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ARGUMENT

Faith, hope, and love, these three remain, and though love is the greatest of these, faith is the first. In faith, we hear Truth himself speak, and we know his word is true. In faith, we hear him promise, “I am with you always,” and we know his word is true. In faith, we hear him say, “greater love than this hath no man . . .” and we know his word is true. Faith places before our minds the ground of our hope and the object of our love, and this is nothing less than God himself. In this sense, faith is truly the beginning of the Christian life.

Pope Benedict’s call for a Year of Faith, then, is an invitation to return to the very foundation of our Catholic identity. Challenges to the Christian faith—be they political, intellectual, or moral—abound in every age. Meeting such challenges, then, calls for a constant intention to deepen, intensify, and share this faith we have received. Accordingly, every year should be a year of faith.

Growth in this supernatural virtue does us no violence. Faith extends our knowledge, and as rational animals we have an inborn desire to know the causes of everything we see and experience. Wondering “why?” is part of who and what we are as man, and faith extends the sphere of this desire for understanding.

Yet many of our contemporaries tend to consider only the knowledge gained through personal experience or discovered through scientific inquiry to be reliable. More and more, our culture limits the scope of what counts as a legitimate answer—or even as a legitimate question. But we might wonder with Eliot, “Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?”

The gift of faith comes from God and cannot be conjured up by any merely human effort. Ultimately, faith adheres to God simply because he is God, the one who neither deceives nor is deceived.

Still, theologians refer to the “motives of credibility” which prepare us for faith. Human evidence abounds to confirm the truth of what is revealed.

Our experiences of friendship, love, and wonder suggest we are more than molecular; rational argumentation demonstrates the existence and attributes of God; the example of the saints—such as the heroic temperance of St. Thomas Aquinas and the bright light of Martin de Porres’s humility—and the magnanimous witness of the one who sits upon the throne of Peter suggest that there is something more than mere fancy to this two-thousand-year-old institution we know as the Catholic Church.

Even the Church’s Marian devotion bespeaks the reasonability of the faith. Just as natural mothers take great pride in their children, so too the Blessed Virgin Mary points us toward her Son. Just as natural mothers care for their children’s needs, so our Redeemer’s mother extends her maternal care to all in this valley of tears: We can be confident, then, that she will show us the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus.

What is at stake in all of this? It may be easy to forget that nothing less than the eternal fate of our immortal souls hangs in the balance. Good, evil, heaven, hell: These are not metaphors. The battle which every Catholic wages against principalities and powers is a battle for the person.

We know that Christ has won the battle. With his *Consummatum est*, Christ proclaimed his victory. Yet our place in this contest is not on the sidelines. Knowing God inspires us to love him, and loving God impels us to know him more deeply. Contemplating who God is, what he is like, and how he has acted in our lives and in our world will enkindle within us a burning desire to share the saving truths of the faith. This contemplation prompts us to share the gospel with a world that, despite its scientific advances, seems frighteningly unaware of God’s love. Thus, as members of Christ’s body, we share in the battle as long as human history wends inexorably towards its consummation at his glorious return.

New years contain new resolutions, usually with mixed results. Fortunately, in the life of faith success does not depend merely on the resolve of any human will. The grace of Christ, given through the sacraments of the Church, strengthens and renews us from day to day, year to year.

Each article in this issue of *Dominicana* offers a point of entry into the Year of Faith. To highlight just a few, Br. Joseph Mary and Br. John Baptist present to us the examples of the saints, Br. Gabriel interviews Roger Scruton on man's engagement with modern culture, and Br. Thomas More considers Gregory Wolfe's analysis of art and faith today. Diverse in content, our Winter issue has one goal: nourishing its readers in faith.

By the grace of God, there is no limit, this side of heaven, to growth in faith. It ceases only when the soul in heaven beholds God face to face. May this year be a year of growth in faith for each of us . . . and the next year, too.

Sebastian White, O.P.
Editor, *Dominicana*

Philip Neri Reese, O.P.
Associate Editor, *Dominicana*

A MOTHER'S LOVE

Joseph Mary Hertzog, O.P.

During the recent summer Olympics in London, the multinational company Procter & Gamble ran a series of television commercials featuring the mothers of Olympic athletes. The aim was to honor moms and all that they do to help their children succeed.

The leading commercial opened with a Chinese mother in a big city gently waking her little girl early in the morning: “Hi sweetie, it’s time to wake up,” she says. We then see identical scenes in suburban America, in an Afro-English home in working-class England, and in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. “C’mon, I’ll make you breakfast,” says the Brazilian mom to her young son while the background music fills the viewer with a sense of anticipation and the sun rises over the bay of Rio.

In the next scene the moms are tenderly preparing different national breakfasts for their children: Chinese dumplings, toast and beans, fried plantains, cereal. Mom serves breakfast and then sits down to watch with delight as her child happily eats.

Now it is time to go to practice. Mother and child leave the house together to catch the bus, the subway, or load the minivan, sometimes braving the pouring rain. Mom is ever attentive, holding the child’s hand, helping him or her on and off. She is careful and gentle.

Now we are at practice: One child is swimming, one is playing volleyball, one is in track and field, and another is on the balance beam. Whatever sport, the moms are all engaged in the same thing with the same attitude—looking on attentively, watching,



MARY CASSATT - BREAKFAST IN BED

smiling, guiding, becoming experts in a sport in which otherwise they would have no interest if not for their child.

What comes next is a review in rapid succession of all the previous scenes of mom and child. The music picks up, seemingly to carry both mother and child forward, uniting them from two different points of view in a common endeavor—the child’s life, success, and happiness. Now mom is helping and guiding, now doing the laundry, now watching and playing with her child, now folding and straightening. Day after day, the same dedication, the same commitment—the child to his or her passion and the mother to her child. We see mom at home behind the scenes—washing the dishes, fixing the bed—while the children are at practice or at school. No one sees her, nobody congratulates her or gives her a medal—nor does she want one. What gives mom satisfaction is seeing to her child’s needs, giving him a piece of fruit, taking her

where she needs to go, or watching her sleep peacefully and safely while mom looks on in the rearview mirror, attentive, thoughtful, anticipating.

Fast-forward. The children are quickly growing up and competing in tournaments. We see mom cheering vigorously from the stands. Whether it is swimming, track and field, volleyball, or gymnastics there's mom bandaging a foot, consoling after a defeat, helping to pick up the pieces when dreams crumble. Each time we see mom she is full of emotion—anxiety, joy, focus, optimism, and always lots of love, unconditional love. It is the same for each mom, day after day, year after year, as her “baby” grows up and flourishes in manhood and womanhood.

The final scene has us at the Olympic games: the culmination of thousands of hours and dollars, sacrifice, sweat and toil impossible to quantify. The crowds are huge, the hometown is glued to the TV, the stakes are high, all eyes are on our athletes and nobody feels the pressure more than the biggest fan—mom, watching with baited breath. The commercial ends on a cathartic note: The child wins the race, sticks the landing, wins match point, and touches the wall of the pool first. Competitive exultation turns into profound gratitude as one adult child runs to the stands to embrace mom, one blows kisses from his knees, and another waves from the pool while mom's eyes overflow with tears, hands over her mouth and inexpressible joy on her face. The children know they did not make this journey alone, that none of it would have been possible without the encouragement, support and sacrifice of mom every step of the way.

After a mere two minutes of these powerful, rapid, images, the picture gives way to a message in stark black on white: “The hardest job in the world, is the best job in the world. Thank you, Mom.”

Indeed, where would we be without our moms? Nobody comes into this world without a mother and our healthy development and happiness as human beings depends in large part on the maternal care and love that we have received from our moms. It is hard to imagine a greater responsibility than that of motherhood, one

that requires more goodness and virtue, one more worthy of more respect and devotion.

A CALL TO SUPERNATURAL LIFE

What is true of our natural life is also true of our spiritual life. What our earthly mothers are to our natural life, the Blessed Virgin Mary is to our supernatural life. Indeed, as Christians we do not call the most holy Mother of God our mother in a merely metaphorical sense: Precisely because she is the mother of Jesus Christ, Word Incarnate and Redeemer of the human race, she is truly our mother too. It was in view of her being the Mother of God and men that God outfitted her, so to speak, with the plenitude of grace unique to her.

To appreciate the wonderful reality of the supernatural life and Mary's role in it let us recall a basic truth of the Christian faith, namely, that we are all called to something that outstrips our present reality in fulfillment, beauty, happiness, and love innumerable times over. This supreme calling excludes every frustration, disappointment and sorrow, for it is nothing less than a share in God's eternal bliss—the supernatural life. The theological placeholder in Christian language for this reality is "Beatitude."

Describing this reality as a divine call, Blessed John Paul the II wrote in *Evangelium Vitae*:

Man is called to a fullness of life which far exceeds the dimensions of his earthly existence, because it consists in sharing the very life of God. The loftiness of this supernatural vocation reveals the greatness and the inestimable value of human life even in its temporal phase (EV 2).

The promise of divine life will reach its full realization in eternity. For this reason we should not think of life on earth as an "ultimate" reality but as a "penultimate" reality.

This point is worth stressing: The human person, because of his rational nature, is more than a thousand times above the world of animals. However, his Christian dignity, considered strictly supernaturally, is more than a thousand times above his human dignity, considered purely at the level of nature. By grace, man is elevated and bears the stamp of divinity. He has received a mysterious but real participation in God's nature, which truly makes him his son by a kind of intrinsic adoption and not a merely juridical and extrinsic one. By the divine adoption of grace, we can say, in effect, that in the veins of a Christian runs the very blood of God. As long as the Christian remains in that state he is heir to heaven by right, as St. Paul says (Rm 8:17). His dignity is such that it incommensurably surpasses the entire creation, including angelic nature as such. For this reason, St. Thomas Aquinas affirms without hesitation that "the good of grace in one [person] is greater than the good of nature in the whole universe" (*STh* I-II, q. 113, a. 9, ad 2).

"YOU WERE PURCHASED AT THE PRICE OF HIS BLOOD."

This unimaginable gift of divine life is not something we could have purchased ourselves: It is given to us as a gift of the divine goodness. And yet, it did have to be purchased—at no less a price than the blood of Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate and Son of the Father. The Father has given all things to Christ and no one is redeemed and given the divine life without the redeeming sacrifice of Christ being applied to them, including the Immaculate and Blessed Virgin Mary, his mother.

The declaration *Dominus Iesus* succinctly sums up the Catholic conviction and attitude:

It must be *firmly believed* as a truth of Catholic faith that the universal salvific will of the One and Triune God is offered and accomplished once and for all in the mystery of

the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God (*DI* 14).

God did not have to redeem man this way, but he did. In the actual state of affairs the Divine Wisdom ordained that the eternal Word would take the flesh of a woman and be born and grow up under the maternal care of a mother, just like you, me, and the Olympic athletes. Therefore, in the very same eternal decree of the Incarnation—the union of the human and divine natures in the Person of the Word—is included the woman of whom God would take flesh and be born, the one by whom he would be fed and cared for. That woman is Mary.

Her act of consent to the realization of the mystery of the Word made flesh, announced by the angel Gabriel, was given in the name of the human race. Further, in thus consenting, she consented likewise to that train of sufferings predicted by the Messianic prophecies.

IMAGE RESTORATION AND CONFORMITY TO CHRIST

A fundamental unity and solidarity exists between Christ and the whole human race. By his Incarnation, the Son of God has united himself, in some way, with every human being. There is, therefore, no one who is untouched by the mystery of the Word made flesh. Humanity, and indeed all creation, has been objectively changed by the very fact of the Incarnation and objectively saved by the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. God the Father wills to configure all human beings to Christ by the Holy Spirit, who transforms and empowers them by his grace. However, that objective salvation must be subjectively appropriated.

This highlights two other fundamental theological principles. First, because human beings, created in the image of God, have been given free will, each of us, moved by grace, must freely choose the gift of salvation offered to us by God in the death and

resurrection of his Son. As St. Augustine reminds us, “God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us.”

Secondly, we have been created in space and time. We do not possess our entire being all at once, but successively over time. Clearly, we are not born adults but grow into adulthood. As another Proctor & Gamble commercial has it, “They weren’t born Olympians, they were raised that way.” The same is true of the restoration of the image of God in us, the measure of which is our conformity to the image of Christ.

Now the process of recovery—and it is a process—may take a long time. Since becoming the image of God is a dynamic process rather than static state, we are always becoming more or less an image of God. The completion of the human person, the full realization of the destiny of each person is to become the image of God as he has wanted him to be from all eternity. In other words, the image of God—becoming the image of God—is the finality, the goal, of man. Man was created in order to be the image of God through knowing and loving him. And if the image, at least in the conditions of this life, is only realizable under the guidance of the virtues of faith, hope, and charity through grace, then, of course, faith, hope, and charity are central to the whole moral life, and the primary means for this configuration is the Church and her sacraments.

THE FIGHT AGAINST SIN

The concrete human person who is created in the image of God is always *in via*, always being drawn to the Father, but partly impeded by sin; one is redeemed by Christ, yet undergoing a lifelong transformation finally consummated in an eternal life of communion with the Blessed Trinity and the saints.

This process of development of the Christian life does not take place without a fight. Our enemy is sin and the battle takes place on three fronts, which tradition identifies as the world, the devil and

the flesh, that is, our own evil inclinations. The arduous process of our return to God involves a purification from sin in which we resolve to separate ourselves from anything that could separate us from God, from a growth in love and in the works of charity, and from a realignment of our will with God's.

This transformation takes place in the power of the Holy Spirit and its realization is possible only with divine grace. It has pleased the divine Wisdom to root the work of image-restoration and image-perfection in a specific plan which includes, in the first place, the sacramental structure of the Church. Included as well in this plan is the need for our free collaboration with it. While healing and liberation from sin are offered in the sacrament of reconciliation, one is always free to reject it. Beatific fellowship finds its anticipation in the Eucharist, but God does not force our love. Also included in this plan at every step of the way—from the Incarnation to the bestowing of grace for supernatural life—is the Blessed Virgin Mary.

MARY'S OFFICE IN OUR SANCTIFICATION

When God calls someone to an office He gives that person whatever he or she is going to need to carry out that office. To be the worthy Mother of God and of the Redeemer of the human race required nothing less than the fullness of grace. Mary was given every conceivable grace, even surpassing all the angels and saints combined, which is highly appropriate for someone so intimately and essentially a part of the divine plan of salvation.

Because Mary's divine maternity is ordered to the union in one person of the divine and human natures, and because this union, in turn, is ordered to the salvation of man, Mary is also intimately united to the redemptive work and mission of her Son. Jesus Christ, who has received all things from the Father and from whom comes our salvation and the promise of eternal life, has willed that the graces won for us at the price of his blood should pass through

the hands of a mother—his mother—the blessed and glorious and ever-virgin Mary.

Recall, now, what was said earlier, that what our earthly mothers are to our natural life, Mary is to our supernatural life. Mary's universal role in the mission of her son was clearly revealed by Christ precisely from the Cross: "When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' and from that hour the disciple took her to his own home" (Jn 19:26-27).

Mary is our mother because, just as our entrance into our natural life required a mother, so God has destined our entrance into supernatural life to come also through a mother. Mary is our mother because she, standing at the foot of the Cross, was intimately associated with the tremendous sacrifice of Christ the Redeemer. In the words of the *Stabat Mater*, the hymn sung before the Gospel on the feast of her seven sorrows, "At the Cross her station keeping, stood the mournful Mother weeping, close to her Son to the last. Through her heart, his sorrow sharing, all his bitter anguish bearing, now at length the sword has passed." Mary accompanies us because she first accompanied her Son.

Mary is our mother because, as St. Augustine says, Mary is the living mold of God. In her was the Man-God formed and in her alone can man be formed into the shape of God, taking on the shape of Jesus Christ. Mary is our mother because in her there was no gap between the real and the ideal, between her will and God's will. In her, human freedom finds its most perfect expression. Mary is our mother because she loves us with a perfect maternal love and nothing moves our human wills more freely or calls forth greater trust than love. Mary is our mother because of her constant fidelity and devotion to the well-being of our souls. None of us are born saints; we are "raised" that way by the careful and dedicated hand of a Mother. But most of all, Mary is our Mother because

God has ordained it so. “Indeed, she [Wisdom] reaches from end to end mightily and governs all things well” (Wis 8:1).

OUR RESPONSE: DEVOTION TO MARY

The word “devotion” comes from the Latin *de vovere*, which means to dedicate oneself readily to the active service of God. To have a Marian devotion is to dedicate ourselves fervently to Mary, our mother, and to her work, which has no other end than to make all of us live the mystery of Christ more intimately and profoundly. The most complete formula of this devotion is to Jesus through Mary. And just as our relationships with our earthly mothers should not be conceived in terms of how useful they are to us, so too an authentic devotion to Mary is one conceived not in terms of what she can do for us but in terms of what we can do to help her carry out her mission of Co-Redemptrix and Mediatrix, understood as subordinate to and essentially united with her Son, the one Redeemer and Mediator.

Because devotion is stirred up in us by meditating on God’s superabundant goodness and our own littleness and poverty, the best way to acquire, conserve, and develop a devotion to Mary is by prayerfully calling to mind what God has done in and through Mary. Mary herself showed us the way when she declared to her cousin Elizabeth, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47). In her *Magnificat*, Mary calls to mind what God, in his great mercy, has done in favor of his people, from Abraham to herself. Mary’s recollection of salvation history finds its natural expression in a hymn of praise to God. Catholics have “an embarrassment of riches,” as the Italians say, in their heritage of Marian devotions, literature, and art from which they can draw for the purpose of increasing devotion to the Mother of God.

Like the mothers in Proctor & Gamble’s commercial, whose daily humble and self-effacing dedication to the well-being of

their children takes place largely behind the scenes, so too is Mary's motherly intervention in our sanctification largely hidden and unobserved. Just as the place of a mother in the life of a child is crucial, so too do we Christians understand Mary's place as mother of our souls to be a gift of immeasurable value and a privilege beyond compare. This is the wisdom of God's holy will, and therefore in order to enter into the plan of God it is necessary to have a close relationship with and devotion to Mary. It is Mary who will lead us to her Son, Jesus, and who will trace in our souls the features of our configuration to him. It is this that constitutes the very essence of our sanctity and perfection.

Sancta Dei Genetrix, ora pro nobis.

Joseph Mary Hertzog entered the Order of Preachers in 2007.

GIRDED WITH GRACE

Louis Bertrand Lemoine, O.P.

THE TEMPERANCE OF ST. THOMAS

St. Thomas Aquinas is well known as the Angelic Doctor, the Universal Doctor, and the Patron of Catholic Schools. Lesser-known, however, is his title “Lily of Innocence.” Joining the Dominican Order against the wishes of his parents, St. Thomas was captured and imprisoned by his own blood-brothers to discourage his aspirations to this newly-founded order. When St. Thomas remained steadfast in his Dominican vocation, his brothers devised a plan to attack his religious vocation much closer to its core. One day, they sent a prostitute into St. Thomas’s cell thereby tempting him to sexual sin that could destroy his vocation. His response is as surprising as it is well known—St. Thomas chased her out of the room with a flaming timber from the fireplace; afterwards, he was ministered to by angels, who gave him a heavenly cincture of purity.

St. Thomas Aquinas is an authority on chaste living not only because of his brilliance and wisdom but also as a result of his heroic personal virtue, attested to by this story from his early years and also by the fact of his canonization. His wisdom will first help situate the virtue of chastity in the context of the more general virtue of temperance; second, it will be used to chart a way out of the illness of unchaste living.

In chapter nine of his work, *Liber de Perfectione Spiritualis Vitae*, or “A Book on the Perfection of the Spiritual Life,” St. Thomas Aquinas explains an interesting phenomenon: He says, “Now the more the flesh is pampered, by superabundance of food,



DIEGO VELÁZQUEZ - TEMPTATION OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

and by softness of life, the more will its concupiscence increase.” A foray into the *Summa Theologiae*, St. Thomas’s most popular and mature work, will help explain this phenomenon.

The virtue of temperance is part of a larger class of virtues called “moral virtues.” As St. Thomas explains, “it belongs properly to moral virtue to moderate those passions which denote a pursuit of the good” (*STh* II-II, q. 141, a. 3). The moral virtues sort through the jumble of knee-jerk reactions, emotions, feelings, and passions within us, allowing timely and appropriate passions their due attention and leaving the rest aside, choosing the course of action that will lead to our fulfillment and avoid the self-destruction of sin.

More specifically, the virtue of temperance “is properly about pleasures of food and drink and sexual pleasures” (*STh* II-II, q. 141, a. 4). It is a mistake to regard these as inherently evil desires that should be beaten down after the manner of riot police subduing a violent gang; to the contrary, St. Thomas explains that these are “the most natural operations” since food and drink preserve the individual person, and sex preserves mankind. These desires are normal and healthy parts of the human experience—however, “all things have their season,” says Qoheleth.

A person whose only rule of life is to do whatever he or she feels like doing at all times is on a path of self-destruction, and this is abundantly clear regarding both of the above-mentioned aspects of the virtue of temperance. To be convinced of this truth, one only needs to approach a buffet line on an empty stomach; for most, this awakens a strong desire, a kind of Cookie Monster within, and the desire has the single goal of eating food without much reference to quantity or timeliness. At this, an intemperate person says nothing but an unqualified “yes” and eats much more than was actually necessary to satisfy hunger; thus, the person degrades himself by allowing this desire to become a sole measure of action with no regard to reason and common sense.

Choosing to eat this way over and over leaves a person stuck with the vice of intemperance—a vice which they implicitly embraced—and crafts an intemperate person. Habitual excess in food clearly abuses the body, but it also threatens the soul, since after mankind’s fall in original sin, our cracked and fissured passions are no longer sure guides on the narrow way of Christian life but rather, alas, often lead to sin and excess when they are taken as absolute guides, and “the wages of sin is death,” says St. Paul.

Moreover, this is just as true concerning the other aspect of the virtue of temperance—regulation of sexual pleasure. A virtue is absolutely vital in this regard, for a person who indulges in every sexual desire has adopted a program of self-destruction. In general, chastity causes one to indulge in sexual desire only at the

fitting time; in the concrete, chastity means something different for the single person and the married person. For example, the married person has exactly one sexual partner—his or her spouse. Furthermore, in the words of *Humanae Vitae*:

Responsible parenthood is exercised by those who prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those who, for serious reasons and with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time (*HV* 10).

Married couples are called to live out the fruitfulness of conjugal love in a way that is both open and prudent.

Following this wisely-charted path in any state of life or vocation involves working with (and sometimes working against) our passions and emotions; this requires prudence and self-control, again necessitating the virtue of temperance, particularly that of chastity. Keeping one's eating and sexuality in proper rule to promote authentic and abiding human flourishing and happiness, the moral virtue of temperance enables the man or woman who possesses it to freely and easily choose the path of wisdom. This virtue brings order to the emotions and feelings at work within us and is an important part of the conversion of life to which all are called.

Furthermore, this virtue teaches us that conversion is not only about a change of behavior or the imposition of new laws on our everyday life—though change and law are certainly part of conversion. Temperance also involves the shaping of our very reasons for action, and the imprinting of wisdom on our passions and emotions. Though we all live with the effects of original sin, Jesus seeks to redeem every last part of us, from the highest to the base, with his sanctified humanity as the instrument of our redemption.

We could look to popular culture for examples of widespread defects in the virtue of temperance. Regarding the first aspect of this virtue, there is the phenomenon of “all-you-can-eat” buffet restaurants. Let us not judge the consciences of American diners, but one must wonder if the appeal of a practically unlimited amount of food available for consumption is really the presentation of an opportunity to eat a perfectly temperate and reasonable amount of food, or rather the base pleasure of casting the guidance of reason to the wayside and taking no rule other than the Cookie Monster within.

With reference to the second aspect of the virtue of temperance, the widespread practice of unchaste behavior among the young is well known and even acceptable and encouraged in some circles; this malady is clearly a problem of intemperance. This self-destructive behavior is often the norm and has created a culture of intemperance—indeed, the excess has become the standard. Young people are inculturated into this environment and formed by it, left affected for a lifetime with deformed understandings of love, sexuality, and relationships. The sad but inevitable outcome of this lifestyle is an inability to rightly order, affirm, or deny the various emotions and desires that come with everyday life.

MEDIEVAL SOLUTIONS TO A PERENNIAL PROBLEM

The problem is evident. What is the solution? In his *De Perfectione*, St. Thomas gives a surprising answer: “The first and chief remedy [against obstacles to chastity] is to keep the mind busied in prayer and in the contemplation of divine things.” This is a tall order, particularly in a society in which day-to-day life usually includes a bombardment from advertisers and the media with material that does little to foster “the contemplation of divine things.” One isn’t even spared by staying home, but rather all the more dangerously exposed, thanks to the Internet.

The “contemplation of divine things” is so difficult today because society has given us another form of contemplation, or rather an anti-contemplation that clouds the heart and drags down the flesh. The wages of sin is death. Here in the *De Perfectione*, St. Thomas quotes the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians: “And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another [in] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts” (Ephesians 5:18-19). Chastity is not simply a fight over actions—it’s a fight for the inner man, for Christ’s reign in our heart of hearts, and a call to follow St. Paul’s advice to avoid intemperance and be filled with the Holy Spirit, keeping the mind busy with our hearts in song.

St. Thomas was aware that a renewal of the inner man implies a renewal of the outer man. As a religious, St. Thomas was assisted in the pursuit of virtue by laws given to him by his superiors, his rule, and the Dominican constitutions. The cumulative wisdom of generations upon generations of religious made it clear that such guidelines for conduct were of great assistance. The life of the friars includes the practice of both fasting and abstinence. The former limits how much food is eaten, the latter what kinds.

These penitential practices, necessary for the Christian life, also assist us in the pursuit of the virtue of temperance. As St. Thomas said earlier, overindulgence in food leads to an increase in concupiscence. Fasting and abstinence greatly assist the life of virtue—especially the virtue of chastity—by helping a Christian build the habit of allowing grace, Divine wisdom, and reason to guide his conduct rather than the fleeting (and often destructive) impulses of passions and emotions. Thus, if someone wishes to grow in chastity, prudently practicing fasting and abstinence can help keep the emotions in right order and allow wisdom to rule the day. Growth in one aspect of temperance disposes us to growth in another.

Another reason for the guidelines given by Dominican religious life is quite simple and can be explained by quoting an exhortation given to the reader of the *De Perfectione* by St. Thomas. St. Thomas

reminds the Christian that he or she must be mindful of his or her own weakness; indeed, as St. Thomas writes (citing St. Jerome), “how fragile is the vessel.” Though the Christian is strong in Christ, he or she must at the same time never lose awareness of man’s utter weakness and poverty apart from Christ. Thus, when St. Thomas warns that “the practice of continence is impeded by sight,” or when, in his own lifetime, the Dominican superiors of Rome warn the friars to refrain from “hearing confessions of women in our churches at night,” the goal is not terror in the face of ordinary day-to-day life but rather a humble awe before our weakness and our need for the grace of Christ.

Even though these norms were intended for St. Thomas and his fellow Dominican friars, the deeper wisdom contained is perennial and helpful for anyone—living chastely requires practical, common-sense safeguards. Indeed, anyone wishing to grow in chastity must not reduce their method to mere wishes and half-hearted promises—as St. Paul says, “the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.” In all honesty and truth, the person aspiring to more perfect chastity should both pray for this grace and also change the habits and patterns of their day-to-day lives to avoid occasions of sin and enjoy the true freedom of the sons and daughters of God.

St. Thomas Aquinas is an authority on the virtue of chastity. His teaching illumines the path of virtue by situating the virtue of chastity within the larger virtue of temperance, showing that both chastity and temperate eating involve the pursuit of wise and ordered living by affirming or refusing to act upon the various desires of one’s daily life. In addition, St. Thomas advises his hearers to contemplate lovingly divine truth rather than that which gives death. Finally, as a religious—but as anyone should be—he was aware of his status as a fragile vessel and the need to take practical and prudential safeguards to preserve his purity.

In our present age, the wisdom of St. Thomas is perhaps more necessary than ever, not only because of the difficulty of living

chastely in today's culture, but also due to the unique approach taken by St. Thomas; rather than just telling those pursuing chastity to "try harder," he shows the interconnection of the virtues within every Christian and urges the importance of prayer. Every triumph of reason and prudence ordering an otherwise wayward passion (whether it concerns food and drink, sexual pleasure, or anything else) positively influences a person's whole manner of life and his or her habits, thus making prudence a subconscious and joyful rule of life.

Under the auspices of the Dominican Order, there is today a sacred brotherhood committed to this pursuit of chastity and purity. Bound together by that same heavenly cincture given to St. Thomas on his day of triumph over temptation, the members of the Angelic Warfare Confraternity, following their enrollment, likewise wear a cord or medal in imitation of their chaste patron and, as with one voice, offer prayers daily for themselves and for all the men and women of the Confraternity. Thus, leaving behind mere talk, they choose to clothe themselves with that same mark of St. Thomas's chastity, begging that their purity may be as constant as the cord that they never remove. With St. Thomas Aquinas as a heavenly patron and with mutual intercession, may all Christians together grow in imitation of Christ, "from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love."

For more information about the Angelic Warfare Confraternity or to seek membership, visit www.angelicwarfare.org.

Louis Bertrand Lemoine entered the Order of Preachers in 2010.

ANNUS MIRABILIS

THE CATECHISM AND THE YEAR OF FAITH

Patrick Mary Briscoe, O.P.

A 2012 survey from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life calculates twenty percent of Americans do not identify with any particular religion. This statistic reveals a thirteen percent increase since 1972 in the category of Americans who do not consider themselves affiliated with any particular religion. Moreover, seven percent of Americans report professing no belief in God or a supreme spirit.

The findings of the Pew Forum, clearly demonstrate the trend which Pope Benedict identifies in his recent Apostolic Letter, *Porta fidei* (Door of Faith), as “a profound crisis of faith” (PF 2). The fact that the number of atheists is on the rise, and that an alarming percentage of Americans—one which has more than doubled in just thirty years—does not identify itself with any one religious tradition is quite troubling. Keenly aware of “the need to rediscover the journey of faith,” the Holy Father sees the Year of Faith as a summons “to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Savior of the world” (PF 6).

Why then, at the start of the Year of Faith, would Pope Benedict place so great an emphasis on the study of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in *Porta Fidei*? To answer this, we first need to examine the theological virtue of faith. Only then, with a definition of faith in hand, can we see the relevance of the *Catechism* to the virtue of faith. Finally, when we combine this working knowledge of the virtue of faith with an appreciation of the centrality of the

Catechism, we will see have a broader vision of the *Catechism* in the life of the Church.

THE VIRTUE OF FAITH

The infused virtue of faith elevates the intellect, allowing it to assent to otherwise unknowable truths. The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, from the Second Vatican Council summarizes the breadth of this teaching: “Through divine revelation, God chose to show forth and communicate himself and the eternal decisions of his will regarding the salvation of men. That is to say, he chose to share with them those divine treasures which totally transcend the understanding of the human mind” (*DV* 6).

Faith, then, through belief in the person of the Word, becomes the believer’s gateway to sharing the innermost life of the Holy Trinity. The infused theological virtue of faith raises men up and, by the Holy Spirit, endows them with spiritual capabilities far greater than those which men possess in the exercise of their natural human abilities.

Theologians agree that the object of faith is none other than God himself. St. Thomas was fond of saying that unaided reason can know that God is, and what God is not, but what God is far exceeds our human capacity for knowledge. If *what* God is cannot be comprehended fully, then without divine assistance we can certainly never know *who* he is. If man is to know the inner life of God—the mysteries of God’s own life as a Trinity of persons—then it must be revealed by God and accepted by man in faith. Thus God is not only the object known by the mind of man, but also the light whereby man comes to see God.

Faith allows man to know God. *Knowing* indicates that faith is a virtue that perfects the mind. It is the theological virtue that allows man to share in God’s own self-knowledge. Every act of living faith leads to an act of the will, but faith itself resides in the intellect,



JULES-ALEXIS MUENIER - LA LEÇON DE CATÉCHISME

for the act of faith assents to what is true, and truth is held in the mind. Moreover, faith is an intellectual virtue unlike any other, for it is completely supernatural. By faith, we know God as more than just the great designer of the universe—we know him as the Holy One of Israel; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the most Glorious and Exalted Trinity. By faith, we know the Father in the face of his Incarnate Son, and recognize the Holy Spirit they send to dwell in our souls.

FAITH AND THE CATECHISM

As Pope Benedict says, “Knowledge of the content of faith is essential for giving one’s own assent, that is to say for adhering fully with intellect and will to what the Church proposes. Knowledge of faith opens a door into the fullness of the saving

mystery revealed by God” (PF 10). It is no great mystery, then, that the study of the *Catechism* both enriches and intensifies the faith of a believer.

St. Thomas observes that a consideration of the object of the virtue of faith includes two aspects. The first is the “formal” aspect of the object, who is God, the First Truth. Thus, as we have said, faith only assents to anything because it is revealed by God. The whole of the Catholic faith rests on the basis of Divine Truth. The second aspect of the object of faith encompasses those propositions which we believe that say something about God. Many and sundry things fall into this category, and it is here in the “material” object of faith that we can locate the *Catechism*. The *Catechism* presents the propositions of faith to the believer, and this is why studying it can be such a strong aid in the life of the believer—because its propositions aid the intellect in attaining the formal object of faith, who is God.

The Holy Father offers Saint Augustine as an example of a man who understood the perennial search for the beauty of the faith. The saintly Bishop of Hippo was committed to a constant rediscovery of both joy in believing and enthusiasm for communicating the faith. For many believers the missionary commitment of the faith can be renewed and invigorated by studying the truths of the faith. In fact, with its elegant and precise formulations, the *Catechism* can be a powerful aid to assist the faithful to build the much-needed vocabulary in order to enter into genuine and effective conversations about the faith.

Pope Benedict notes that the rigorous intellectual exercises we might undertake are not to be misconstrued as *necessarily* being occasions of growth in faith. The Pope writes, “Only through believing, then, does faith grow and become stronger; there is no other possibility for possessing certitude with regard to one’s life apart from self-abandonment” (PF 7). Devoid of the dynamism of true belief, a sterile intellectual endeavor will not be of much assistance to the believer.

Moreover, to avoid the trap of proof-texting the faith, those seeking to know the Lord must subject themselves to a certain type of asceticism of the mind. This does not mean uncritically submitting oneself to the Church, but it does mean approaching the teaching of the *Catechism* with a certain openness and humility. Without these requisite attitudes, we run the risk of missing the presence of the Lord; we might well turn away from him as so many did in his own day.

A BROADER VISION

As we have seen, acquiring knowledge of the content of the faith plays a crucial role in accepting the saving mysteries proposed by God into one's own life. One of the great strengths of the *Catechism* is its systematic presentation of that content. But the *Catechism* by no means contains the absolute totality of the Catholic faith. St. Thomas Aquinas touches on just this point in his *Summa Theologiae* when he wonders why Christ did not simply write a book. His answer is illuminating; he says that Christ's teaching is pre-eminently directed to the heart. The purpose of Our Lord's preaching is not something that can be fulfilled by a book, for he intended his teaching to reshape our hearts after the image of his own heart. Accordingly, if believers adopt Christ's teaching as a mere intellectual pursuit—one without consequence in the way that they live—they miss the seminal truths of the Good News.

Simply memorizing teaching of the *Catechism*, then, will not necessarily usher us into a vibrant life of communion with God. Catechetical study is not an input-output relationship with God. The believer is responsible for more than simply knowing the truths of the faith, for as Pope Benedict says repeatedly throughout *Porta Fidei*, faith bears no fruit without the living-out of charity. But faith itself forms the first step on the path to divine charity,

and the more sincerely we give ourselves to understanding that faith, the more confident our steps will be.

To live out this divine charity places a heavy demand on the life of the believer. A man seeking friendship with God, informed by the knowledge of faith, will live a distinct sort of life: a Christian life. The Holy Father writes, “Faith without charity bears no fruit, while charity without faith would be a sentiment constantly at the mercy of doubt” (*PF 14*).

Living faith dynamically illuminates our knowledge, and when it works, it works through charity. The *Catechism*, then, can be considered as much more than theory. In fact, Pope Benedict describes it as “an encounter with a Person who lives within the Church.” It is a vehicle for knowing Christ, who dwells in his Church. Jesus Christ, the Pope teaches us, the one who is the answer to the drama of the suffering and pains of the world, the one who has ransomed our souls from death, can be met in the *Catechism*.

To return to the rather ominous statistics presented at the beginning of this essay, Pope Benedict offers a concise and challenging response. He says, “What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end” (*PF 15*).

The Holy Father is encouraging Catholics in the United States to study the truths of the faith so as to present them in creative, articulate and compelling ways to the twenty percent of Americans who do not identify with any particular religious tradition. Knowing well that this enterprise is fraught with hardship, the Pope exhorts us saying, “How many believers, even in our own day, are tested by God’s silence when they would rather hear his consoling voice! The trials of life . . . are a prelude to the joy and hope to which faith leads” (*PF 15*).

And so we turn our hearts and minds, even in the face of great tribulation, to the task of rediscovering the perennial truths of the faith, so that we ourselves may continually be converted to the Love that saves, the Love that offers new life in the mystery of our faith.

Patrick Mary Briscoe entered the Order of Preachers in 2010.

A LIFE FORMED IN SANCTITY

John Baptist Hoang, O.P.

Fifty years ago, on 6 May 1962 at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Blessed John XXIII proclaimed—in the presence of thirty-eight cardinals, numerous archbishops and bishops, and 40,000 pilgrims from more than fifty countries—the sanctity of Martin de Porres, the early 17th-century Dominican brother from Peru.

Five months later, on 11 October 1962, again at St. Peter's Basilica, Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council.

Perhaps the Pope had this saintly man in mind when he summoned the historic event that captured the curiosity and attention of millions of people throughout the world, as the media extensively covered the deliberations of thousands of cardinals, bishops, and theologians gathered in Rome.

The Council had in mind to explicate the many diverse roles within the Church, which is evident from even a cursory look at the council documents: *Christus Dominus* focuses on the pastoral office of bishops, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* on the ministry and life of priests, and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* on the apostolate of the laity. Martin de Porres fits neatly into the mold of *Perfectae Caritatis*, the document on religious life. All of these different roles serve in the unity of truth, that is, in the mystical body of Christ. Indeed, St. Martin, known for his unreserved service to others, was primarily a servant of this divine truth.

But are the diverse roles within the Church to be considered identical in nature? If that were the case, how do we make sense

of the extensive third chapter of *Lumen Gentium* which details the hierarchical nature of the Church?

A HARMONY OF VOCATIONS

There can and should be diversity within the Church so long as the different roles are properly distinguished from each other and share in the identity of belonging to the Catholic faith. Here we see the mode of defining a thing according to its proper genus and species. This man and that man are both Catholic: One man is a priest of the Catholic faith, the other a layman of the Catholic faith. The genus? Each is Catholic and belongs to the Church. One is not “more” Catholic than the other. The species, or specific difference, is that each is situated in a certain state of life and has a specific role in the Church. There is diversity amongst the members of the Church according to each one’s proper vocation.

The word “vocation” is used in many different ways today, often very ambiguously. We can at least distinguish between “vocation” in a general sense and “vocation” in a proper sense. Generally, a vocation is a gift of grace by God to be called to a life of holiness. *Lumen Gentium* states:

Therefore all in the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or are cared for by it, are called to holiness, according to the Apostle’s saying: ‘For this is the will of God, your sanctification’ (1 Thess. 4:3). This holiness of the Church is constantly shown forth in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful and so it must be; it is expressed in many ways by the individuals who, each in his own state of life, tend to the perfection of love, thus helping others to grow in holiness (LG 39).

A vocation taken in the proper sense is a gift of grace by God to be called to a specific form of life within the Church. It is the gift

of a vocation, taken generally and properly, which informs the role and identity of a man in the Church.

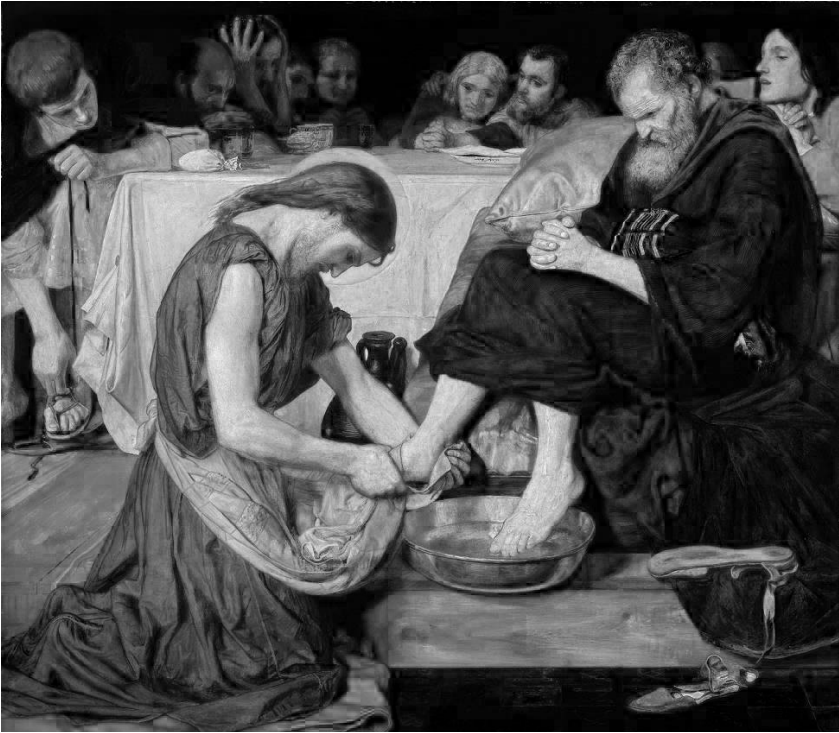
A VOCATION IN HARMONY

The poor mulatto man from Lima, Peru can serve as a perfect model of both the specific vocation to the religious life and the universal vocation to holiness. Though he is piously known for his extraordinary miracles, recounted by the many entertaining stories of his bilocations, healings, and even conversations with animals, it was St. Martin's remarkable and tireless service to the poor that contributed to his status as a wonder-worker for social justice.

Each day of his life, St. Martin fed nearly two hundred people, and it is said that he disbursed \$2000 worth of necessities—an incredible sum for the time—among the sick and dying Indians, Africans, and Spaniards in Lima. He visited the hovels of the abandoned, and established an orphanage for the poor and homeless children of Peru. A poor man himself, he was affectionately dubbed “Father of the Poor” by the people of Lima, and he is recognized today as the patron saint of social and interracial justice.

The declaration of St. Martin de Porres as a saint of the Church could not have come at a more appropriate time. The world was rapidly changing at the turn of the 1960s. Many social movements were happening at the time, notably the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Amidst such leaders as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr., the Catholic Church displayed to the world a true saint for our time in the mulatto from South America.

Yet there is more—much more—to the life of St. Martin than his social work. Unfortunately, many aspects of his life and holiness are often overlooked. The Church certainly encourages the people of God to be in solidarity with the men of this world in various social, economic, and political situations (as taught in



FORD MADOX BROWN - CHRIST WASHING PETER'S FEET

Gaudium et Spes, for example), but these types of actions should always be seen as coming from a life of holiness.

St. Martin de Porres became a saint not only because of the great things he did in his life but also because he received with humility the answer to the question of who he was—that is, in the service of God and of his neighbor in his vocation as a Dominican lay brother. Here there is shown the completeness of the call to sainthood: The saint is filled with divine charity, and it is charity which animates all of his or her actions. The saint is more than a political advocate, brilliant speaker, or daring figure.

The essence of St. Martin's life is summed up in his Dominican vocation. As a young man, Martin spent countless hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament or before Our Lady's altar in the

Dominican Church of the Most Holy Rosary in Lima. It is said that St. Martin received his vocation when the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary revealed to him that God wished him to become a member of the Order of Preachers.

Martin already had a great admiration for the Friars Preachers. Just as St. Catherine of Siena, who, as a young girl, would watch the friars walk past her home and then hurry outside to kiss their footprints, Martin saw the Order with great awe and wonder. He saw it as a holy Order, under the constant care and protection of the Mother of God. Through his contact with the friars, Martin developed fervent devotions to the Dominican saints—his favorites being St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Vincent Ferrer.

At the age of fifteen, Martin knocked at the door of the Dominican convent and asked to be admitted as a tertiary helper. He did not ask for the black and white habit of a full lay brother—or as we say today cooperator brother—for in his humility he felt that it was too honorable for him. Instead, Martin sought the lowest place in the community. After nine years of service as a tertiary, Martin was ordered by virtue of holy obedience to make solemn vows and become a full brother at the age of twenty-four. The rest of Martin's life, including his role and his identity in the Church, would be formed according to the Dominican way of life.

The Fundamental Constitution of the Order of Friars Preachers stipulates the specific form of life undertaken by St. Martin:

Sharing the Apostles' mission, we also follow their way of life, in the form devised by Saint Dominic. We do our best to live of one accord the common life, observing faithfully the evangelical counsels, fervent in prayer and in the common celebration of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist and the divine office, diligent in study and constant in regular observance. Not only do these things contribute to the glory of God and our sanctification, they also bear directly on the salvation of humankind, since together they prepare and impel us to preach; they give our preaching its

character, and, in turn, are influenced by it. The life of the order comprises a synthesis of these elements, inseparably interconnected, harmoniously balanced and mutually enriching. It is an apostolic life in the full sense of the word, from which preaching and teaching ought to issue from an abundance of contemplation.

Martin was called by God to partake in the life of a Dominican friar, and he accepted his chosen state of life with utter humility. Emblematic of his humility and holiness is the story that while Martin was cleaning the washroom—one of the many lowly chores he performed daily in the priory—a brother jokingly called out to him: “Brother Martin, don’t you think you would be better off in the palace of the Archbishop of Mexico than here cleaning lavatories?” Martin responded with the verse from Psalm 84: I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God.

Martin’s reply is an instance of how he identified his place among the grand scheme of the hierarchical structure of the Church. God called Martin to live the Dominican life as a simple non-ordained brother, and Martin did not seek to do otherwise. The only thing that Martin sought was God Himself, and he did so by the life he received from God.

A SANCTIFIED LIFE

It takes a gift of great humility to remain faithful in one’s vocation, especially when one experiences unexpected difficulties or feels unappreciated, but with trust in God’s providence, the reward will be a hundredfold as the revelation of one’s identity—the identity of being a saint—will be made manifest. *Lumen Gentium* makes this message clear, and provides fitting words of conclusion:

Therefore, all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state. Indeed

they have an obligation to so strive. Let all then have care that they guide aright their own deepest sentiments of soul. Let neither the use of the things of this world nor attachment to riches, which is against the spirit of evangelical poverty, hinder them in their quest for perfect love. Let them heed the admonition of the Apostle to those who use this world; let them not come to terms with this world; for this world, as we see it, is passing away (LG 42).

God raised the lowly Martin de Porres to the heights of the canon of saints in 1962, and, by the prayers of this holy man, He will not cease to raise men and women up to heaven. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the canonization of St. Martin de Porres, Pope Benedict XVI enlightened the thousands of pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square: "Today... we ask [St. Martin de Porres] to intercede for the work of the New Evangelization, which kindles holiness in the Church." May St. Martin de Porres be our patron and model during this anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

John Baptist Hoang entered the Order of Preachers in 2009.

THOUGHTS FROM THE RHINELAND

PAIN, PROVIDENCE, AND HAPPY ENDINGS

Ambrose Mary Little O.P.

AN UNEXPECTED REFLECTION

Long ago in Middle Earth, in a dark crevice high in the mountains, sat two hobbits. They were there taking a rest upon their most unusual of journeys. What is unusual about this is not simply the fact that a hobbit would be found on a journey, for that would occasionally happen. What was unusual was rather the place where their journey had taken them, and brought them to their momentary rest: the Mountains of Shadow, on the doorstep of Mordor. They had arrived at their frightful locale with the assistance of a rather wretched creature, named Sméalgol. Precisely how they got there and what happened to them after this respite is a tale for another time. It is enough to know that it was a miracle they made it there at all.

Now, you may ask, what were they doing in a high pass on the edge of Mordor? Well, a rather curious set of circumstances landed one of the hobbits, Frodo Baggins, with the most dangerous artifact in the world. This artifact, the Ring of Power, had to be destroyed. Now the task of destroying it was all but impossible, since it required sneaking into the heart of enemy territory to destroy it in the same place where it was made. This task, which would

be practically impossible for the most seasoned of warriors, was entrusted to a hobbit, who was rather more used to a comfortable hole in a hill than a crevice in the heights. Yet there they were, on a seemingly impossible journey, with little food, almost no water, and only a wisp of hope.

Why did the wise of Middle Earth entrust such an important task to them? And why did they accept it? It seems that our little friends were whisked away by the streams of providence, whose roads have no maps accessible to mortals. Frodo's uncle, Bilbo Baggins, warned him of such things: "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door," he used to say. "You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to." Indeed.

Yet at this moment of rest something striking happened. Frodo's humble servant and friend, Samwise Gamgee, piped up with a deep reflection on old stories, since he saw that his adventure had some similarities to theirs. It is upon Sam's commentary that I would like to reflect for a moment, because it outlines, in a peculiarly vivid way, the workings of providence. And maybe, if we can see the hope that guides and drives Frodo and Sam to the completion of their task, we ourselves might find a reason to hope in the strange and sometimes horrid circumstances that come our way as well.

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES

In the crevice, we find Frodo lamenting about the horror of his current circumstances. He ends his comments with despondent resignation: "But so our path is laid." "Yes it is so," responds Sam. "And we shouldn't be here at all, if we'd known more about it before we started." This knowledge, however, would have been impossible to obtain. They were, in fact, warned before taking on the burden of the Ring that it was a nearly impossible task, and would include great trial. But the nature of warnings is that they can only hint at

the terror of danger, for one must experience danger and suffering before one can fully appreciate it. This is the difficulty with decisions. Like choosing a path in the woods, we can only see so far ahead, and must accept the consequences of what we cannot see. However, even when we can see the bad effects of our decisions before we make them, we hardly ever understand the bad effects until we are in the midst of them. To face this unknown requires fortitude.

This can, of course, leave one in a bit of a bind. What if my choices have truly terrible consequences? Even if I can foresee them, they remain painful, and even if I am doing the “right” thing, it’s still a bitter pill. If these consequences are a result of my own sins, they become even harder to bear. Sometimes, too, we are led to make decisions that lead to awful circumstances because they seem to be the only things to do. This was certainly the case with Frodo, who felt that only he could take the Ring to Mount Doom. And so our hobbits found themselves in a lonely crevice atop the Mountains of Shadow. If ever there were a time to want to turn around, it was at that moment. But Frodo and Sam were determined to go on, though they had little hope of success.

Likewise, we too can find it necessary simply to accept the consequences of our own actions or the actions of others, even if they are painful. When all is said and done, though, would we change what happened? Surely, Sam says, that if they had known what the journey entailed, they never would have set out. But did he actually want to change it? Would he have refused the burden? I don’t think so. As Frodo said, his path was laid before him. He simply followed it into the darkness. There is something predetermined here, as if all his actions, no matter what they are, somehow fit into some mysterious plan, a plan that guides them on their journey.

By this point in the story, Frodo had narrowly escaped death many times before he came to this momentary rest, and he will miss death by a hair’s breath in the coming pages. Yet with all that, he continued on. Maybe, it was the understanding of this

mysterious hand that guided him through his trials that allowed Frodo to keep going. Maybe when he says, “But so our path is laid,” he is not as despondent as we might think at first glance. For he could have turned back, and yet he and Sam continued on. Sometimes the results of our decisions or the pain inflicted upon us by others must be born. Yet if we understand that it is part of a great plan, a great story, then it can be meaningful in the end. This is where the knowledge of Divine Providence helps.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE ORDERS ALL THINGS WELL

Sam continues on with his reflection, talking about the difference between the average adventure story and the truly great ones. He says, “But that’s not the way of it with the tales that really mattered, or the ones that stay in the mind. Folk seem to have been just landed in them, usually – their paths were laid that way, as you put it.” Many parts of our lives are outside our control, and are determined by circumstances. In the case of our hobbit heroes, they never would have set out on this journey had not Frodo’s uncle, Bilbo, found the Ring when he was dropped down a forgotten passage by accident and found his way to a forgotten cave at the roots of a mountain. A strange happenstance, yet one that shows the delicate hand of Providence at work.

The strange thing about a story, as well as real life, is that things seem to work out for the good in the end. Despite the dire predictions of the dystopic authors of the twentieth century, somehow the world is still here. Maybe individual stories have bad ends, but the overall story of humanity has a lot of good in it, and still has a lot of hope. We can lay this success at the feet of Providence, that great storyboard that guides creation in the mind of God. And in the end, we know that all things will be done for the good of creation, since divine Wisdom, “reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well” (Wis 8:1).



THOMAS MORAN - CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME

Why, then, does so much go wrong if God's Providence is at work? That is largely a mystery. We do, though, have a partial answer, one that can help us trust that all is being done according to the plan of God. When talking about divine things, it is often best to talk about what we know on the human level first. Thus, before talking about Divine Providence, it is first helpful to discuss briefly what human providence is.

Human providence is simply a plan, a scheme of sorts, held in the mind of the planner, a mental blue print or a storyboard. These plans can be for a building, a story, a trip, or even for life. In general we want our plans to be perfect, but at the same time we plan for error. Mistakes and unexpected circumstances do come our way after all and we want our plan to be ready to meet it. Yet our planning cannot foresee all circumstances, nor is the future in our control. Gandalf remarks that even the wise, who can see many things, cannot see all that is to come.

The fact that things generally do end up for the best leads us to see that there is a greater plan at work, one that is comprehensive of all creation. This is an aspect of St. Thomas Aquinas's fifth way for proving the existence of God. If non-intelligent creations, like rocks and plants, have reasons for their movement, then some intelligent being must move them. Since all creation does exhibit natural motion towards ends, this can prove the existence of God. The thing about human providence is that we can only plan for particular events and circumstances. God's plan, on the other hand, encompasses all creation. Nothing falls outside God's Providence.

The curious thing about Divine Providence is that because it is universal, it can allow for some defect. Aquinas states, "A particular provider excludes all defect from what is subject to his care as far as he can; whereas, one who provides universally allows some little defect to remain, lest the good of the whole should be hindered" (*STh* I, q. 22, a. 2 ad 2). Divine Providence acts for the good of the whole, the good of the whole story so to speak. Sam goes on to reflect upon the characters in the stories that really matter: "But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't... We hear about those as just went on - and not all to a good end, mind you; at least not to what folk inside a story and not outside it call a good end."

Yes, not all individual stories seem to have what we could call a happy ending, where everyone goes home and things are changed only a little. But note Sam's mysterious qualification: It only seems like a bad end to those *in the story*. Somehow those outside the story know better, because they can glimpse the whole.

For sure, the martyrs of the early Church would have been seen by their pagan contemporaries to have had bad ends, yet those of us who hear and retell their part in the great story of creation know better. We see that their earthly end was in fact no end at all, but a beginning. They have simply passed outside the bounds of our current narrative, though they exist elsewhere and still

affect us now. It is important to remember that though individual tragedy strikes, yet God can bring good out of it. “We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28).

In the end, God allows particular evils to happen so that he can bring a greater good out of them. The martyrs are allowed to suffer, so that they can be brought to greater sanctity. Frodo must endure much, and in fact was never healed while he remained in Middle Earth. Yet, he was given the reward of the elves, and beyond the seas he found healing and rest. God allows us to be tried so that greater good will come out of it, but he never tries us beyond our strength. We further see that he can even take our own sinfulness and bring good from it.

Take, for example Boromir’s sin at the end of the Fellowship of the Ring. He tried to take the Ring for himself, and in the end broke the fellowship established at Rivendell. Truly it was a great evil, and caused much pain. Yet, had he not done it, Frodo might never have had the resolve to go on to Mordor rather than to Gondor. Boromir’s sin made the decision clear. Though a great evil occurred, yet it was part of a series of events that led to final victory. For now the rest of the fellowship could go on to distract the enemy, while Frodo and Sam snuck into Mordor.

We too celebrate such victories of Providence. For at the Easter Vigil we hear in the Exsultet, “O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!” Though terrible, Original Sin allowed for a great good to be given to humanity—the greatest of goods, in fact.

Despite our failings, God desired to save us, and so became man that we might be united to him. Though all the pain, the suffering, and the misery of the world is due to original sin, yet because of it God has given us something greater: the promise of life with him. And if we are blessed to receive this gift, all the misery and pain we endured here will not simply be wiped away, but will be accounted to us as glory, for by these sufferings God shaped us for himself. As Jesus entered heaven with the battle scars of the cross as symbols

of victory, we will see our own scars in the same light. Our trials will no longer be a burden to us there, but a symbol of sanctity.

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF HOPELESSNESS

While we know that Providence is guiding all of history, including our individual history, we can still be confused and hurt by what feels like an unfair lot, and there are plenty of unfair lots. God's ways are mysterious, and it is hard, very hard, to understand why we must endure such pain at times. We cannot always understand the workings of Providence, but we know that it is working. This knowledge can give us hope, and this hope will help us to endure.

Hope is one of those special graces, given to us by God, that we call the theological virtues. Hope is the virtue that promises us a better life. It is theological because it is not based on human wisdom or strength. Theological hope realizes that only God can bring us to eternal rest. This defends us both from total despair before the tyranny of the world and from the presumption that everything is ok when it is not. It is a realistic view of the world: yes things are not as they should be, but that will be fixed one day by one who is greater than I.

This hope in the healing of eternity with God can give us strength to endure all trials. In his story, Fr. Walter Cizek, S.J., survived by means of this hope. He bore some of the worst that Soviet Russia's hard labor camps had to offer, and yet found strength in this terrible trial in the hope of a healing eternity. In his time in prison, he was often alone, starving, or unsure he had the strength to live even to the next minute, much like our hobbit heroes. But during this time he found solace in the guidance of God, who traveled with him. Fr. Cizek says, "Religion, prayer, and love of God do not change reality, but they give it a new meaning."

God does not necessarily remove the present pain from those he loves. But he does give us strength to endure, he does accompany

us through the pain. In Fr. Ciszek's case, God gave meaning to his suffering. And this meaning helped him to endure, and even helped to sanctify him. Suffering is not and cannot be meaningless, even if we cannot understand the meaning of it right now.

God himself became man so that he could suffer for and with us: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). This suffering had a purpose, and when we are joined with Christ, our suffering too is given a meaning and is made a means of our own sanctification. For then we become united to the cruciform Christ.

Hope allows us to go on despite the pain, and from this hope comes heroism. Sam says, "But I expect they had lots of chances, like us, of turning back, only they didn't." He then remarks on a story from his own world, a legend of another hopeless cause that somehow succeeded. "Beren now, he never thought he was going to get the Silmaril from the Iron Crown in Thangorodrim, and yet he did, and that was a worse place and a blacker danger than ours."

The hope that Beren had drove him on to succeed where no one else could. Likewise with Fr. Ciszek, who with the help of God endured the labor camps of Siberia and brought Christ to those who were in darkness. We may read his story and see only pain, but I am sure from the other side of eternity Fr. Ciszek is looking back and sees only victory, the victory of Christ.

In the end, hope hopes for a happy ending. But the ending has yet to be fulfilled, and we know that it is coming. For now, though, we are simply a part of the larger story of creation that marches on toward salvation behind the cross of Christ. Sam himself realizes this in a powerful moment in his monologue. "And why, sir, I never thought of that before! We've got—you've got some of the light of it in that star-glass that the Lady gave you!" At this moment, Sam realizes the stories he heard as a child were real, and that in fact he is part of that same story. The story of Beren and the Silmaril lives on, for Frodo has in his hand a relic from that same tale.

We ourselves have a real connection to the heroes of our own world, the saints. We tell their stories, but they become real when we touch their relics and visit their homes. They are not mere fictions, but real people who were part of making the world what it is today.

An even greater event happens in the Blessed Sacrament. For there we come face to face with Jesus. We receive his body, that same body which died on the cross and now rests in splendor in heaven. With Sam we can exclaim, “You’ve got some of the light!”—that is, the light of the world, God made man. When Christ comes to us, he comes in the flesh, really truly. And with the light of faith we can see this clearly.

The curious thing about the tales that matter is that they never end. They in fact are real stories, stories that come from real people and that truly effect us. They do not end because the world has not ended. And so the story goes on. “No, they never end as tales,” said Frodo. “But the people in them come, and go when their part’s ended.” Where do they, the blessed, go? Surely, into the presence of God, awaiting resurrection. There all their tears, all our tears, will be wiped away.

All things in this life are directed toward the good of eternal life. For those who are called, there will be only joy, not sadness. This knowledge does not make our suffering here any less real, but it does help us to put it into context. Here, agony is for but a time; there, peace is unending. This age is but a doorstep to eternity, a drop in the ocean of everlasting life. Time may not heal all things, but eternity will, for it is not simply an elongation of existence, but a perfection of it. And this is what gives us hope—that despite our weakness, we will be healed and made perfect.

HOPE IN THE ENDING

When we are faced with dreadful choices, we can hope in Divine Providence. All things will end for the good, despite

what we see now. Though we may have to suffer for a little while, our hope can help get us through. Knowledge of eternity can help us to pray even in the midst of pain. It helped Sam and Frodo, it helped Fr. Cizsek, and it can help us. In the end, God will surprise us. We will look back and see that somehow we made it through those trials because he was there, guiding us gently along the way.

Despite our own fumbings, our own sinfulness, God will make all end for the good, for he is in control. With this knowledge God will help us get up from the crags we rest in and move on, proceeding along the path he has laid out before us. For if we trust him, it will end in a happy Jerusalem.

Ambrose Mary Little entered the Order of Preachers in 2007.

THE LOCUTORIUM

THE PERSON IN BATTLE

An interview essay with Roger Scruton, by Gabriel Torretta, O.P.

In April 2008, Aliza Shvarts began a bold trajectory to shock-art stardom with an installation originally intended to be her senior art project at Yale. Shvarts claimed to have spent nine months artificially inseminating herself and taking abortifacients at 28-day intervals, filming the results on a camcorder. Self-destruction disguised as art-installment was nothing new, of course, and the proposed final form of Shvarts' project (never realized) positively dripped with shock-art clichés—fake (?) blood, Vaseline, hundreds of feet of plastic sheeting, and a box full of unpleasant secrets, all of which was to be chaotically lavished with four different projected video feeds. That the whole event proved to be a hoax—as near as anyone can tell given the schizophrenic exchange of denials and counter-denials from Shvarts herself—was no more surprising than her appearance on MTV two years later, pontificating with pop profundity on a Kanye West video.

The Shvarts debacle and its highly choreographed media life-cycle sits at the destructive confluence of currents in contemporary culture; while being itself a radical extreme, it was made possible by the streams of isolation from others, alienation from one's own body, ideology, rootlessness, and consumerism on which the tree of modern life is fed. The Shvarts affair is an unconscious incarnation of the problem David Foster Wallace confronts in *Infinite Jest*: In a world that has jettisoned any more meaningful sources of identity than entertainment through self-satisfaction, realities like



SHITAO - CONVERSATION AT THE EDGE
OF THE VOID

the self, the person, and humanity tend to vanish under the raging waves of solipsistic despair.

But the streams of Shvarts' and Wallace's world have also fed the field of the New Evangelization, a vast horizon of white-ripe wheat that too often collapses and rots for the want of a harvester who knows how to reap it. And small wonder: Some of contemporary culture's streams seem too tainted to produce anything but bad fruit, so one finds it difficult to resist the temptation to write off mainstream culture as a ruined nihilistic mess and turn instead

to smaller fields fed by purer streams. Happier Keats' Arcadia, "with streams that deepen freshly into bowers," than the world's troubled waters.

Fortunately, some of our contemporaries have neither blindly embraced modern culture nor left it to its own devices. The philosopher Roger Scruton has spent much of his life exploring the philosophical, cultural, religious, and political roots of contemporary Western culture, in its strengths and weaknesses.

His project has been one of both analysis and remedy, to elucidate the perilous moves that have pulled us away from our traditional sources of meaning and to search for ways to allow that meaning to speak to us anew.

Though himself a Christian, Scruton has chosen to begin his philosophical reasoning by granting certain premises of the Enlightenment in order to make the case for a revivification of tradition from within the modern conceptual framework—namely, that God is dead or at least inaccessible, that it is epistemologically impossible to work backward from the experience of the world to derive a proof of God’s existence, that man longs for a transcendence that he can feel emotionally but never know rationally, and “that there is no going back, that we must live with our enlightened condition and endure the inner tension to which it condemns us.”

These presuppositions give Scruton’s philosophy a striking shape; heavily influenced by Kant, Hegel, and Burke, he recognizes an unsatisfying “inner tension” in the Enlightenment thinkers, which he seeks to overcome with an interpersonal ethics that shows traces of both Buber and Levinas, grounding morality in the lived encounter with other persons, not in theoretical abstractions. Sharing Kant’s wonder at “the starry sky above” and the developments of modern science, Scruton is fluent in the modern scientific debates and their philosophical implications, especially in the realms of neuroscience (on which he is currently writing a book), genetics, and evolutionary biology; likewise devoted to Kant’s “moral law within,” he limits the epistemological hegemony of modern science by subordinating it to the science of the person, in which human meaning and reasons are found.

The post-Enlightenment search for the reality of the person has been a guiding leitmotif for Scruton’s prodigious career in letters, during which he has written more than thirty books. Most of his writings grapple with the problem of personhood in the present day, viewed especially through the lenses of aesthetics, culture, philosophy, and politics. Scruton’s distinctive focus on the person lends a gripping realism and depth to topics that in lesser hands

might seem overplayed or impossibly general, including animal rights, sexual desire, Wagner, environmentalism, architecture, the nature of beauty, even fox hunting.

After decades of exploring personhood under different lights, however, Scruton chose to make a complete if schematic analysis of the problems facing personhood in the contemporary world. Delivered as the 2010 Gifford Lectures and published in 2012 under the title *The Face of God*, Scruton's analysis shows that man currently labors under a threefold alienation that is both a cause and an effect of his loss of respect for the person: the alienation of man from man, of man from his world, and of man from God. This threefold alienation has left man adrift on the seas of materialist consumerism, turning more and more to entertainments that dehumanize and destroy. Commercial-political shock-art like Aliza Schvarts' is just a crude symptom of a larger problem: that we have forgotten the face of God and, in so doing, have become faceless ourselves.

In September 2012, Professor Scruton granted *Dominicana* an e-mail interview. In the questions that follow I have followed the path traced by his description of man's threefold alienation, exploring possible avenues for the rediscovery of the face of man, the world, and God. The inspiration for the questions comes largely from Scruton's two newest books, *The Face of God* and *How to Think Seriously about the Planet: The Case for an Environmental Conservatism*, along with his earlier work *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Culture*. My goal was not to rehearse problematics already addressed in those books, but to reframe those ideas in new contexts, to apply them to new problems, and occasionally even to challenge them.

Professor Scruton's replies to my questions are brief but fruitful, pointing to new horizons for art, criticism, culture, and politics. My short discussions of his answers are a preliminary attempt to flesh out some of these new ideas, and are not intended to represent Scruton's own thought.

In his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict states: “Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity. That light is both the light of reason and the light of faith, through which the intellect attains to the natural and supernatural truth of charity: it grasps its meaning as gift, acceptance, and communion. Without truth, charity degenerates into sentimentality.” In contemporary America we see abundant evidence of the latter point: A company that gives to ‘charity’ could be supporting anything from shelters for homeless people to shelters for homeless cats, and will boast just as happily about either. In a society that sees impassable fissures between faith and reason, nature and supernature, how can authentic charity be renewed?

Scruton Replies: I entirely agree with Pope Benedict. There are things which present themselves as charity but which are based on self-indulgent feelings and a wilful disregard of the truth. To renew the charitable impulse we must first see all that we have and wish to make our own as a gift. And then we must look for the other who rightfully requires a share of it. I don't know how to do this, and maybe you are right to imply that, without the recognition that our natural world depends upon a supernatural origin, it cannot be easily done, and certainly not easily maintained.

The source and safeguarding of charitable activity is a vexing problem. The right ordering of property has always been a key concern for Christianity, from the dire warnings about the miserly rich in James 5:1-6 to the early Church's concern for almsgiving, through to the social doctrine of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. John Paul II's *Centessimus Annus* in particular emphasizes the supernatural horizon that gives Christian temporal charity its meaning, arguing that the Genesis creation accounts reveal that “God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favoring

anyone. This is *the foundation of the universal destination of the earth's goods.*"

Yet at the same time that encyclical suggests a possible grounding for charitable activity in the natural law of human personhood:

A person's work is naturally interrelated with the work of others. More than ever, work is *work with others* and *work for others*: it is a matter of doing something for someone else. Work becomes ever more fruitful and productive to the extent that people become more knowledgeable of the productive potentialities of the earth and more profoundly cognizant of the needs of those for whom their work is done.

Work attains its meaning as an activity among persons, so labor and its fruits cannot be considered as radically isolated realities; even though the individual has his due right to private property, goods of themselves carry a relational character that carries with it an inbuilt direction toward mutual satisfaction of needs through both shared labor and charity.

While the status of creation as a universal gift from the benevolent Creator is surely necessary to reign in and correct man's perpetual misunderstandings about the nature of property, perhaps a natural, philosophical argument stemming from the relations among human persons could provide a foundation of truth on which to build a local culture of charity freed from the sentimentality that springs from an inadequate understanding of man and his relation to the world. Such a personalist charity, grounded in reason and the nature of man yet open to transformation in grace, may provide a common starting point for both Christians and non-Christians seeking to revitalize the practice of charity.

In speaking of charity in the quote above, Pope Benedict raises the important question of communion, a particular kind of unity shared only between persons. Historically our notion of the person stems from the early Christian struggle to understand the Triune

God, and the need to see other humans as persons in the image of the God who is a communion of persons is a major heritage that Christianity has bequeathed the world; given the widespread secularization of Western culture, what is the present state and future fate of personhood?

Scruton Replies: I think the Trinitarian view of God is important for the reason you imply, that it makes personal relations central to the highest way of being. It also endorses our attempts to see each other as persons rather than as animals. My own view is that Islam is in a state of crisis today because it has never recognised the personality of God, or His corresponding need for relations of mutuality with His creation. Christians don't suffer from that crisis. But our secular world is beginning to lose the sense that personhood is another mode of being from the being of animals. My own philosophy has been an attempt to rescue personhood from that predicament, to present the truths of the Christian vision to people who are no longer Christians.

Intellectually, the notion of personhood is in a strange place now. As Scruton notes, many intellectual trends have devalued or outright rejected the idea of personhood, arguing that man-as-person is a kind of self-protecting and irrational myth used to separate us from other forms of life that we wish to be free to use and abuse; think of certain extreme branches of neurodeterminism, reductionistic models of evolutionary biology, or political/economic modes of impersonalism like communism, fascism, and consumerism. Other intellectuals, from the existentialists to Buber to Scruton himself, have formulated profound theories of the person that share a conceptual background with the Christian origins of the person while speaking from a fundamentally secular worldview.

Christianity itself has, on one hand, experienced a profound recommitment to the theory of the person and its centrality to the

faith; theologians as prominent as Luigi Giussani, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI have proposed the mystery of the person—both divine and human—to contemporary man with renewed fervor. On the other hand, many Christians have lost the idea of God as a person—let alone as a Trinity of persons; the most recent *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* from the Pew Forum in 2007 shows that only sixty percent of self-identified U.S. Catholics, sixty-two percent of mainline Protestants, and seventy-nine percent of Evangelical Protestants acknowledge a personal God.

The loss of a sense of a personal God may betray an unreflective willingness to absorb prevailing secular trends about the unimportance of the person. Regardless of the source, however, the path forward for man surely involves a re-awakening to the irreducible mystery of the person, a path that will itself begin by rediscovering that, in the words of Benedict XVI, “being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”

The Internet in particular poses difficult problems for communion and personhood in the realm of communication. The explosive growth of pornography is an obvious example of the depersonalizing effects of Internet technology, but even more neutral entities like anonymous blogs and social media like Facebook and Twitter have inherent tendencies to reduce the human person from a mystery to a collection of facts and opinions. Is it possible to personalize the Internet? How can the Internet be used to strength the bond between communication and personhood?

Scruton Replies: I wish I had an answer to the Internet problem. It is clear that it is easier to interest people in what is lowest and most demeaning through this medium. But of course I am replying to you by e-mail, and in that way showing that the medium can be personalised. We need a new form

of education, which begins from the premise that the Internet is dangerous, a sea of temptation and destruction, and that we must not embark on that sea until we are prepared. Facebook and Twitter are more dangerous than they seem, for they teach people to exist in another way, as a collection of transient images and sound-bites, with no lasting affections or beliefs, in a web of negotiable relationships which cannot be relied upon and which can turn from phony love to real hatred in the twinkle of an eye. But we can counter these things only through the Internet, developing sites in which children learn to be careful and learn also to be cared for in another and more lasting way.

Certainly one of the problems of the Internet is its nearly infinite series of possible uses. The old bromide that the Internet is like an ocean that's exactly one inch deep is both true and false; false because the Internet provides a means of genuine contact between people and a transmission of real knowledge in an inimitable way, as anyone who has ever used Skype or JSTOR can testify, but true because the sheer number of possible uses of the Internet often prevents anyone from using it deeply. Like a greedy dog that has barely tasted one bone before trying to snaffle another, the incautious Internet user finds himself drawn in so many directions at once that he never does anything worth mentioning.

Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter pose a related problem: by offering perpetual access to the private lives of everyone one has ever met, they tend to prevent the focused attention and individual love that is necessary for the growth of a real relationship between persons. In his curmudgeonly work *In Praise of Shadows*, the Japanese novelist Tanizaki Jun'ichirō describes how he tried every possible means to prevent the entry of a telephone into his house, and then hid it from sight once he finally caved. Tanizaki's insight is a warning to the Internet culture: He was, in part, concerned about losing the integrity of his life and

relationships by having them become too easy, too public, and too ever-present.

For further reflection on the potential evangelical harms and uses of the Internet, I refer the reader to “Disputed Questions: Preaching and the Internet,” an exchange of ideas between Br. Clement Dickie, O.P., and Br. Innocent Smith, O.P., on the subject, contained in the Winter 2011 issue of *Dominicana*.

Moving from questions about man to the world in which man finds himself, I’d like to explore some of the theological and anthropological implications of contemporary environmental concerns. In your book on environmental theory, *How to Think Seriously about the Planet*, you emphasize that environmental crises stem in part from man’s desire to push the cost of his actions onto other people, be they powerless members of the same society, invisible members of other societies, or, perhaps most dangerously, unborn members of future societies. The philosopher Rémi Brague has argued that secular society, lacking a credible account of the connection between past, present, and future people, is incapable of providing its members with a real incentive for limiting present satisfaction for the sake of hypothetical people in the distant future. What solution do you see to the problem of present incentives for future goods?

Scruton Replies: *Rémi Brague is right that, in a secular society, the connections between present, past and future generations are weakened. This is part of what Burke had in mind in criticising the secular philosophy of the French Revolution, and the Social Contract in particular – namely, that it vested all power and all right in those living now, and so permitted the squandering of resources and the destruction of savings. One of the benefits of a public religion is that it puts all matters of present politics in the perspective of an unchanging relation between man and God, and thereby, as Chesterton puts it, enfranchises the dead. The Romans had an*

interesting approach to all this, not requiring of their citizens to practise any particular religion, but insisting on the place of pietas in everyday conduct, and an acknowledgement thereby of the fragility of our world. Whether we can, in our situation, revive a kind of secular piety is another question – but I say something about this in my book, in particular in the chapters on home, Heimat etc.

Scruton provides valuable background for these issues in *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Culture*, arguing that, after the Enlightenment, Western society lost the unreflective heritage of common culture, adopting consciously created and chosen aesthetic ideals or ideologies. These ideals have crumbled, however, leaving the present popular culture without a tradition inherited from the past or a strong vision of the future that includes the present, encouraging people to live as if only the current moment and its satisfactions will ever be real. A current tagline on the Pepsi webpage captures the idea perfectly: "NOW IS ALIVE, FUN AND FEARLESS. NOW IS REFRESHING. NOW IS EPIC. AND MOST OF ALL, NOW IS WHAT WE MAKE IT."

But how are we to speak of *then*—be it the past or the future—to the Now Generation? Unsurprisingly, Scruton's answer lies in the rediscovery of the person, in finding ways to call attention to the individual's embeddedness within a network of interpersonal relationships and thus help him to realize his responsibility to hand on to the future what he has received from the past. Scruton fleshes out these ideas in admirable detail in the chapters he alludes to in *How to Think Seriously about the Planet*, and I refer the reader to them for a more thorough treatment.

We will pick up this thread in more detail below, but here we should note that the difficulties associated with reconstructing a secular *pietas* are surely as troublesome as the difficulties surrounding a rediscovery of true religion. The cultural forces of the twentieth century have all worked to encourage an indifference or even a distaste for a future that we will never see; the normalization

of intentionally childless romantic partnerships, both heterosexual and homosexual, a disposable market of consumer goods, even the accumulation of national and personal debt militate against any organic notion of intergenerational responsibility. Attempts to ground contemporary ethics in a transmittable natural philosophy of personhood are important steps in the right direction, but we may find that the sterilizing effects of modern secular culture can only be reversed by conversion to a worldview informed by someone wholly Other—by a rediscovery of the face of God.

What should Christianity's response to environmentalism be? Rather than merely adding a supernatural gloss to a fundamentally natural behavior, is there a properly supernatural dimension to man's dwelling in the land? What does a theological environmentalism look like, and how does or doesn't it overlap with contemporary environmental movements?

***Scruton Replies:** Contemporary environmental movements tend to be aggressively secular, and often growing from the residue of leftist hostility to capitalism and free enterprise. But there are exceptions. The Church of England has taken environmental issues seriously, and Ian Christie has been a great force in advocating this. I think Christians are naturally disposed towards care for their environment and for the earth, since they understand both as a gift from God over which we are stewards. Our accountability for the earth is written in our destiny, and the Bible presents us with a picture of the earth as a habitat entirely adapted to our needs. What the Christian religion can add to environmental movements is the belief in, and experience of, the sacred – the recognition that we live among consecrated things, and that we should approach them with reverence and not treat them merely as instruments for our fleeting purposes.*



CASPAR D. FRIEDRICH - MORNING IN THE SUDETEN MOUNTAINS

Pope Benedict's *Caritas in Veritate* provides a useful context for Scruton's notion of the Christian sacrality of the environment, both affirming it and providing proper limits to its application:

When nature, including the human being, is viewed as the result of mere chance or evolutionary determinism, our sense of responsibility wanes. In nature, the believer recognizes the wonderful result of God's creative activity, which we may use responsibly to satisfy our legitimate needs, material or otherwise, while respecting the intrinsic balance of creation. If this vision is lost, we end up either considering nature an untouchable taboo or, on the contrary, abusing it. Neither attitude is consonant with the Christian vision of nature as the fruit of God's creation.

The Christian attends to the environment precisely because God has given him dominance over creation, a gift that must be lived as received from the previous generation and handed on to the next. The environment is sacred in that it both points beyond itself to the Creator who made it out of love and exists as a divine gift held in trust.

Christian environmentalism does not exist in its own right, but rather as a subset of theological anthropology. The Christian cannot understand the environment unless he understands who God is, who man is, and how the two relate. Augustine sings a paean to the structures of nature in his *Literal Commentary on Genesis* because he sees nature as a means of divine communication with man, not because he believes nature to be divine; Boniface chopped down an ancient tree because a group of Germanic pagans were worshipping it, and were thereby forgetting their own humanity. Christians seeking to join the environmental movement should strive to bring with them this salutary balance of exuberant love for the created world and grateful respect for the place God made for man within it.

I'd like to close with a question reflecting on man's relation to God. In *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Modern Culture* you give a compelling account of the state of contemporary Western society:

A community that has survived its gods has three options. It can find some secular path to the ethical life. Or it can fake the higher emotions, while living without them. Or it can give up pretending, and so collapse, as Burke put it, into the 'dust and powder of individuality.' These are the stark choices that confront us...

In the book you defend the first option, "the way of high culture, which teaches us to live as if our lives mattered eternally."

And yet, the crises that have undermined high culture in the present day seem as severe as the intellectual crises that led large sections of the West away from Christianity, including the fraught heritage of the Enlightenment, the collapse of modernism into post-modern ironic 'kitsch-art', the rootless wanderings of popular culture, and the resilience of a reductionistic neuro-psychological view of the human that leaves no room for beauty or art, just to name a few. Since contemporary culture has apostatized from high

culture as much as it has apostatized from Christianity, I wonder if a fourth option might not be at least as reasonable as the three in your list: the culture can discover that its gods are still alive.

Granted that neither the fourth option nor the first—the rediscovery of Christianity as a dynamic encounter with the living God or the rediscovery of high culture as a source of ultimate meaning—will be easily achieved, why should a society—or an individual—turn to a simulacrum of religious experience when it—or he—could turn instead to genuine religion?

Scruton Replies: I agree with you that the high culture in which I have always put my trust has been effectively destroyed by its own appointed guardians, and that without the religious core it persists only as a fragile shell. So the fourth option is, perhaps, the only one available. But this means, as you say, rejecting the premise of modern life, that God is dead, and starting all over again, seeking for the living God, and hoping to be visited by his grace. If people are prepared to live the religious life, then their example will once again make this course available to the mass of mankind, and there will be hope. At the same time, we must constantly fight those who are trying to destroy the memory of the spiritual way of life, and assailing all those things in which that memory is contained. In particular we should exercise our aesthetic choices in art devoted to the ideals of beauty and order, and refrain from the kind of desecration that has become the norm in modern art schools.

Presupposing the philosophical conclusions of the Enlightenment has given Scruton the tools to assess the problems of modernity from within, delivering even his harshest critiques in an idiom that remains credible and familiar to the secular reader. Any writer must choose the battles he wants to fight at the outset of a project; Scruton's choice has been to begin with the Kantian stance that the metaphysical questions of God's existence should

be supplanted—even if not answered wholly in the negative—by epistemological and ethical questions about man himself, and to argue in defense of the human person from there. His project is fixing modernity, not abandoning it. Scruton's dozens of books and distinguished academic career testify to the effectiveness of his choice.

Yet a question remains about the inherent limitations of such a project. If any of the conclusions of the Enlightenment are wrong, then an internal critique that builds from those conclusions will eventually begin to impugn its own presuppositions. Scruton's invaluable work on modern culture does precisely that; having argued from rational, Enlightenment principles, he shows how post-Enlightenment culture has proven unable to offer a coherent answer to the human question. Moreover, this culture has been unable to protect the human person from its worst impulses, as Shvarts' clichéd violence-as-art—and the very fact that it is a cliché—makes abundantly clear. Scruton's project is emphatically not proving God's existence, but he has convincingly shown that a culture that declares the death of God, in so doing, signs its own death sentence.

A Catholic response to Scruton's analysis must be subtle. To use his conclusions as an excuse to reject modernity entirely, as if modern man could be saved by sidestepping the last four hundred years and returning to a (largely imaginary) philosophical and theological golden age, is illusory and dangerous in the extreme. Likewise, ignoring the implosion of modern culture and striving to reshape Christianity according to the principles of the Enlightenment results in irrelevance at best. What we are to do, then, just *is* the question of the New Evangelization: how to speak about God once "God is dead" is dead.

Scruton points to an answer that resounds with the Gospel *kerygma*: Be open to grace, look for God, seek his face, be changed by his self-revelation. Let the event of Christ, the reality of the God-man, guide and transform all aspects of life, from daily

experiences in the family to the creation of art. Only a people that has been transformed by grace can be an example that will draw others. But to be a city on a hill, the City of God must produce the fruits of any city: brotherly love above all, expressed in care for the environment; temporal charity; and the love of beauty in art, architecture, music, and literature. Such a transformation need not be violent or antiquarian; Christianity took the best of Roman, Germanic, and Anglo-Saxon culture and made them better by healing their wounds. The same has occurred throughout Christian history, and it can happen again if we have the courage to face modernity on its own terms, open to the Gospel.

Roger Scruton's philosophy is a proposal. In the midst of ideological media whirlwinds like Aliza Shvarts' shock-art or the hopeless, entertainment-seeking rootlessness described so aptly by David Foster Wallace, Scruton has spent forty years steadily and patiently re-proposing the concept of the person, suggesting that key loci of contemporary relativism—sex, aesthetics, and politics—can be sources of meaning and tradition when grounded in the irreducible personhood of the human being.

Perhaps, he suggests, we have trouble seeing the face of God because we have lost the face of man. As C.S. Lewis says of the gods in his masterful retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche, "How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?" I can think of no more apt answer than that given by Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*: "Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear." The task of the Christian in the modern world is to live, write, speak, and make art in the light of Christ, to grapple anew with the deep mysteries of man and so be led to the Father.

Gabriel Torretta entered the Order of Preachers in 2008

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).

REMEDIES FOR THE TEMPTATION TO EXCESSIVE STUDY

The Venerable Louis of Granada, O.P. (1505-1588)

Editor's note: Monastic rules give a central place to manual labor in the life of the monk. The rule of the friars preachers, however, replaced this monastic "labora" with the study of sacred truth as an essential element of our life. It is only right, then, that the Order of Preachers should prize its intellectual tradition. Yet the very rule that gives such primacy of place to study also warns that pride can corrupt even the noblest of endeavors. In the text that follows, Venerable Louis of Granada, O.P. offers us—from the abundance of his study and contemplation—sage advice and salutary caution: Study without love ceases to be meritorious.

The first remedy for the temptation to excessive study is to consider how much more excellent virtue is than wisdom, and how much more excellent divine wisdom is than human wisdom: in this way, man can see how much more he should occupy his time with exercises that strive for the one rather than the other.

Perhaps you wonder, is this in Scripture? Look at what Sirach says: "How great is the one who finds wisdom and knowledge! Yet no one is greater than the man who fears God. This is because the

fear of God has placed him above all other things.”ⁱ Moreover, look at what St. Augustine writes:

Men place great esteem in the knowledge of the things of heaven and earth, but those who supplant this knowledge with self-understanding are of greater esteem; more praiseworthy is the soul who knows his weakness than he who, forgetting this understanding, works to know the pathways of the stars, not knowing by which paths to approach Heaven.ⁱⁱ

Even if worldly wisdom had all the greatness it might desire, it would not be able to rid itself of one monumental misery: The shared enjoyment that stems from worldly wisdom will end with life. What could be more miserable than to acquire, with so much work, something that will endure for so short a time? St. Jerome once described a philosopher who wept as he lay dying—the awareness was heavy upon him that he was ending his life only as he was beginning to be wise.ⁱⁱⁱ

Truly, if there is any worldly loss worthy of sorrow, it is the death of a great sage, for he leaves behind a skull filled with a multitude of marvels and secrets, only to be laid under the earth. This is the way of human wisdom; thus it is great prudence to accept the council of the Savior: “Do not wish to store up riches on earth, where rust and moths destroy, and where thieves break in and steal; rather, work to store up treasures in heaven, where none of this has a place and where goods will be eternally secure.”^{iv}

According to these words, how much greater is it to be engaged in acts of charity than in the speculations of human understanding? The fruit of the one endures forever, and the other—if it is not born of the same charity and grace—ends with this life.

Consider how much better a home built on a perpetual promise is than one built on a promise with a lifelong duration; even greater than this is the greatness of the exercise of charity above that of human knowledge. And if you desperately desire knowledge, wait

a little while. Do not be in such a hurry; all that you can know here is as nothing. But if you exercise yourself in the love of God, you will go swiftly to see him, and in him you will see all things.

Additionally, you should remember judgment day, when—as one saint says—we will not be asked what we have read, but what we have done; and not how well we have spoken or preached, but how well we have lived.^v This consideration, when pondered, was sufficient to convince all those who wished to attain true knowledge. Tell me: what in the world is better than discovering how to please God and how to become pleasing before Him? And what pleases him more than charity?

This is the only thing that pleases him, and only by charity is anything made pleasing to him. This charity is that by which we will be examined and judged, and it is the measure by which our works will be rewarded. For it is true to say that if, on the one hand, a man possessed (notice: I do not say “learned”) all the knowledge in the world, and preached and converted all the nations of the world, while, on the other hand, an old woman who has done none of this should be found with more charity, then it cannot be doubted that she would be found more pleasing to God, and she would have a larger share in him.

Accordingly, we cannot doubt that the life which assists in achieving the virtue of charity is greater, and that those actions are more on the mark. We are certain that the exercises and acts of the contemplative life are more helpful for this end than any other, so it follows that these acts of charity should be the best and most excellent of all. Oh, if only you knew how many people there are in the world who never learned syllogisms nor converted souls, and yet in the eyes of God are more pleasing than the many great, wise men and preachers of the world! Thus, my brother, if you desire to achieve the better part, examine here the sure path and be sure that you can follow it. I do not say these things so that you abandon all study, but so that you may carry it out in the manner that St. Augustine advises: “We ought not to be continuous in disputation and slothful in prayer.”^{vi}



NICOLAS POUSSIN - ET IN ARCADIA EGO

In addition to this, all law and all natural reason teaches us that we ought to undertake the work of study just as we engage in other works: We should not forget ourselves, nor exchange what is greater for what is lesser. As St. John Chrysostom says, great condemnation is reserved for the man who works much at grinding and polishing his speech, and yet does not strive to arrange and compose his life. We gain little for the composition of our speech, but much for the character of our life. What great madness is it to have inordinate care for so little gain and such carelessness for so much gain?

This is what St. Bernard strongly writes to Pope Eugenius:

Let your consideration begin with yourself, lest, while you neglect yourself, you vainly extend yourself to other things. What does it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? Though you may be wise in one sense, you

lack wisdom if you do not belong to yourself. And how much do you lack wisdom? In my opinion, completely. Though you know all the mysteries of the Scriptures, though you know the breadth of the earth, the height of the heavens, and the depth of the sea, if you know not yourself, you will be like a man building without a foundation, doing work doomed to fail.

Whatever structure you raise outside yourself will be like a heap of dust before the wind. He, therefore, is not wise who is not wise toward himself. The wise man will be wise toward himself, and will first of all drink from his own well. Let your consideration be for yourself; and do not let it end there. Wherever you go, look that you go by this path that you may finally return. To yourself, be the first and the last. Imitate the example of the great Father of all, who in this way produces and sends forth that eternal Word and keeps it with him.

Your attention is your “word.” If it goes forth, watch that it returns; do not let it desert you altogether. Regarding that which affects your health,^{vii} you ought to have no closer neighbor or brother than the only son of your mother, which is to say yourself. That which is contrary to your health should not be thought. I have said less about what you ought to say because I will not say something contrary to your health; moreover anything contrary to your health ought not be admitted.^{viii}

In these words, St. Bernard manifests how jealous a lover a man should be of his health and how he ought to understand the external world so as to do no harm to himself.

This alone was enough to convince the studious that, as much as they give themselves to study and the advancement of others, so much should they guard themselves from exploiting others for

the sake of their study, even if this exploitation is minor. For the law of charity does not license anyone to take advantage of another to his detriment. Moreover, what if we proved that this path of caring for oneself not only does not impair the advancement of neighbors, but even significantly enhances it to great advantage? What if the only true path to the advancement of others is one's own advancement?

Know for sure, my brother, that if you truly wish to advance, there is no other means more proportionate to this than a good life, and the exercise of prayer and meditation by which this is achieved. I could prove this with many strong reasons, but for the sake of brevity in this volume I will content myself with presenting just a few.

First, it is clear that the principal instrument required for advancement is true wisdom. To reach this wisdom, what is more important than fear of the Lord, a good life, the practice and daily exercise of the virtue, attention, and continuous meditation on the law of God? What does Sacred Scripture repeat more often than the fact that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and that the fullness of all wisdom is this same fear?^{ix} Without these means it is impossible to achieve this virtue, as St. Augustine makes clear: There are many who are greedy for knowledge, but neglect the guarding of justice; they should be warned that they will not achieve what they desire but rather are guarding what they despise. As the Scriptures say: "My son, if you desire wisdom, guard justice, and the Lord will give it to you."^x This is God-given, one of the principal gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, more is achieved by tears than by disputes, and more by prayers than by actions. As St. Augustine says: "Those who have learned from Christ to be meek and humble of heart learn more from prayer and meditation than from reading and studying."^{xi} If this wisdom is the principal instrument for the enjoyment of other things, how can we not use the preceding means by which she is reached?

Second, since converting souls is one of the highest supernatural works, it is indispensable to overcome depraved nature, evil habits—which are little weaker than nature itself—and above all the strength and power of the Enemy, who strongly holds imprisoned and enchained the hearts of his own. In order to defeat such great forces, another, greater force is necessary—one which does not exist on earth, but is found in Heaven; it is not reached so much by study and speculation as by tears and supplications, and the merits of a life well lived.

Those who are converted to God are sons of tears no less than words, nor does prayer take a lesser part in conversions than preaching. Just as the prayers of Moses had more to do with the victory against Amalek^{xii} than all the swords of the Israelites, so must we believe that no less a part is played by the prayer and supplication of the true preacher in order to attain victory, than by all his opinions and words, even if they are well-crafted.

Third, as is found in experience, people sin more through their affections and passions than by ignorance of the truth. So he who attempts their cure ought to work more to move their wills than to teach them through their understanding. Every great master of rhetoric shows there is nothing more important for one who would pretend to move others than to be truly moved within himself. As Quintilian affirms:

The height of this work, all that I can reach, is that if we wish to move the hearts of others, our hearts must be moved. Moreover, our prayer must flow from the same spirit. How is it possible for another to mourn who sees that I do not mourn myself? How should he be outraged who sees that I myself am not outraged? How will he weep who sees me speak with dry eyes? It is impossible because nothing is ignited without fire, nor dampened without water; nor is something able to give the color it does not itself possess.^{xiii}

Accordingly, who would doubt that the one who has no understanding, and yet cries and experiences the things of God day and night, would have greater and more profound affection than another who, for all his knowledge, never shed a single tear for the Lord?

Fourth, as Tully says, eloquence that does not instill admiration in its listeners is worthless. If this approach to eloquence is required for human affairs, how much more is it required to treat divine affairs, to rescue man from sin and defeat the forces of the Enemy, which—since they are supernatural—require spiritual and supernatural eloquence? For reaching this level of eloquence, nothing is more suited than the Spirit of God; thus it can be said sparks shine forth from this Spirit in the words of the speaker. For just as this Spirit exceeds all that exists in natural faculties, so there is nothing that better attracts and captures the hearts of men and leads them to the admiration of God than a single spark from him. In it they recognize the power and strength of the Holy Spirit; they humble themselves and lower their weapons, saying with Pharaoh’s magicians, “the finger of God is here.”^{xiv}

Above all, another help is available that should be taken advantage of: the life of the preacher.^{xv} For there is no greater argument for belief that speaks to the heart than a life conformed to doctrine—to see him do what he says. This is the best and most efficacious of sermons, and it is most advantageous to its listeners. Sanctity of life is a supernatural and divine good, and the just are as tongues and temples of the Holy Spirit, thus, all men possess a certain devotion and reverence, which is more than human, for these holy men. They watch and listen to them not as men, but as if they were angels; not as inhabitants of the earth, but as citizens of Heaven. Their acts and words are regarded as treasures from the Holy Spirit.

When well considered, this clearly demonstrates what is involved in bringing another person to act as the teacher acts. To teach and make others virtuous, the teacher must be virtuous. As

the philosophers write, one thing begets another of the same kind. Man begets man and beast begets beast. What more powerfully begets virtue than another virtue?

Therefore it is advisable that those who truly seek God and not themselves should know neither honors, nor liberties, nor dignities, nor imperiousness, nor authority, but only edification, thereby assisting their own hearts. As the Apostle writes to Timothy, “Look to yourself and your teachings, because in this way you will be able to save yourself and those who hear you.”^{xvi}

Thus, citizens will first desire your life and second your teachings. He that has already partaken of his teaching is advantageous for others. This truth is made manifest in trees that have grown for their own good, but then bear fruit for the good of their owners. Just so, the preacher tastes of what he preaches in order to be useful for others; according to the measure of his benefitting will he be of benefit to his listeners.

Translated by Tomás Martín Rosado, O.P.

Tomás Martín Rosado entered the Order of Preachers in 2010.

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ Sir. 25:13.
ⁱⁱ *De Trinitate*, IV: PL 42,885.
ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Eusebius, *De Morte Hieronymi*: PL 22,2411.
^{iv} Mt. 6:19.
^v Cf. *Contemptus Mundi*, I,3.
^{vi} *In Ps.* 118, sermo 6: PL 37, 1516.
^{vii} St. Bernard and Ven. Louis are playing with the meaning of health and salvation—Trans.
^{viii} *De Consideratione*, II, 3: PL 182, 745-746.
^{ix} Cf. Ps. 110:10; Sir. 1:16
^x Sir. 1:33
^{xi} *In Ps.* 118, sermo 6: PL 37, 1516.
^{xii} Cf. Ex. 17:8-13
^{xiii} M.F. Quintilian, *Institutionis Oratoriae*, I,1.
^{xiv} Ex. 8:19
^{xv} Seneca, *Epistola LXX*: “Longum iter per verba est; breve et efficax per exempla.”
^{xvi} I Tim. 4:16

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EX NIHILO
ORIGINAL PROSE AND POETRY

STILL LIGHT

Cassian Derbes, O.P.

Dominic's door -
Darkness sent.
Drawn down to rest
In night's ample still.
Peering sight's clouded lens:
Tired, though rest feels far spent.
Until he forgets but the divine,
Whose hand he sees not;
Nor feels not.

Not to sight knows still;
But to heart and breath he hears:
The whispering spill from Our Lady's love.
Fills the soul with grace.

Cassian Derbes entered the Order of Preachers in 2009.



THOMAS COLE -
STUDY FOR THE PILGRIM OF THE CROSS
AT THE END OF HIS JOURNEY

A PEASANT & HIS BREAD

(UPON A REMARK MADE TO JOHN VIANNEY)

Timothy Danaher, O.P.



ILYA REPIN - A SHY PEASANT

I look at him and he looks at me.
It's nothing much, I just come and see
For me is nothing else besides
Looking at Bread where my God hides
Though he doesn't do it all so well
Else he shouldn't cause my heart to swell
As it does each time I close the door
To sit alone with this king made poor

Not often do my emotions arouse
My mind oft burdened, my thoughts they browse
Even so, I am here, and worry not so
He or I haven't need to put on a show
My part is small, but to get out of bed
He loved us first I hear in my head
So I drag my old body, still whole and entire
Not much, when he chose to climb, cry, expire
But I walk while it's dark, an old friend to meet
My part is small, his is the feat
O painful Passover that here he may dwell
The wood of the cross and descent into hell
That I might sit here, bundled, secret, warm
While he coldly hung, for the crowds and their scorn.

Timothy Danaher entered the Order of Preachers in 2011.

CROSSROADS

Philip Neri Reese, O.P.

Torches scattered shadows across the garden. In darkness and the dim dancing of orange light, the centurion—sent by Pilate—watched the mob. Hidden, he watched as the Traitor kissed the Teacher. He watched as metal flashed: the first sword drawn. He watched as the blade swept down and struck its target. The high priest's slave fell, clutching his head where his ear once was. The centurion braced himself for the violence to come, but into the pause of pregnant tension, the betrayed man stepped forward. The centurion couldn't hear what was said, but the images burned into his memory. The rabbi stooped down to the fallen slave. Looking him in the eyes, he placed his hand upon the wound, and when he removed it, it was to reveal a face unmarred. Then he rose and let the mob take him away.

What just happened? The centurion couldn't stop asking the question as he delivered his report to Pilate and returned to the barracks. His mind grew increasingly agitated. They had all heard of this prophet, this wonder-worker who supposedly gave sight to the blind and life to the dead. But the centurion had seen war. He knew that the dead did not rise. He had fought under Caesar himself, and men called *him* a god. But Caesar couldn't heal the wounded, and no one claimed that this Jew was a god.

What, then, had just happened? The centurion had seen the wound with his own eyes. He had seen the man rise, healed, and he could not convince himself that it was a mere trick of the shadows and darkness. The wound had been as real as the wounds he had received on the battlefield. His mind turned back to his



EDWARD HOPPER - ROAD IN MAINE

fallen friends. If only *he* had had such power to heal, if only *he* could have made them whole with a touch of his hand . . . If this miracle worker could accomplish such marvels, why wasn't he *there*, saving lives? If he could raise the fallen and heal the sick, why was he *here*, wasting himself on these Jews?

The next few hours transformed agitated thoughts into tortured ruminations. Doubt gave way to despair and a dark cloud of memory and sorrow, wrath and regret settled upon him. When news came that Pilate had ordered the Nazarene to be flogged, the centurion made arrangements with the commanding officer. He was ready, scourge in hand, when they brought the prophet into the Praetorium. As soon as he had been stripped and tied to the pillar, the centurion lashed out. Once, twice, three times. Over

and over, he gave violent vent to his anger. But as he continued to wound the healer—as blood poured down the man’s back—something twisted, sickeningly, in the centurion’s stomach. It was as if he could hear the voice of his victim reproaching him, *What have I done to you? How have I offended you? Answer me!* But the centurion had no answer. This man had done only good, and now he was bringing down scourges upon him.

When the last lash fell, the centurion stumbled backward in a daze. *What had he done?* The other soldiers were gathering around the weak and blood-lost man, and their every insult, their every curse, turned the centurion’s stomach even more. *What had he done?* Guilt disoriented him. Shocked and bewildered, he could only watch as they robed the man in a fake purple cloak and mocked him for a would-be king. He could only watch as a wooden stick was handed over to play the role of a ruler’s rod.

He watched as a crown of plaited thorns was passed forward through the crowd, and he winced as the awful object was jammed upon the brow of the man he had brutalized. He watched as the prophet’s knees buckled under this new pain. He watched—but he did not move to help him.

Slowly, the man climbed to his feet, struggling for balance. The centurion was looking on when, through the obscuring streams of blood flowing from his forehead, the healer looked at him. It was not a glance, but a gaze. Their eyes locked. *Jesus* looked at him, looked into him, and that look pierced the centurion’s malaise. In that look, the centurion knew that he was known.

More terrifying still, in that look the centurion saw love. *What had he done?* The power and the depth of the love contained in those blood-draped eyes was too much for him. Raw and exposed, he backed away from a love he could not bear. Then, breaking for the first time in his life, he pushed his way through the crowd, fleeing from the gaze of *Jesus* as he had never before fled from the field of battle.

Safely distant, far from that gaze that was far too intimate, the centurion trembled. *Who was this man? How could he have loved what he saw?* It wasn't possible. You don't love a man who volunteered to whip you. You don't love a man who envies your power to do good. You don't love a man whose hate is kindled by healing. And yet the centurion could not deny that Jesus had looked upon him with love any more than he could deny that Jesus had restored the ear of the wounded slave. *Who was this man?*

It was then that he made the decision to turn around. He would not get close enough to be seen. He would not chance another unbearable gaze. But if he kept his distance, if he stayed far enough away, he could see what happened without being affected by it. He could observe Jesus without getting involved.

Thus, the centurion found himself following the crowd. From afar, he saw Jesus take up the cross, weak though he was, and fall under its weight. He saw a woman approach, but he couldn't hear what passed between them. A man was enlisted to help him carry the cross, and for a fleeting moment, the centurion desired to be that man, to make up for what he had done with the whip. When another woman came and wiped his face, the centurion again missed what was said.

If he wanted to hear, he had to draw closer. Again Jesus fell. Again he struggled back to his feet. He spoke, but the wailing of women made it impossible to hear, so the centurion came closer still. Men he knew—soldiers he had eaten and joked with—stripped the clothes from Jesus' back and laid him down upon the cross. The centurion's hands had become clammy. *Stop this*, he thought, *there must be some way to stop this. The man has done nothing wrong.* But the arms were outstretched. The nails were set. The hammers were raised. Then, for the first time, he heard the voice of Jesus, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do,"—and his heart broke.

The crucifixion itself was a blur. He watched them raise Jesus upon the cross, but he didn't really see it. He overheard the

exchange between the crucified and the pair standing at the foot of the cross, but he didn't really hear it. The only things that were real to him were the echoing words, *Forgive them*. He knew that they applied to him. He had come too close. He had gotten involved. But this time, the love was not unbearable; it was liberating. Contrition crashed upon him, but waves of gratitude followed. He could leave this place behind him. The man Jesus had forgiven him before he died.

He looked up and saw that it was true. The body of Jesus hung, lifeless, upon the cross. The centurion came forward to get a closer look before leaving. Longinus, a man he knew well, stepped beside him, carrying a spear. As the lance thrust into the dead man's side, the rest of Jesus' prayer leapt into his mind: They know not what they do.

Blood and water splattered down upon him. He turned and saw tears streaming down Longinus' face. Despite the tears, however, his friend's voice was bold. *Truly, this was the Son of God*.

Frantically trying to understand the scene that lay before him, the centurion felt as if his mind was flailing about in the darkness: The man hung. The words echoed. And the centurion stood at the crossroads.

Oh God . . . Is that true?

Philip Neri Reese entered the Order of Preachers in 2009.

FRIARS' BOOKSHELF



PIETRO DELLA VECCHIA - ST. DOMINIC AND THE DEVIL

CHRISTIANITY & CONTEMPORARY ART

PUTTING POLITICS ASIDE FOR BEAUTY'S SAKE

Gregory Wolfe, *Beauty Will Save the World: Recovering the Human in an Ideological Age*. Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2011.

The campaigns of 2012 are over, but the news remains saturated with talk of American electoral politics. Major media outlets are already assessing the impact of the outcome of the latest presidential campaign on future races as far off as the next US Congressional cycle nearly two years away. What affect does this fixation with politics have on our culture? In his

latest book, *Beauty Will Save the World: Recovering the Human in an Ideological Age*, Gregory Wolfe suggests that all of the attention that politics consumes restricts our culture's flourishing, and even contributes to its decay. Wolfe argues that beauty, not political discourse, will save the world.

A Writer in Residence at Seattle Pacific University, Wolfe serves as the director of the school's Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing program. He is well-credentialed for the position, being the author of several books, numerous essays, and the founder and editor of *Image*, a journal that introduces readers to contemporary efforts at synthesizing the concerns of faith with literature and the arts. Wolfe is also a convert to the Catholic faith.

While his work is now devoted to academia and the arts, Wolfe is no stranger to partisan politics. An interest in politics that began in his undergraduate days led him eventually to a short stint with the *National Review* in 1980. At the *National Review*, he was a part of an optimistic group of conservatives invigorated by the recent success of Ronald Reagan.

However, Wolfe confesses in his book that he soon became disillusioned with politics. His disenchantment grew as he witnessed the priorities and principles of political conservatives shift with their ascendancy. For example, Wolfe saw many conservatives abandon their former allegiance to smaller government as the prospect for wielding power increased. Behind this change of heart, Wolfe argues, is an attachment to government as a means for the exercise of influence. Rather than shrinking the size of government, a mere reallocation of resources from one department to another came to represent the preferred approach.

Wolfe explains in the early chapters of his book that he came to the realization that, all too often, political participation leads to an obsession with the acquisition of power rather than the nourishment and cultivation of the human person. Ultimately, he decided that an emphasis on politics as the means for cultural revitalization is misplaced. Beauty has a far greater capacity to reinvigorate the human spirit, and art, not argument, is its medium. But for

beauty to have its salutary effects, Wolfe argues that Christianity must exercise its rightful stewardship over contemporary artistic expression.

A skeptic might object to the art-as-antidote program that Wolfe proposes. After all, much of the art and literature of recent vintage celebrates libertine values. Not a few pieces mocking religion in general and Christianity in particular have appeared recently even in the halls of the most prestigious galleries and pages of the most esteemed journals of literature.

Wolfe is not ignorant of the amoral or even nihilistic views expressed by many modern artists. He is also keenly aware of art all too commonly being put to the service of sensationalism and propaganda as part of an effort to undermine traditional values. However, Wolfe does not lay blame for the growing scarcity of healthy Christian themes in art at a morally depraved society hostile to the message of Christianity. Instead, Wolfe offers pointed criticism at a stale traditionalism that has increasingly come to embrace something like a bunker mentality that shields itself from the culture at large. According to Wolfe, traditionalist Christians have, by and large, merely opted out of culture insofar as it pertains to the arts.

To be sure, Christians of the more traditionalist bent have not disappeared from the public square altogether. Wolfe argues, however, that they have ignored contemporary art and focused their cultural engagement on politics, especially that which treats of national concerns. This, however, is precisely the problem. Wolfe links his personal observations and experience with partisan politics to a broader phenomenon that consumes and redirects Christian engagement with public culture. The infatuation with politics contributes to the paucity of Christian themes in contemporary art.

Wolfe does not imply that traditionalist Christians ignore the arts all together. The problem lies in their being trapped in the past. He faults Christians of the conservative stripe for insisting that



JOHANNES VERMEER - THE ART OF PAINTING

the heritage they prize is wholly distinct from the present culture. Only that which qualifies as “classical” art, both in content, style and age, is worthy of attention. Wolfe criticizes the assumption that Western art, in any felicitous form at least, died with the advent of the modern era.

What Wolfe refers to as a “suspicion of imagination” contributes to an impoverished appreciation for the arts in its variety of expression. The “suspicion of imagination” unnecessarily limits the manifestation of Christian truths within the arts to a narrow, and often stale, mode of artistic expression. The type of art that

this approach tends to encourage is the mere production of saccharine pieces placed at the service of pietistic propaganda. Mere reproduction of the past does little to address the problems of the present.

The Christian imagination, however, is capable of synthesizing modern concerns with the truths of Christian faith. Wolfe explains that while a more welcoming approach to contemporary art might trouble traditionalists unwilling to go beyond the treatment of 'safe' themes, unless Christians engage the problems of modernity, including the difficult and even taboo areas of life, art will cease to reveal the everlasting truths of Christianity in ways that reflect the changes that come with the passage of time. The Christian artist must, in the words of the author, "speak to his age in the language and forms of his time."

Wolfe holds up the imaginative minds of Catholic humanists Erasmus and St. Thomas More as examples from which Christians of today should take their lead. More and Erasmus, Wolfe argues, were able to answer the challenges to Christianity in their times through their contributions to literature, poetry, and drama.

Throughout his book, Wolfe introduces his readers to modern artists whose work follows in the path marked out by More and Erasmus. While he highlights the contributions of the leading figures of the "modern Catholic Renaissance" in literature (a group that includes familiar names, such as Leon Bloy, Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, Graham Greene, Flannery O'Connor, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton and Walker Percy), Wolfe focuses more intently on exposing his readers to artists that, aside from two notable exceptions (Evelyn Waugh and Wendell Berry), have received comparatively less attention.

Wolfe divides the section of his book that treats of individual artists into three parts. The first part includes six chapters devoted to an equal number of writers. In addition to Waugh and Berry, Wolfe surveys the work of Japanese author Shusaku Endo; Oxford don Geoffrey Hill; Andrew Lytle, a member of the Southern

Agrarian movement; and American novelist Larry Woiwode. Wolfe presents these writers, whose work spans the early part of the last century up to the present, as artists whose writing engages Christian themes within the context of modernity in critical essays, novels and poetry.

Wolfe devotes the next part to visual artists. Each of the three artists that Wolfe singles out for specific treatment—Fred Folsom, Mary McCleary, and Makoto Fujimura—practice their craft today. Folsom is a recovering alcoholic and convert to Catholicism who paints in what the artist describes as a Neo-Flemish post-Raphaelite style. Wolfe highlights Folsom’s work for its collection of “submerged allegories, obscure symbols, and surrealistic images” planted in scenes that portray the ugly underbelly of modern life. McCleary is a collage painter who lives and works in Texas. Wolfe draws particular attention to the use of contemporary figures to embody biblical characters in her work. Fujimura, whose exhibition of works titled *The Four Holy Gospels* appeared at the Museum of Biblical Art in New York in 2011, paints in a style that mixes a fusion of fine art and abstract expressionism with traditional Japanese style. Wolfe draws from reproductions of Fujimura’s sequence of paintings entitled *Water Flames* to offer an example of the mystery and beauty of paradox in the visual arts.

Finally, Wolfe devotes a part of his book to four “men of letters.” This group includes two public intellectuals that the author knew personally, Russell Kirk and Gerhart Niemeyer. Wolfe regards Kirk, the father of modern American conservatism, as a mentor. While he does not hesitate to criticize the former Hillsdale College professor’s largely indiscriminate rejection of all modern art and literature, Wolfe praises him for a “moral imagination” that gave him “the ability to see the ordinary in the context of a moral, historical, and spiritual significance.”

Wolfe lauds another former conservative political philosopher, Gerhart Niemeyer, for his prescience in warning of a growing “individualist rhetoric” in the conservative movement.

A third figure is the subject of Wolfe's 2003 book *Malcolm Muggeridge: A Biography*. Muggeridge, a Catholic convert and satirist, is described by Wolfe as a genuine representative "twentieth century man" whose early life as the child of a socialist politician and later work in journalism gave him a unique perspective on the moral struggles of the last century. Muggeridge's take on the great moral disputes of the preceding century, such as the relative merits of communism, sexual license, and the ascendancy of media power, ultimately found expression in his memoirs at the end of his career.

Wolfe's last subject, Marion Montgomery, receives special note for his critical essays on poetry and literature. While Wolfe recognizes Montgomery's own contributions as a poet and novelist, Wolfe locates Montgomery's "originality and significance" in his criticism of poets whose work follows modern versions of philosophical "sects" (Wolfe lists nihilism, naturalism and solipsism) in seeking to separate man from actual existence in favor of competing subjective "realities."

Wolfe acknowledges that some of the artists whose work he offers as examples of modern artistic Christian expression "may not be strictly orthodox on all aspects of doctrine, and many of them remain outside of the institutional church." Wolfe admits that Hill, for example, "can be thought of as a Christian poet only in a limited sense." Writer Annie Dillard, whose work receives favorable treatment in Wolfe's book, once identified herself as a convert to Catholicism but now lists her religion as "none" on her personal website. Nonetheless, Wolfe defends his selections when he writes that "it is fair to say that if this body of art was absorbed and pondered by the majority of Christians, the quality of Christian witness and compassion in our society would be immeasurably strengthened."

Yet aside from Wolfe's willingness to extend beyond a conventional definition of "Christian artist" in search of examples, readers of the Dominican persuasion will be pleased

to find the names of some of their familiar favorites scattered throughout the book. References to Saint Thomas Aquinas appear repeatedly. Students of Saint Augustine and the Angelic Doctor will read approvingly the following statement from the chapter entitled “Ever Ancient, Ever New: The Catholic Writer in the Modern World”:

Show me a thinker who has faithfully grappled with the achievements of St. Augustine or St. Thomas, and you will likely find someone who has the ability to grasp the real challenges of the modern world.

Craftsman, poet, and Dominican tertiary David Jones also receives favorable mention. Wolfe treats Jacques Maritain’s insights on the arts with sympathy. Readers will find Dominican priest Gerald Vann, who entered the English Province and departed life as a member of the US Western Province, quoted twice by Wolfe (once extensively in an excerpt that spans two pages).

One regrettable absence in the book is the lack of any effort to address music. Perhaps Wolfe regards the topic as one beyond his expertise. If he had taken up the subject, the opera *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, by 20th century composer Francis Poulenc, might qualify for treatment, especially in light of its timely theme. This 1957 piece unfolds within the narrative of aggressive government hostility and intolerance toward Catholicism by recounting the story of the suppression of a monastery of Carmelite nuns during the French Revolution.

The work of pop musician Brooke Fraser is perhaps another worthy suggestion. Fraser succeeds in integrating Biblical passages and Christian themes into her music with a delicate precision that allows her work to transcend the narrow category of Christian pop. Her 2006 album, *Albertine*, offers several notable examples of her unique talent.

Despite Wolfe's neglect of music and his sometimes questionably expansive parameters for those who might qualify as a Christian artist, the strength of Wolfe's book lies in his call for a Christian engagement with contemporary artistic expression. While Christian participation in the political sphere is necessary, the ability to change hearts and minds through partisan politics is limited. The arts offer a better medium for communication of the Christian message. But to engage the culture, a modern Christian response must involve more than an exclusive devotion to the art of an era past. Against the sentiment of suspicion for modern themes and forms of artistic expression, Wolfe's book is a convincing appeal for a greater emphasis on Christian works of art in a modern mode.

Thomas More Garrett entered the Order of Preachers in 2008.

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

Karl Marlantes, *What It Is Like To Go To War*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011.

Few Americans today have a personal experience of war. Most of us acquire our knowledge of war through books, news, movies and television. Depending on the source, we can gain a whole range of impressions: from being inspired by heroism to being disgusted by atrocities. Karl Marlantes's *What It Is Like To Go To War* may seem like one more round in the stockpile of war stories, but it offers more: It doesn't simply present the general difficulties of war, but addresses honestly the individual struggles that soldiers face.

For example, about a year after the Iraq War started, just as the first wave of troops returned home, a television news segment depicted the way one soldier decorated his truck: An obviously devout Catholic, he had put on the back windshield a large image of Our Lady of Guadalupe flanked by words to the effect of, "Forgive me, I sinned for my country." It was just a blip in the larger flurry of news coming out of the Iraq War, and was swallowed up by all of the debate and puzzlement over whether we should have been involved in the first place. From the beginning, there were many who questioned the rationale given for our presence in Iraq, and in many circles the venerable tradition of Just War Theory was considered in an effort to adjudicate whether or not our decision to invade was right.

The story of this particular soldier and his truck seemed different, though. Less of a comment about the war in general, it suggested something about his own actions in that war. This was not a question of whether or not the Iraq War was a just war, but

whether or not this particular soldier had been a just warrior. Evidently, he thought he had not. One hopes he was able, in the light of his faith, to come to terms with the decisions he made, but it highlighted an important question: How many other young soldiers have not dealt well with their own choices? It is one thing to make broad conjectures about where our nation should be focusing its military resources, but as long as we have and use those military resources, it will involve putting young men and women in harm's way, not only physically but interiorly.

On the surface, articulating what a just warrior is and how he should act seems fairly straightforward. We should simply apply our general understanding of what a just man is to the situations and decisions that one faces in times of war—easier said than done. Attempting to complete this project simply on the basis of impressions received in movies and news reports is bound to fail. Yet, a true understanding of the life of a soldier—from the day-to-day grind to the vexing moral quandaries—is not the common currency of modern discourse, which is precisely why a book such as *What It Is Like To Go To War* is so valuable.

Karl Marlantes presents a broad survey of the difficulties that a soldier faces in war based on his own experiences as a young lieutenant in Vietnam, and decades of reflection on those experiences in the light of history, psychology, sociology, and religion. The most captivating portions of the book draw on life-and-death decisions in the course of intense jungle combat. On their own, these episodes would simply melt into the background of the all-too-familiar action movie heroics.

The heart of the book is his honest and piercing consideration of what exactly was going through his head in the midst of the fray, what was motivating him and what he believed himself to be doing. Additionally, his frank discussion of the ways he dealt with these experiences after returning home—more bad than good, he admits—provides a stark view of the effect of the Vietnam War on the young men of that generation.



MYKOLA PYMONENKO - OFF TO WAR

One poignant example of his honesty comes as Marlantes recounts a particular assault that he led just after his company had lost one of its most beloved members. Right as he reaches the climax of the narrative, he interjects: “Thirty years later, while trying to write about this incident, I kept compulsively writing *then these three* [Vietnamese soldiers] *stood up in their hole. I was in a different frame of mind. I gunned them down.* But this was a lie. I did no such thing.”

His first three attempts to write about it were the same fiction that drew both much of the blame and some of the glory to himself for the atrocity that followed. In fact, his whole unit, with his sanction, had engaged in a “no-quarter fight,” not allowing the enemy a chance to surrender. He reveals what he was thinking at the time and how his decision had affected him over the years, to the point of lying to himself about his own actions.

While this honest assessment of the decisions he made and the effect these had on him over the ensuing years are intriguing, the book is not meant to be a personal memoir but a thorough investigation of the psyche of a young man at war and of a warrior returned home. Beginning with his own experiences and those of his fellow soldiers specifically during the conflict in the Far East, Marlantes draws on the ways that many cultures and religions have dealt with the fact of war and the personal struggle of being a warrior through the ages.

Much has changed about the nature of war and our attitudes towards it over the course of recorded human history, yet certain universal aspects to armed conflict emerge. Marlantes astutely observes and articulates the cultural factors that contribute to the psychological makeup of modern American soldiers. While the stories are his own from Vietnam, the message is very clearly aimed at soldiers heading into modern conflicts and the citizens that are sending them there.

While the responsibility for any particular act falls on the individual soldier, there is much that a society can and should do to prepare its warriors for the dangerous situations awaiting them. In general, our nation does a superb job training soldiers for combat, providing them with the best equipment to ensure survival and the completion of their objective, and training them to recognize and react quickly to threats and come out victorious. Yet surviving the physical threat is only part of the danger that our soldiers face, and the preparation we provide to face difficult moral decisions and to deal with the consequences of those decisions—whether right or wrong—is woefully lacking.

There is much that can and should be done by focused guidance for the young men and women we send in harm's way, but there are also broader issues that must be addressed: how we raise our children; how we treat our soldiers; how we treat our enemies; and how we think and talk about war.

Marlantes provides valuable thoughts and penetrating insight on how we might address these issues on the individual and societal level, with a view toward psychological, sociological, and spiritual considerations. Most of all, he stresses the importance of opening a conversation about them, the lack of which is one of the most glaring problems we face.

A constant refrain throughout the book is the need for each soldier to grapple with the moral difficulties that will arise in war, which, since they so often involve life and death, cannot fail to have a spiritual component. Although he does not confess a particular religious belief, he references his upbringing in general Christian terms and writes of experiences involving Catholic friends.

His attempt to address all people of whatever belief is noble—and clearly quite serious and sincere—but his insistence on the importance of recognizing and fulfilling the spiritual needs of young soldiers comes across, in the end, as somewhat platitudinous. His use of a variety of religious narratives and cultural myths, and his effort to reflect on them is, again, very insightful and commendable, but the lack of a consistent notion of what it means to be spiritually healthy affords him little basis for much practical or worthwhile spiritual advice.

Situations that almost invariably involve killing or being killed do not provide the most conducive venue for calm moral reflection. Thus, it is all the more important that our soldiers possess a clear understanding of what it means to be a just warrior before they ever step into combat—that is, if we wish them to come home not only physically but spiritually healthy.

A sharper and more perspicacious understanding of how we should wage wars will not make them less dangerous, nor will it render the particular decisions less stressful and difficult. But a healthy moral perspective will ensure that we fight with true honor as well as provide a framework with which to understand, accept, and learn from cases when we fail to live up to that standard.

What It Is Like To Go To War supplies a reasoned look at the interior struggles that a soldier must face in war, and Marlantes's reflection on those experiences contributes a basis for conversation about these issues. If we are to address honestly what it means to be a just warrior in the wars we will inevitably fight, more serious and honest reflection on how we have fought in the past and how to fight with honor in the future is indispensable.

Thomas Davenport entered the Order of Preachers in 2010.

THE POPE AND THE TEDDY BEAR

Georg Ratzinger and Michael Hesemann. *My Brother, the Pope*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012.

When we encounter great men and women, it is often fascinating to learn about their upbringing, to understand how their natural endowments were nourished in a way that allowed them to flourish. When a person is not only great but famous, there is an added pleasure in learning about his childhood, long before he became renowned. In what ways was his potential greatness perceivable to those around him? What aspects of his later work were quietly formed by his early experiences?

In the case of Pope Benedict XVI, christened Joseph Ratzinger in 1927 in a small Bavarian village, one's curiosity finds plenty to satisfy it in the recently published memoir of Georg Ratzinger, modestly titled *My Brother, the Pope*. In this volume, developed by Michael Hesemann on the basis of a series of conversations with Msgr. Ratzinger, many stories and recollections about the early life of Joseph Ratzinger are related in a frank and charming manner. Georg Ratzinger, born three years before his brother Joseph, has maintained a remarkably close relationship with his brother since the time of his childhood, and his stories illuminate the early experiences of his brother, helping us to understand the familial and cultural environment from which Pope Benedict arose.

Take, for instance, the question of Gregorian chant, an area in which Pope Benedict has been keen to encourage a revival. In one passage of the memoir, Georg describes his brother's first encounter with the *Liber Usualis*, a book of chants for Mass and the Divine Office compiled by the Monks of Solesmes:

In 1935, when I was in my first year at boarding school, I received a book of chant, the *Liber Usualis*, which was used at the seminary, and nevertheless, cost five reichsmark. It was a thick book with over a thousand pages, in which Latin text and the chant notation were printed. Joseph was quite impressed, because there was not a single German word in that thick book, but after all I was in secondary school by then and was already taking Latin classes.

In another illuminating passage, Msgr. Ratzinger describes vividly the formative impact of the ordination rites at which he and his brother Joseph were ordained priests in 1951:

As we entered the cathedral, the organ thundered and the men's choir sang. Our liturgy provides us with such wonderful experiences! There was standing room only in the cathedral; the people literally thronged to participate in this special event, our ordination to the priesthood . . . The sound of the organ and the splendid colors of the flowers decorating the church did their part to intensify the already festive mood and to lend an additional, sensory dimension to it. Then the ordination rite was celebrated, in a form that was very moving to us at the time. The high point of it was the Litany of the Saints, during which we lay on the floor before the altar and in that posture prayed and sang along in complete abandonment to God. Everyone present, even our teachers and the assembled laity, joined in, so as to implore for us the help of all the saints in heaven in preparation for our ordination. Thus we became more profoundly certain that with the imposition of hands by the Archbishop, a new chapter of our life was beginning that would be pleasing to God and rich in blessings.

In addition to the details provided by the Pope's brother himself, each section contains editorial introductions provided

by Michael Hesemann, who helps the reader to understand the broader context and significance of the memories related in the book. Particularly helpful in this regard are the sections on the experience of the brothers as seminarians during the Nazi regime, which helps us, decades later, understand the progressive stages in the terrible Nazi persecution of Jews and faithful Catholics, as well as the nature of Joseph Ratzinger's participation in the German army.

The book provides interesting details for each period of the life of the Ratzinger brothers, following Joseph from his infancy through his priestly, episcopal, and curial service and Georg throughout his work in choral music at the Regensburg Cathedral. One of the most beautiful passages in the work describes the innocent, loving heart of the child Joseph Ratzinger:

During Advent, we—with my sister on the right, me on the left, and little Joseph, who could not yet walk by himself, in the middle—always used to go over to look at the display in the festively decorated shop window. There, surrounded by evergreen branches, gold foil, and tinsel, were toys that children might like to have. What fascinated Joseph most was a bear that had a very friendly expression. We went then every day, despite wind and weather, to visit the little bear, because we all liked it, but Joseph most of all had taken it to his heart. He would have liked so much to hold it in his arms. Once the owner of the shop, a very nice lady, asked us in and revealed to us the little bear's name: Teddy! Then one day, shortly before Christmas, we tried to visit the teddy bear again, but he was no longer there. My brother wept bitterly: 'The little teddy bear is gone!' We tried to console him, but he was much too sad, and really we were, too. Then we went back home, quite disappointed.

Then came Christmas and the exchange of gifts. When Joseph came into the festively decorated room where the Christmas tree stood, he was so happy he laughed out loud. For there, where the presents for us children were set out, stood the teddy bear at his place. The Christ Child had brought it for him. That gave the youngster the greatest joy of his life.

When we read this passage, we get a glimpse of what seems to be at the core of Joseph Ratzinger's humanity: simple joy in response to God's loving generosity, which in turn bestows on Ratzinger the magnanimous generosity for which he is so famous. It is only because we have received the gift of God's love that we can give any gift to our fellow men.

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Benedict has shown a spirit of magnanimous generosity, especially in his interactions with communities that might hold minority positions on liturgical practice or might be seeking communion with the Church, such as in the promulgation of the *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* or the creation of the Anglican Ordinariate. These actions, although perhaps misinterpreted by some, flow from his desire to foster an environment in which all Christians may dwell in unity, to "generously open our hearts and make room for everything that the faith itself allows," as he wrote to his brother bishops in 2007.

Why is it helpful to read such anecdotes of the youth of Pope Benedict? Does it not cause us to focus too much on his human personality, whereas we should rather focus on his office, on his writings, on his actions? An analogy from the life of Christ might be helpful in understanding the value of such testimony. In the canonical Gospels we have only a few hints of the experiences of Jesus before the beginning of his public ministry, and yet these glimpses give us tremendous insight into the God-man.

In addition to the theological insights we can gain from contemplating passages such as Luke 2:52 ("And Jesus increased



BORIS KUSTODIEV - BOY WITH TEDDY BEAR

in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man”), an important part of the Church’s liturgical and devotional life revolves around such scenes as the Nativity of Our Lord, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple. According to St. Thomas, the Church’s focus on these mysteries of Christ’s humanity extends from our nature as embodied creatures:

Such is the weakness of the human mind that it needs a guiding hand, not only to the knowledge, but also to the love of Divine things by means of certain sensible objects known to us. Chief among these is the humanity of Christ, according to the words of the Preface [of the Nativity], “that through knowing God visibly, we may be caught up to the love of things invisible.” Wherefore matters relating

to Christ's humanity are the chief incentive to devotion, leading us thither as a guiding hand, although devotion itself has for its object matters concerning the Godhead (*STh* II-II, q. 82, a. 3, ad 2).

Although the evangelists have only given a few precious details about Jesus' "hidden life," focusing their enunciation of the Gospel on Christ's public apostolate of preaching and his Passion and Resurrection, these words of saving truth about Jesus' birth and childhood profoundly shape the Church's understanding and proclamation of the Word who has dwelt among us, who is like us in all things but sin. In the case of the successor of St. Peter, described so richly in metaphorical terms by St. Catherine of Siena as "sweet Christ on earth," we are called not to pray to but to pray for the holder of the office, presently Pope Benedict XVI.

The greatest contribution of this volume is that it will help Catholics acquire a certain "devotion" to this successor of St. Peter. This should by no means be confused with the devotion and worship owed to God, but the human devotion by which families are held together in bonds of love and affection. *My Brother, the Pope* offers a glimpse of the humanity of our Holy Father, our Papa, which in turn helps us to remember to pray for him and his intentions, and to pray that more men and women in the Church will imitate his magnanimity and his faithful witness to Christ.

Innocent Smith entered the Order of Preachers in 2008.

CLOISTER CHRONICLE

On Saturday, August 11, four of our brothers made solemn profession: Br. Thomas More Garrett, Br. John Maria Devaney, Br. Sebastian White, and Br. Gabriel Joseph Torretta. Surrounded by fellow Dominican Friars, family, and friends, their profession until death of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience was received by the Very Rev. John Langlois, O.P., Socius and Vicar of the Provincial. The four brothers continue their education and formation in Washington in preparation for ordination as deacons, and then as priests.



On August 20, the Memorial of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, the Pontifical Faculty of Theology of the Immaculate Conception celebrated the opening Mass of its academic year. The celebrant

and preacher was the Very Rev. Steven Boguslawski, O.P., president of the PFIC. Continuing the tradition of beginning the academic year by celebrating the Eucharist and asking for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the school, the Mass and lunch also welcomed new students and those returning from the summer recess.

On September 10, a few days before the first anniversary of its founding, the Dominicana blog passed the milestone of 200,000 unique views. Some of the most popular posts have been Br. Thomas More's "Why the Church Should Stay in the 'Civil Marriage Business': A Response to George Weigel"; Br. Bonaventure's "St. Thomas and the Keeping of Pets"; and Br. Leo's series, "Opening the Book of Revelation."

From September 26-November 4, the Dominican brothers participated in the DC-area's "40 Days for Life" by regularly praying and witnessing in front of the Planned Parenthood clinic in Washington, D.C.



On September 27, Fr. Pius Pietrzyk, O.P., celebrated Mass according to the Dominican Rite in the main chapel of the House of Studies. He offered a Votive Mass of the Most Holy Eucharist, with proper chants and motets sung by the Dominican Schola, under the direction of Fr. James Moore, O.P.

On October 5-6, the Thomistic Institute hosted a theological symposium, “Jesus Christ, True God and True Man: The Promise of Chalcedonian Christology.” In 451 A.D. the Council of Chalcedon affirmed an important Christological truth: Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, truly God by virtue of his divinity, truly human by virtue of his humanity. The Word Incarnate is one person with two natures. This doctrine has been the subject of much controversy both in ancient times and more recently. This symposium gathered together experts in patristic, medieval, and modern theology. Presenters included Dr. Khaled Anatolios, Dr. Corey Barnes, Fr. Brian E. Daley, S. J., Dr. Boyd Taylor Coolman, Dr. Bruce Marshall, and our very own Fr. Andrew Hofer, O.P.

On October 8, ten brothers at the Dominican House of Studies were installed in the ministry of Lector: Br. Pier Giorgio Dengler, Br. Luke Hoyt, Br. Alan Piper, Br. Leo Joseph Camurati, Br. Timothy Danaher, Br. Edmund Mary McCullough, Br. Aquinas Beale, Br. Mannes Matous, Br. Henry Stephan, and Br. Peter Joseph Gautsch. The brothers were installed by Fr. Brian M. Mulcahy, O.P., Prior Provincial of the Province of St. Joseph.

On October 11, the Dominican Friars hosted a Holy Hour to celebrate the beginning of the Year of Faith. After Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Fr. Ken Letoile, O.P., prior of the Dominican House of Studies, preached a stirring homily based on Luke 24:13-35, where the disciples encounter the Lord on the road to Emmaus. The Holy Hour ended with the singing of Compline and a reception for the many guests who joined us in prayer.

On October 11-14, the Dominican House of Studies hosted the Dominican Lay Inter-Provincial Council. Leaders from each of the provinces of the North American Lay Fraternities participated, as well as the Promotor General of the Dominican Laity, Fr. David Kammler, O.P.

On October 31, despite the best efforts of Hurricane Sandy, the Dominican House of Studies hosted its annual All Saints' Vigil. Br. Charles Shonk, O.P., preached on the theme of faith, and the brothers read passages by Blessed Columba Marmion, Aelfric of Eynsham, Blessed John Paul II, and St. Catherine of Siena. Hundreds of faithful were in attendance.

On November 4, many of the Dominican brothers made a pilgrimage to pray at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Northeast DC, where many of our friars are interred.

On November 22, Thanksgiving Day, the Dominican brothers observed the time-honored American custom of playing football. Friars flocked to the field, and for the second year running, the House of Studies was able to field four teams. No friars were injured, despite the ferocity with which they played.

On the Sundays of Advent, student brothers gave conferences on the Four Last Things at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Charlottesville, VA, St. Dominic's Parish, in Washington, DC, and the Dominican House of Studies. The following brothers gave conferences: Br. Bonaventure Chapman, "Death;" Br. John Devaney, "Judgment;" Br. John Sica, "Heaven;" Br. Philip Neri Reese, "Hell."



DOMINICAN STUDENTATE (2012-2013)