an illuminating account of the historical period that saw the crystallization of many aspects of

Catholic life. Having set out to write a non-teleological account that lets the early Middle Ages speak for themselves, he has remarkably achieved his goal.

Peter Totleben, O.P.

Peter Totleben entered the Order of Preachers in 2006. God willing, he will be ordained to the diaconate in March 2012.

CLOISTER CHRONICLE

On May 27, 2011, four of our brothers were ordained to the priesthood at St. Dominic's Church in Washington, DC, by the Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio, JCD: Hyacinth Marie Cordell, Ignatius John Schweitzer, Ezra Sullivan, and Austin Dominic Litke. They are pictured below together with Fr. Joseph Alobaidi, Master of Students, and Fr. Brian Chrzastek, Subprior of the Priory of the Immaculate Conception.



On August 13, nine brothers made solemn profession: Br. Peter Totleben, Br. Paul Martin Kennedy, Br. Joseph-Mary Hertzog, Br. Mario Aquinas Calabrese, Br. Albert Duggan, Br. Reginald Mary Lynch, Br. Leo Checkai, Br. Peter Martyr Joseph Yungwirth, and Br. Ambrose Mary Little. They are pictured below with Fr. Giles Di-

mock, then Prior of the Priory of the Immaculate Conception, Fr. Joseph Alobaidi, Master of Students, and Fr. John Langlois, Socius and Vicar of the Provincial for the Province of St. Joseph.



Fr. Paul Murray of the Province of Ireland preached the Community Retreat for the Priory of the Immaculate Conception following the Solemnity of the Assumption.

On September 14, the student brothers launched a new blog format of *Dominicana* (www.dominicanablog.com).

On September 17, the following brothers were installed as lectors by Fr. John Langlois: Br. Bonaventure Champman, Br. Humbert Kilanowski, Br. Thomas Davenport, Br. Peter Benedict Sampino, Br. Dominic Mary Verner, Br. Joachim Kenney, Br. Raymund Snyder, Br. Jacob Bertrand Janczyk, Br. Joseph-Anthony Kress, Br. Michael Mary Weibley, Br. Patrick Mary Briscoe, Br. Louis Bertrand Lemoine, Br. John Sica, Br. Gregory Maria Pine, Br. Athanasius Murphy, Br. Tómas Martín Rosado, and Br. Dennis Klein (Province of the Holy Name).

Among the recent guests of the Dominican House of Studies was Dominic Duka, O.P., Archbishop of Prague, who visited from September 19-25. Archbishop Duka came to America to celebrate the Dvořák Festival Mass at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on September 25, held in honor of the composer's 170th birthday and the 200th birthday of Bohemian-born John Nepomucene Neumann, fourth archbishop of Philadelphia.

Fr. Kenneth Letoile was elected prior of the Priory of the Immaculate Conception on September 25.

The studentate hosted an inter-provincial gathering of Dominican student brothers from the North American Provinces from October 7-9. Eight students came from the studentates in Oakland, St. Louis, and Ottawa. Talks were given on John Paul II's *Vita consecrata*, and there was ample opportunity for fraternity and fellowship, including a visit to the Capitol.

On October 12, the DC Frassati Fellowship, a group of young men and women from the Washington, DC area, held its first meeting at the Dominican House of Studies for a discussion of Pope Benedict's *Light of the World* led by two student brothers. Since then, the Fellowship has held several hikes, service projects, discussions, and periods of Eucharistic adoration.

Training sessions for the celebration of the Low Mass in the Dominican Rite were offered for student brothers and members of the Senior Community of the Dominican House of Studies on October 19 and 20.

On October 31, Br. Gabriel Torretta preached on the theme of friendship at the annual All Saints' Vigil. Brothers read passages by St. Aelred of Rielvaux, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Catherine of Siena, and from the life of St. Philip Neri. A large group of the faithful attended, filling the chapel and the cloister walk.