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ARGUMENT

I will go back to my place until they make reparation and seek my presence. In their affliction, they shall look for me.

—Hos 5:15

Lead Kindly Light, amidst th'encircling gloom.

—John Henry Newman, “The Pillar of Cloud”

The night is dark, and I am far from home. It is day, and a young, tired woman is wandering through a country churchyard. Life had thrown both fortune and trouble across her path. She had weathered the storms and claimed her fortune, though not entirely unscathed. Now embarking on the novitiate of her widowhood, she visits the grave of her deceased husband—and her husband’s lover. She pauses; the choir sings, *Lead Thou me on!*

Iloved to choose and see my path; but now the young widow sits, examining her life. She had set the rule for her life. She had known the thrill of pushing the limits, gaining her point, having her way. And still, she could not create her own happiness. She had blundered and now has been left broken. As the choir continues to sing inside the church, the woman sits on the stoop and weeps—far, far from that rejoicing crowd. *Remember not past years!*

Few would describe the novels of Thomas Hardy as particularly happy, but few would also charge him with shying away from

portrayals of the more trying aspects of life. In this country churchyard of his half-real, half-fictional county of Wessex, Hardy puts the human experience of conversion on display through his heroine, Bathsheba Everdene, in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. He highlights the unsettling and poignant side of this spiritual transformation—it is not without reason that some might describe Bathsheba’s experience as a *mortification*. Moreover, considering Hardy’s better-known tragedies, the pathos of this scene suggests that conversion is not very different from another, much darker human experience: despair. Yet, in conversion, there remains an unmistakable, positive undertone.

Conversion, of course, is no foreign theme in the Bible; it is the perennial song of the prophets—“Turn to me and be saved” (Is 45:22). The prophets sound the call to repent and turn away from sinful ways, but they also offer a more positive message of hope. In the midst of the affliction that they first prophesy and later endure, the prophets foretell a happier time that is to come: “The Lord shall ransom Jacob, he shall redeem him from a hand too strong for him” (Jer 31:11). Though God promises punishment for sin, He offers as well the hope of forgiveness and salvation. Conversion does not only entail the unhappy awareness of sin, but also bears the joyful message of hope. In this way, conversion is a fundamental component of the Christian experience. Turning from total self-reliance, we look to God for our salvation.

This issue of *Dominicana* considers various themes relating to the topic of conversion. In their thoughtful essays, Brs. Patrick and Timothy tell compelling stories of conversion: the first, the story of a wife hoping and praying for the salvation of her husband; the second, the stories of the many and varied lives touched by the spiritual daughters of Mother Teresa. These pieces are well complemented by the reflection on grace and hope that pervades Fr. Jacob Restricks’s discussion of his assorted experiences as a chaplain to nuns, religious sisters, and the dying.

Several pieces in this issue contemplate the interaction of the arts with our lives of faith. Br. Jordan asks what it is that we seek to get out of good literature in his thoughtful essay on the quest for Shakespeare's faith, and Br. Gabriel provides an arresting reflection on the mingling of the mundane with the divine in Caravaggio's painting *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. In the disputed question, Brs. Athanasius and Joseph discuss the role television might have in the home. Each of these pieces, in its own way, challenges us to encounter the world in ways that help us to turn and grow ever closer to God.

Returning to Bathsheba, though we left her sitting on the brink of despair, we see that she is safe from harm, for there is one standing nearby who has loved her faithfully. Though she is unaware of his presence, she has only to lift her face to see him. Likewise as we walk through this vale of tears, there is One to whom we can lift up our eyes, the One from whence comes the help we need to turn away from evil and do good. Let us pray that He may stay there, guiding us, until

*The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which [we] have loved long since, and lost awhile!*

Br. Aquinas Beale, O.P.
Editor

Br. Mannes Matous, O.P.
Associate Editor

ESSAYS

WHY THOMISM?

Charles Shonk, O.P.

Asking “Why Thomas Aquinas?” is like asking “Why Shakespeare?” Spell out all of the reasons for reading the Bard, and you will hit upon most of the reasons for reading English Literature. So, too, describe all of the ways in which the Angelic Doctor repays study, and you will come close to showing why theology in general is worthwhile.

This in itself is suggestive of one of the great virtues of St. Thomas’s thought, namely, its breadth or comprehensiveness. Most theologians make one or two topics their specialty and then branch out from there, so that, wherever we are in their oeuvre, we notice a bias or bend in their thinking—always tilting back toward one or other of those favorite themes. Thomas, by contrast, presents the whole of sacred doctrine in such a way that no element usurps the place of another, each being duly proportioned to each. And, incredibly, he does this without sacrificing depth or detail or analytical rigor. He has a profound interest in the nitty-gritty, not in spite of the fact that he sees the big picture but rather precisely because, for him, everything is connected. Truth is unified; theology is a compendious whole, embracing God and *everything* in relation to God. Indeed, for those inured to the balkanization of the modern academy, dipping into St. Thomas can be both



FRANCISCO DE ZURBARÁN — THE APOTHEOSIS OF
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

liberating and disorienting—like exploring a huge castle after being confined for years to just one or two of its rooms.

In this regard, we can apply to St. Thomas what Sherlock Holmes said of his brother Mycroft: “All other men are specialists, but his specialism is omniscience.” Of course, Thomas himself would disapprove of such intemperate speech, but, admitting the hyperbole, we might say that a certain degree of “omniscience”

is merely a corollary of the comprehensiveness we have just described. Thomas could put everything together because he knew practically everything there was to know, from Scripture to the Greek and Latin Fathers, from the pagan philosophers to the great Jewish and Muslim thinkers. In fact, a principal benefit of reading St. Thomas is that he sums up so much of what came before him. He not only enlightens but also educates and informs the reader. Since he approaches every question dialogically—first stating objections, then citing an authority, then presenting his own position, and finally replying to each objection—we necessarily learn a great deal about his interlocutors' opinions. One quickly discovers that, just as Thomas receives truth from any quarter ("by whomever it is spoken"), so he never refutes falsehood by recourse to a straw man. He can state opposing viewpoints so persuasively—often more persuasively than those who espouse them—one is sometimes left wondering how he will muster a reply.

If all of this makes St. Thomas seem a bit intimidating, we hasten to add that his writings are by no means accessible only to experts. Just as a great piece of music, art, or literature can be enjoyed, albeit on different levels, by both connoisseur and layman, so the theology of the Common Doctor. In fact, Thomas wrote his most mature work, the *Summa Theologiae*, for the instruction of beginners, and its brief prologue reveals what a passionate teacher he was:

We have noticed how students of sacred doctrine are greatly hindered by the writings of various authors, partly on account of the multiplication of useless questions, articles, and arguments; partly because the things they need to know are not taught according to the order of the subject matter, but rather according to the plan of the book or the occasion of the argument; partly, too, because frequent repetition brings weariness and confusion to the minds of readers.

Thomas himself certainly avoided these pitfalls. Although modern readers, accustomed to the rhetorical fireworks and flourishes of a journalistic age, may have to adjust to the quiet sobriety of his style, they will find more than adequate recompense in its clarity and concision, in his orderly arrangement of material and minimal use of technical vocabulary. This last point may come as a surprise, since medieval theology is popularly perceived as a veritable quagmire of technicalities, but in fact one can get through most of the *Summa* with the help of just a few basic distinctions—the types of cause, form–matter, and act–potency. Then, too, St. Thomas has been around long enough that there is no need to go it alone; excellent introductions to his work abound.

But, one might wonder, is it really practical to read St. Thomas? Will doing so bring one closer to God? At first, his concise and dispassionate style, so suited to abstract reasoning, might seem an unlikely vehicle for “Spirituality,” or at least for what we now designate by that term (i.e., a vaguely religious search for emotional fulfillment without any necessary connection to the truths of the faith). Upon reflection, however, it is even more unlikely that great spiritual riches should be absent from the writings of such a great saint, who often wept during Mass, who was the recipient of mystical graces in prayer, and who penned what is perhaps the most moving poem ever written about the Eucharist (the *Adoro Te Devote*). In point of fact, the spiritual value of his theology is immense, as is illustrated by a cursory glance at just a few of its themes:

1. *Exitus–Reditus*: All things come from God (*exitus*) and, in different ways, return to Him (*reditus*). But, for us human beings, this coming forth and returning has a special relation to the inner life of the Trinity. In fact, the coming forth of the Son from the Father (procession of knowledge) and the coming forth of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son (procession of love) are the *cause and exemplar* of (1)

our coming forth from God as creatures who are capable of natural knowing and loving, and (2) our returning to God as creatures capable of supernatural knowing and loving.

2. *Deification*: In returning to God, we are made like Him. Thomas, following the Church Fathers, does not hesitate to call this transformation a “deification”: “The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity [2 Pt 1:4], assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods”.¹ Since this destiny infinitely exceeds anything we can accomplish naturally, the cornerstone of the moral and spiritual life is not our own moral effort, but rather God’s grace.
3. *Communion and Friendship*: Being made like God—being “conformed to the image of his Son” (Rm 8:29)—is not an end in itself; rather, it is for the sake of, and cannot occur apart from, communion with Him. We are made like God so that we can be with Him and enter into His life—the eternal exchange of knowing and loving among the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Even now, through the divine presence and action in our souls, we enjoy something of true communion, or friendship, with God and His saints. (Remarkably, St. Thomas was the first theologian to *define* supernatural love as a kind of friendship.)
4. *Human Flourishing*: Friendship or communion with God does not impede, but rather enhances, our natural human development and flourishing. Grace perfects us as the kind of creatures we are; it does not turn us into something else. Moreover, although the purification and elevation of our nature involves a participation in Christ’s Passion—accepting suffering out of love for God and neighbor—this itself both deepens and enlarges our humanity.

1 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Officium de festo corporis Christi*, Ad Matutinas, In primo Nocturno, Lectio 1, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 29 (Paris: 1876), 336.

So, why Thomism? Well, if Thomism means carrying on the work of so great a teacher; if it means developing his thought in response to the needs of our day, in answer to questions that he never asked; if it means illustrating how the divine mysteries transcend human understanding while also manifesting the luminously rational character of the faith; if it means recognizing the truth, whoever speaks it, and putting secular wisdom at the service of Christ; if it means manifesting the luminously intellectual character of the faith and, thereby, illustrating how far the divine mysteries transcend human understanding; if it means contemplating God and everything in relation to God, with reverence and awe; if it means handing on to others the fruits of this contemplation; if it means all of these things and more, then perhaps the real question is, why not Thomism?

Charles Shonk entered the Order of Preachers in 2009. He is a graduate of Denison University, where he studied Latin, Greek, and philosophy.

THE GRACE OF ANOTHER'S HOPE

Patrick Mary Briscoe, O.P.

My God, who hast allowed us human hopes, but who alone bestowest Christian and supernatural hope, grant, I beseech thee, by thy grace, this virtue to my soul, to the souls of all I love, and to all Christian souls. Let it enlighten and transform our lives, our suffering, and even our death, and let it uphold in us, through the disappointment and sadness of each day, an inner strength and unalterable serenity.

—Prayer for the Virtue of Hope, *Élisabeth Leseur*

“**I** set myself to attack her faith, to deprive her of it, and—may God pardon me—I nearly succeeded.”¹ So confessed Félix Leseur. In the tender preface appended to his wife’s prayer journal (published posthumously by Félix), he poignantly acknowledged his attempts to dissuade Élisabeth from her practice of the Catholic religion. He wrote, “In marrying I undertook to respect my wife’s faith and to let her practice it freely. But I rapidly grew to tolerate only with impatience convictions that were other than my negations; and as religious neutrality is as much of an illusion in private relationships as in public institutions, I made Élisabeth the object of my retrogressive proselytizing” (F. Leseur, “In Memoriam,” 12). And so to his wife he passed copies of the works of Strauss, Renan, Loisy and others, in his attempts to unsettle her religious convictions.

Their friends, too, offered little solace to Élisabeth. Early twentieth-century France suffered intense conflict between militant secularism and Catholic partisanship. One has only to think of the complexities of the Dreyfus Affair (broadly speaking,

¹ Félix Leseur, “In Memoriam,” in Élisabeth Leseur, *My Spirit Rejoices* (Manchester, NH: Sophia, 1996), 13.

the trial divided the nation between pro-Catholic *anti-Dreyfusards* and anti-Catholic *Dreyfusards*) or the anti-clericalist Republican movements (in 1905 France became officially *un état laïque*, by law a secular nation) to conjure up vivid images of the tensions of the day. Félix—an atheist doctor engaged in work as a journalist and diplomat—lived and breathed the air of a world hostile to supernatural faith. So it was with his political and scholarly friends as well. In this circle of polemic and criticism, Élisabeth and Félix together socialized; wondrously, in the midst of this raillery and badinage, Élisabeth ascended to God.

Despite the often difficult milieu, Élisabeth set herself to study her faith. Equipping her library with the works of Aquinas, Jerome, Catherine of Siena, Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila and many others, she amassed the intellectual ammunition to stock a little armory of her own. Soon, the home of Félix and Élisabeth contained two libraries: her Catholic collection facing his atheist annals. Élisabeth thus readied herself to articulate explanations of her faith and sought answers to the questions posed to her. She knew the value of the Church's intellectual tradition and set herself to drinking deeply from the font of wisdom of the saints.

It was not, however, her intellectual prowess that would eventually inspire her husband to rediscover the faith of his baptism. She herself knew she could not win souls by disputation, saying,

Around me are many souls that I love deeply, and I have a great task to fulfill with regard to them. Many of them do not know God or know Him only imperfectly. It is not in arguing or in lecturing that I can make them know what God is to the human soul. But in struggling with myself, in becoming, with His help, more Christian and more valiant, I will bear witness to Him whose humble disciple I am.²

² Élisabeth Leseur, *My Spirit Rejoices* (Manchester, NH: Sophia, 1996), 51. This source is noted elsewhere as *Journal*.

Élisabeth did not cause by way of fevered argument or dazzling exposition her husband's conversion.³ Félix readily attested to this fact, saying, "The intellectual side, which had until then played so great and almost exclusive a part in the workings of my mind, had nothing whatever to do with my conversion. I was not affected by study, or reading, or exegesis, or apologetics, or theological knowledge, for, in fact, I possessed none."⁴ For Félix, the emphasis on the role of divine grace in his conversion cannot be understated. He continued by saying, "It was brought about by something extraneous, higher, stronger, and superhuman, [...] in other words, by God's grace" (F. Leseur, "Introduction," 6).

After Élisabeth's death—she suffered immensely from the cancer that claimed her life—Félix discovered her spiritual diary. Upon reading her journal, he saw, for the first time, the hidden, spiritual dimension of the woman he so dearly loved and, thereby, came to love her truly. The question then arises, if Élisabeth's journal did not make an intellectual argument which convinced Félix of the existence of God or His Providence which governs the universe, what effect did it have? If not by theological argumentation, can we really say Élisabeth was a cause of his conversion? An examination of penance, Élisabeth's devotion to the saints, and the theological virtue of hope will illuminate—if only vaguely—the mystery.

3 Not that she was per se incapable of doing so. A letter to a friend's husband, M. Félix Le Dantec, demonstrates her keen ability to challenge philosophically the logical consequences of atheism. See "Letter XCIII" in *Élisabeth Leseur, Selected Writings*, edited by Janet K. Ruffing, RSM (New York: Paulist, 2005), 219–221.

4 Félix Leseur, "Introduction," in Élisabeth Leseur, *The Spiritual Life: A Collection of Short Treatises on the Inner Life* (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1922), 5.

PENANCE AND MERIT

Élisabeth's extraordinary life of penance and mortification offers one answer to the question. Repeatedly in her *Journal*, Élisabeth notes her desire to undertake various reparations on behalf of others. First and foremost, she begged this grace of the Lord Himself. Élisabeth prayed saying, "Give me the grace of being—by prayer at least, and by suffering—Thine instrument with souls, those who are dear to me, and those whom I do not know but who need my humble intercession with Thee" (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 134). Élisabeth possessed an admirable, indeed exceptional, hunger for souls, but she ultimately knew such hunger was only quenched according to the workings of God's own economy of grace.

In cooperation with the dispensation of grace, Élisabeth set her mind to penance. She wrote,

We are all bound to do penance; none of us has a right to dispense himself from it, for none of us is without sin or without great need of expiation. For a soul, however, that is called to walk in the way of Christ's counsels, penance and prayer are the most important works, the most efficacious means of salvation for the soul herself and for others, the most useful instruments in the task of reparation to which chosen souls are called.⁵

Élisabeth's mortification was far from extreme or ostentatious. She frequently commented how it must remain secret, hidden, as well as prudent (e.g., É. Leseur, *Spiritual Life*, 73). Nevertheless, we must underscore the *intentionality* of her penance. She wrote, "In a special way, with pious persistence, I will often offer for that [specially chosen] soul part of the day's activities or sufferings and will pray and practice mortifications for it" (É. Leseur, *Journal*,

⁵ Élisabeth Leseur, *The Spiritual Life: A Collection of Short Treatises on the Inner Life* (London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1922), 72.



VINCENT VAN GOGH — WOMAN PRAYING

137). Time after time in her writings, Élisabeth indicated her daily acts of prayer and offerings which were marked for others.

These prayers and mortifications—true acts of the virtue of penance—were often offered particularly for Félix, though Élisabeth certainly included many of their friends in her little collection of souls. She tells us in her *Journal* about “how many prayers, spoken or implied, have gone out from those depths of the soul that He alone knows, asking for light and for true life, the inner life of the soul for all those I love, for him [Félix] whom I love more than all” (56). Élisabeth frequently offered whatever suffering she had to endure, as well as acts of charity for the poor and the sick, for those souls “dear” to her.

Consider, however, that when St. Thomas Aquinas treats of the virtue of penance, he treats penance as chiefly for the soul undertaking it (*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 85, a. 1). Properly speaking then, penance is sorrow for one’s *own* sins. As a virtue, penance consists of cultivating the interior disposition of heart wherein one turns to God and manifests hatred for past sins. Acts of reparation are then undertaken, as justice demands, to make satisfaction to God for sins committed (*ST* III, q. 85, a. 3). Of course, between God and man, justice only exists analogously since, “in certain cases perfect equality cannot be established, on account of the excellence of one, as between father and son” (*ST* III, q. 85, a. 3, ad. 2). Ultimately, the acceptance by God of man’s penances and acts of reparation hinges on His mercy and goodness, since man is incapable by his own works of rendering perfect satisfaction.

St. Thomas’ account of the virtue of penance thus lays the groundwork for a theological consideration of what precisely occurs when a Christian undertakes acts of reparation for another. Of course, the ultimate, perfect act of reparation belongs to Christ. Only God can offer the first grace of redemption (since the indwelling of grace is a gift freely given by God), so only Christ can merit the first grace of a man’s conversion (that is, granting sanctifying grace). Élisabeth knew this, and put it this way in her works: “Grace alone can bring about a conversion; without it we can do nothing for a soul” (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 223). Christ is the one

mediator who stands, as it were, between heaven and earth (1 Tim 2:5), and Christ alone merits condignly. Whereas Christ's perfect merit completely satisfies in justice the debt of sin, we—imperfect as we are—merit *congruously*, that is, out of an abundance of God's grace.

It would not do, then, to call Élisabeth the savior of Félix, strictly speaking, as Christ properly was his savior. If our account were to stop there (as many Protestant understandings of grace do...), this would be a very unsatisfactory and shallow explanation for the role Élisabeth seems to have played in Félix's conversion. St. Thomas affords a deeper and more profound view of things with his theological view of congruous merit. Whereas only Christ can *condignly* merit the first grace of salvation, one person can still contribute to another's salvation. In one of the most eloquent moments of the *Summa*, St. Thomas teaches, "One may merit the first grace for another congruously; because a man in grace fulfils God's will, and it is congruous and in harmony with friendship that God should fulfill man's desire for the salvation of another" (*ST* I-II, q. 144, a. 6). In this way, in friendship one might offer meritorious acts of penance for another.

In the theology of Thomas Aquinas, to love a friend with the true love of friendship is to see him as *another self*. As such, we may then say there is a kind of union of hearts wherein one draws the other to Christ. Through this lens we ought to view Élisabeth's 1911 pact with God for the soul of her beloved. She wrote,

Oh yes, my God, I must have it, Thou must have it, this straight, true soul; he must know thee and love Thee, become the humble instrument of Thy glory, and do the work of an apostle. Take him entirely to Thyself. Make of my trials, my sufferings, and my renunciations the road by which Thou shalt come to this dear heart. Is there anything that belongs to me alone that I would not be ready to offer Thee to obtain this conversion, this grace so longed for? My sweet Savior,

between Thy Heart and mine there must be this compact of love, which will give Thee a soul. (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 175)

Of course, the will can always resist Christ, which is why St. Thomas warns, “Sometimes there may be an impediment on the part of him whose salvation the just man desires” (*ST I-II*, q. 144, a. 6). This was the case with Félix. Not until after Élisabeth’s death was he able to be open to the graces that were being stored up, as it were, for him.

COMMUNIO SANCTORUM

Perhaps Élisabeth’s greatest suffering—greater even than her recurring hepatitis or the pains of her cancer—stemmed from the lack of Christian friendship in her life.⁶ Élisabeth often resolved to show greater amiability or improve her self-restraint among those who attacked her faith. In one place, she wrote, “I must nevertheless know how to make myself all things to all men and interest myself in things that sometimes seem childish, and sadden me by their contrast with my own state of mind. Often people are like great children, but Jesus has said that what is done for children is done for Him” (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 86). Is it any surprise then to find that Élisabeth would find great consolation in the communion of saints?

After suffering the death of her sister—one of her few Christian friends—Élisabeth received consolation in the celebration of the Feast of All Saints. She wrote, “This is a sweet feast, the feast of those who already live in God, those whom we have loved and who have attained to happiness and light; it is the feast of eternity. And

6 Consider her words: “Bitter suffering of an evening spent in hearing my faith and spiritual things mocked at, attacked, and criticized. God helped me to maintain interior charity and exterior calm; to deny or betray nothing, and yet not to irritate by too rigid assertions. But how much effort and inner distress this involves, and how necessary is divine grace to assist my weakness!” (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 148).

what a fine idea to make the feast of the dead follow so soon!" (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 101). The principle of connection—the fittingness, if you will, which becomes for Aquinas the root of congruous merit—comes alive in Élisabeth's experience of the saints. As she said, "Not one of our tears, not one of our prayers is lost, and they have a power that many people never suspect" (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 101). While, as we will later see, our hope must first be in God—desiring to be with Him for eternal life—St. Thomas teaches that one can hope in another man as a helping agent, in other words, as an instrumental cause. He writes, "It is in this way that we turn to the saints, and that we ask men also for certain things" (*ST II-II*, q. 17, a. 4). In this sense, then, we can see how hoping in and entrusting our prayers to others, particularly the saints, help carry ourselves and our petitions to God.

Élisabeth demonstrated her devotion to the saints in many ways throughout her life. We have already mentioned their literary works which graced the shelves of her library. Additionally, she inscribed on the front pages of one section of the manuscript of her *Journal* a prayer titled "Litany to Obtain a Conversion."⁷ While reading it, one can sense the fervor with which she must have prayed its words, especially for the soul of her Félix. To these saints, including Dominic and Francis, Mary Magdalene and Monica, Élisabeth entrusted her most sacred prayer.⁸

CHRISTIAN HOPE

In a particular way, hope animated the spiritual life of Élisabeth Leseur. While charity holds pride of place among the theological virtues—even for Élisabeth, charity impelled her to undertake her

⁷ Élisabeth's Litany is printed as an appendix to this article.

⁸ Élisabeth also begged prayer of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes (ca. 1912). Félix was moved by the scenes there, especially by her prayer. After her death, it was at Lourdes that Félix would muddle through the Rosary and implored Our Lady for the gift of faith.

good works and acts of penance—her life offers a vivid example of someone marked particularly by hope. Properly speaking, hope manifests confidence in the attainability, by God's grace, of heavenly beatitude. In her own words, Élisabeth explained the meaning of hope, saying,

Hope is supernatural, a force given by God. It throws light upon life and makes us understand it, and suffering, and death, which is only a continuation of life, and all the truths that concern life after death. It puts us into closer union with God, and extends our view into that wonderful region of souls which faith first opens to us, and which charity allows us to penetrate fully.⁹

Hope drove Élisabeth's desire to constantly seek improvement in life. Her *Journal*, filled with resolutions to cast off her sins and steadfastly strive for perfection, is one whole testimony of hope. Élisabeth demonstrated the great truth that to hope is to be in contact with God through the will in God's action of helping souls in His goodness and mercy.

Hope moves or stretches a soul toward a good that is difficult to attain. The greatest good is, of course, God, which is why hope involves above all else the soul seeking the future happiness of heaven.¹⁰ Consider how Élisabeth proclaimed that "we 'can do all things in Him who strengthens us.' Creatures of weakness, we carry infinite Strength within us, and in the depths of our souls shines the Light that is never extinguished. How should we not rejoice, in spite of all, with a supernatural joy, when we have God for life and for eternity?" (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 226) What a personal confession of hope!

9 Élisabeth Leseur, "Treatise on Hope," in *The Spiritual Life*, 84.

10 "I shall have all eternity in which to contemplate Him whom my soul adores, to unite myself to Him, and to pray" (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 193).

But the theological virtues in themselves are expansive things, powerful forces which broaden the horizons of human desires and destiny. It is no surprise then to see that hope can, as it were, billow over and pour out beyond the rim of a single Christian soul. Recalling St. Thomas' beautiful theology of friendship, we can see how hope can be placed for another. Aquinas tells us, "if we presuppose the union of love with another, a man can hope for and desire something for another man, as for himself; and, accordingly, he can hope for another's eternal life, inasmuch as he is united to him by love" (*ST II-II*, q. 17, a. 3).

Such was the love Élisabeth had for Félix. She wrote,

I thirst for sympathy, to bare my soul to the souls that are dear to me, to speak of God and immortality and the interior life and charity. But the human soul is so subtle and delicate that it must feel the same notes resonating in another of those divine instruments before it can sound its own. The perfect union of two souls—how beautiful a harmony that would make! With him I love best in the world, let me one day make this harmony, O my God! (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 62)

Élisabeth loved Félix through God and suffered knowing that he could not return her love. Her heartfelt hope for his conversion became a principal feature of her spiritual life, dominating her prayer, fueling her acts of charity, and motivating her quest for Christian perfection.

CONCLUSION

More than others I love these beings whom divine light does not illuminate, or rather whom it illuminates in a manner unknown to us with our restricted minds. There is a veil between such souls and God, a veil through which only a few rays of love and beauty may pass. Only God with

a divine gesture may throw aside this veil; then the true life shall begin for these souls. (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 54–55)

Élisabeth Leseur died in the arms of her beloved husband, Félix, on May 3, 1914. During the course of her last years—years of great suffering—Félix conceded much of his hostility toward the Catholic faith, principally because he was moved by the comfort her faith brought to her. After Élisabeth's death, Félix, devastated by her loss, discovered her prayer journal and learned from its pages that she had offered for the sake of his soul innumerable prayers, acts of charity, and the pains of the disease which claimed her life. At Lourdes, while visiting the grotto and fumbling to pray the words of the Rosary, Félix received the gift of faith. He returned to Paris, where he was reconciled to the Church, and after publishing Élisabeth's journal, Félix entered the novitiate of the Order of Preachers. In 1923, Félix (now frère Marie-Albert) was ordained a priest and exercised various Dominican priestly apostolates for nearly thirty years. His priesthood was particularly marked by his teaching about holiness in marriage and redemptive suffering.

“Through the uncertainty of the future of those I love, and in spite of suffering and the absence of a life such as I dream of, [I] anchor myself firmly in God” (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 78). This and many other acts of hope express the confidence Élisabeth Leseur placed in God's mercy and goodness. By undertaking voluntary acts of penance and offering her involuntary physical suffering, she undoubtedly confided unto God a multitude of merits, to be dispensed by Him, according to His providential plan, for those souls so very dear to her. Through the mysterious bonds of the communion of saints and by her conviction and assurance in the difference prayers make, Élisabeth encourages our own expectations. Finally, her clear understanding and demonstration of the constancy of supernatural hope—far greater than human optimism which indubitably wanes and fails—offer testimony to even the darkest fears of the spiritual life. Even while recognizing

the true role one Christian may have in the conversion of the soul, we, like Élisabeth before us, must ultimately pause in awe of the mystery of Divine action. Like her, we must cling to the crucified Lord, knowing that “the chasm between souls can only be filled by God” (É. Leseur, *Journal*, 232).

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APPENDIX

LITANY TO OBTAIN A CONVERSION

AS INSCRIBED IN THE *SPIRITUAL JOURNAL* OF ÉLISABETH LESEUR

*These all look to thee, to give them their food in due season.
When thou givest to them, they gather it up; when thou
openest thy hand, they are filled with good things.*

— Ps 104:27-28

*The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that
seeks him.*

— Lam 3:25

Lord, have mercy upon him (her).

Christ, have mercy upon him.

Lord, have mercy upon him.

Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven, have mercy upon him.

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon him.

God the Holy Spirit, have mercy upon him.

Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy upon him.

Holy Mary, pray for him.

Holy Mother of God, pray for him.

Holy Virgin of virgins, pray for him.

St. Michael, pray for him.

St. Joseph, pray for him.

St. Joachim and Anne, pray for him.

St. John the Baptist, pray for him.

Good thief, pray for him.

St. Peter, pray for him.

St. Paul, pray for him.

St. Stephen, pray for him.

St. Augustine, pray for him.
 St. Dominic, pray for him.
 St. Francis, pray for him.
 St. Ignatius Loyola, pray for him.
 St. Mary Magdalene, pray for him.
 St. Monica, pray for him.
 St. Teresa, pray for him.
 St. Catherine of Siena, pray for him.
 St. Elizabeth, pray for him.
 His (her) holy patron [N.], pray for him.

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord.
 Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Christ, hear us.
 Christ, graciously hear us.

PRAYER

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to Thy faithful people forgiveness of their offences and true peace, that, being cleansed from all their sins, they may serve Thee in peace of mind with holy confidence. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We witness conversions for which we cannot account. Grace often works very slowly. We may trace the successive stages in the soul's progress towards truth, but there is always a starting-point that we cannot grasp, a sudden movement of grace before which there is apparently nothing.

— Louis Veuillot

“FOR I KNOW THOU ART RELIGIOUS”

THE QUESTION OF SHAKESPEARE’S FAITH, AND WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT OURS

Jordan Zajac, O.P.

Discover a book and uncover its author’s faith? That is what some would like to suggest in the case of Shakespeare. Last November, a previously unknown copy of the First Folio—the first collected edition of Shakespeare’s plays, and arguably the literary world’s most valuable printed book—surfaced at a public library in Saint-Omer, a small town outside of Calais, France. Many news outlets emphasized the provenance of this copy of the First Folio, implying that new insights into Shakespeare’s personal faith could be gleaned from the pages of this book’s history.¹ According to the acquisition records, this First Folio belonged to a Jesuit-run college in Saint-Omer. The college had been founded in 1593 to educate recusant Catholics escaped from England, laymen and

1 Unless otherwise specified, I take “faith” to mean personal religious belief, the kind by which one affiliates oneself with a particular religious denomination—namely the Church of England or Roman Catholicism, for the purposes of this essay. To consider Shakespeare’s faith, then, means to assess whether he *personally* identified as a Catholic or a Protestant. I stress “personally” here because, as will be demonstrated, it was not uncommon for early modern English men and women to publicly comply with the state-organized religion yet privately remain loyal to the dissident creed. Meanwhile, when referring to matters of “our” faith, the collective subject I have in mind includes two groups. The first is comprised of Catholics, especially those who, for any variety of reasons, would like very much to claim Shakespeare as a fellow believer. But I also hope this essay appeals to a second, broader group, including those who identify themselves more generically as Christians, share some Christian sympathies, and/or for whom Shakespeare’s faith matters in a personal way. The dynamic animating this study involves people of faith reading faith *into* Shakespeare, *out of* their own vested religious interests.

seminarians alike. When the institution was closed in the mid-eighteenth century, its book collection was donated to establish a town library. Ever since, this copy of the First Folio had remained well-preserved but improperly catalogued; its missing title-page and front matter meant librarians mistook it as a later edition of Shakespeare’s dramatic works.

Had a new way to strengthen ties between Shakespeare and Roman Catholicism been made? *The New York Times* dedicated meaningful space to the question. *The Washington Post* organized their coverage around this very issue. *The Independent* went so far as to run the headline “Discovery of ‘lost’ Shakespeare First Folio revives claim playwright was a secret Catholic.”

This revival has already been going strong for some time, however. In fact, more attention has been paid to the question over the last fifteen years than ever before. A series of factors—some scholarly, some cultural—have fueled this reconsideration. Precisely because there is no decisive biographical evidence for Shakespeare’s personal belief, any and every detail about his life, his family, and his works has undergone intense scrutiny. And, as the case of the Saint-Omer First Folio reveals, association can easily be crafted into causation. Without a doubt, the discovery of this Folio is significant for what it can tell us about Shakespeare’s status in early modern Catholic culture and the ways in which Catholics read and received his work. It tells us about Roman Catholics and Shakespeare, but by no means concedes to us a Roman Catholic Shakespeare.

While the discovery resolves nothing about what Shakespeare believed, it does reveal something of what and how we believe. I am less concerned here with whether Shakespeare was Catholic—a question that I think is beyond our ability to infer from the available evidence—than I am interested in the topics of *why* the question of his faith matters so much to us and *when* exactly it began to matter. Examining these questions, we find cases of faith

seeking not understanding but rather validation, authentication, and other aims. By turning a critical eye to the history of the claims about his religion, considering both the underlying assumptions and overt aims of those who have argued Shakespeare was a secret Papist, or a fastidious Protestant, or a god in his own right, we can better appreciate the Bard-baggage that has been handed down to us. We can be more attentive to what religious sensitivities are, and are not, to be found in his works—and in us.

READING RELIGION INTO SHAKESPEARE'S LIFE

At least two things are certain: William Shakespeare was baptized a Protestant and he received a Protestant burial. His mortal remains lie beneath the sanctuary floor of Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Stratford-upon-Avon, the hometown to which he returned after retiring from his profitable career as a professional actor and dramatist in London. Because he lived in an age of religious upheaval, however, a time of conversion and reversion, of disunity between interior belief and exterior conformity (non-conformity being a form of treason, severely punished—producing what historian Christopher Marsh has classified as the “compliance conundrum”²), it is difficult to say anything else definitive about Shakespeare's religious identity. The same applies for the vast majority of early modern English peoples. At every turn, with every biographical detail and literary allusion, there are enticing hints and suggestions about Shakespeare's faith, but little solid ground to be gained.

To cite only a few examples, in order to provide a sense for the dizzying back-and-forth one finds when reading any number of studies on the subject: yes, Shakespeare was baptized by a Protestant minister, since Henry VIII's daughter Elizabeth had taken the throne five years before Shakespeare's birth and outlawed all Catholic practices. But Shakespeare's elder sister, Joan, had been

2 Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998), 197.

baptized in the Roman rite, when Queen Mary reigned. With which confession did his parents, John and Mary, align themselves more closely? We know not. Each parent had a Catholic background, yet for his part, in his role as a town administrator, John Shakespeare was willing to oversee the whitewashing of Stratford’s Guild Chapel in the 1560s, along with the destruction of the high altar and removal of the rood screen. Some thirty years later, the same John Shakespeare was cited for recusancy, having failed to attend Sunday services. This violation would seem to provide evidence for his Catholicism—except for the fact that the document does not include his name with a list of “dangerous and seditious” papists. Instead, it indicates that he did not attend services for fear of being processed for payment of a debt. In the mid-eighteenth century a “Spiritual Testament,” or a Roman Catholic profession of faith, was discovered by workers at the Shakespeare Birthplace, with John’s name affixed. But the document has gone missing. The eighteenth century’s premier Shakespeare scholar, Edmund Malone, studied the document and published a transcription to much fanfare, but then later decried it as a forgery. After all this, we still have not even gotten to William Shakespeare’s education, conducted by a string of schoolmasters with family ties to English Jesuits, or to his “lost years,” where he just might have taught in a recusant household in Lancashire. This is to say nothing of his plays and poetry, which allude to various aspects of Catholic life and reveal familiarity with the 1582 Douay-Rheims Bible—but which also rely heavily on the Geneva Bible. In other words, there is no shortage of material about which to make conjectures, and plenty have been made. Yet conjectures only do they remain.

Such suppositions about Shakespeare’s Catholicism, or at least this antipathy toward state-sanctioned Anglicanism, began early—even during his lifetime. Biographers tell us that there were two seventeenth-century proponents of a Catholic Shakespeare, but when one looks more closely, neither is quite so credible. One, a staunch Protestant historian named John Speed, made a passing

comment in a work from 1611 (five years before Shakespeare's death) about his disdain for papists and stage poets, and how the works of the latter provide fodder for the former. Speed has a Shakespeare play in mind here, the history play *Henry IV, Part One*, and its comical depiction of the proto-Protestant martyr Sir John Oldcastle (Falstaff), whom the Jesuit Robert Parsons had more recently lambasted. While there is much more to be said about Shakespeare's depiction of discernibly Protestant, as well as Catholic, figures in his works, nevertheless, the extent to which Speed's jeer implicates Shakespeare *as* a Catholic is questionable. The second case involves the notes compiled by an antiquarian, William Fulman, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Upon his death in 1688, his papers fell into the hands of his friend, the Anglican cleric Richard Davies, who ultimately published a small passage of anecdotal writings about Shakespeare. The entry concludes with a phrase that has taunted many over the centuries: "he dyed a Papist." Nothing about the source or credibility of this testimony is known (indeed, some other details Davies includes about Shakespeare's life are true, an equal amount false). Such questions and suggestions about Shakespeare and Catholicism would lie dormant for centuries, not to resurface in any meaningful way until well after Shakespeare became his own religion.

THE ERAS OF PROTESTANT APPROPRIATION & BARDOLOGY

The Shakespeare venerated today—cultural icon, timeless literary genius—was not always so highly exalted. Every would-be saint needs others to advance his cause. So while Shakespeare's works were popular in his lifetime, it may be surprising to learn that he fell into comparative disregard in the opinions of the Civil War and Restoration generations. The cult of the Bard as we know it did not begin to materialize until some hundred years after his death.

By the mid-eighteenth century, Shakespeare's person and plays were being repurposed because they better suited the tastes of the



JAMES NORTHCOTE — A MONUMENT BELONGING
TO THE CAPULETS

times. This was a period marked by the rise of pre-empire British nationalism. Shakespeare, as well as John Milton, was used to combat the influence of French classicism, and both were held up as icons of British literary and cultural supremacy. Shakespeare’s firm status as a Protestant was presumed. As Robert S. Miola summarizes it well, “[t]he cultural and political forces that crowned Shakespeare as the English national poet naturally portrayed him as the product and loyal member of the Church of England.”³

The more Shakespeare became his own god, the less his religion mattered at all. In fact, in the nineteenth century many sought to cast the notion of his personal religious belief as an impediment

3 Robert S. Miola, “Shakespeare’s Religion,” *First Things* (May 2008), <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/05/002-shakespeares-religion>.

to his genius. The thought of Shakespeare investing himself in matters of confessional conflict offended Victorian sensibilities. As the critic Thomas Carlyle wrote, “Shakespeare was no sectarian; to all he deals with equity and mercy; because he knows all, and his heart is wide enough for all.”⁴ Elsewhere he ordains Shakespeare the “melodious Priest of a *true* Catholicism, the ‘Universal Church’ of the Future and of all times.”⁵ The religious sense in Shakespeare can be neither allied nor harmonized with his genius; it is only an appreciation among Bardolators of the religious quality of Shakespeare that matters. After this period of Shakespeare-worship, Shakespeare as well as the concept of religious worship underwent their severest trials. But somehow, interest in Shakespeare’s religion survived Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God and the corresponding “death of the author” pronounced by the deconstructionist theorists Derrida and Barthes. In fact, that interest became stronger than ever.

CONTEMPORARY CLAIMS ON THE BARD

The 1992 publication of Eamon Duffy’s *The Stripping of the Altars* inaugurated what has become a vibrant reassessment of the role of Catholicism in early modern Protestant England, as this work offered a necessary corrective to the dominant Whig view of history being rehearsed in the humanities. The work of historians like Duffy, Jack Scarisbrick, Christopher Haigh, Peter Lake, and Alexandra Walsham has, as Miola puts it,

begun to dismantle the Whig vision of blessed Protestant Britannia, cleansed of popish corruption, rising in the godly Reformation morning. Instead they portray a

4 Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (London: Chapman and Hall), vol. 1, 619; cited in David Womersley, “Why the World Still Loves Shakespeare,” *Standpoint*, 69 (January/February 2015), 63.

5 Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1840), 130.

conflicted United Kingdom, wherein factions fought, compromised, and responded to political pressures. Their England includes Catholics as part of a divided, struggling population, not as a lunatic fringe or treasonous minority. It also includes Catholicism, not as a dying institution, but as a vital, dynamic, pluralistic, and learned confession that could inspire both heroism and holiness.⁶

Where historians have gone, literary critics have followed. As a result, professional Shakespeare studies is experiencing a bona fide religious revival. The field's foremost critics are dedicating entire monographs to the subject, and acknowledging as the starting premise for their work that, in the words of Yale Shakespearean David Scott Kastan, “[s]piritual, affective, and material remains of the traditional religion mark both Shakespeare and his England, not as some sticky residue that cannot quite be removed but as something constitutive of the makeup of each.”⁷ In other words, Catholicism is not problematic but productive for criticism. It can and does enhance our understanding of Shakespeare's works and the worlds he creates in his drama, as studies by Arthur Marotti, Phebe Jensen, Alison Shell, and David Beauregard have shown.

This critical reappraisal of the role of religion generally, and Catholicism in particular, has encouraged some to pose the question that follows naturally enough: “Well, *was* Shakespeare a Catholic after all?” The most recent attempts to give a decisive, affirmative response leave one wishing they had not bothered to ask, however. One problem arises from the manner in which such arguments are constructed: some authors point to the lack of

6 Robert S. Miola, *Early Modern Catholicism: An Anthology of Primary Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8. See also Ethan H. Shagan, ed., *Catholics and the ‘Protestant Nation’: Religious Politics and Identity in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

7 David Scott Kastan, *A Will to Believe: Shakespeare and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 49.

explicit evidence as proof that Shakespeare was a recusant, while others claim the exact opposite—that the proof is actually strewn all over his works, and that it only needs special decoding, as Clare Asquith contends in *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* (2005). Already one starts to lose faith when confronted with such contradictions (Womersley, 63). Then there is the sense of triumphalism that motivates some of these studies, as seen in Joseph Pearce's *The Quest for Shakespeare*. As H. W. Crocker III's *Triumph: The Power and the Glory of the Catholic Church* (2001) is to Church history, so Pearce's work is to the matter of Shakespeare's religion. Other, more sensitive critics rightly leave things within the realm of possibility when examining the details of Shakespeare's biography (he *might* have known the Jesuit martyr St. Robert Southwell, for example), whereas Pearce proceeds with a sense of unabashed certainty (arguing that the connection between Shakespeare and the Jesuit martyr is "solid"⁸). I admire Pearce's zeal, less so his treatment of the historical record.

WHAT MOTIVATES THE QUEST FOR A CATHOLIC SHAKESPEARE?

From the eighteenth century on, Shakespeare has been claimed in some form by each generation. The preceding sections have sought to chart this historical development and to provide the motivation for a more sensitive self-appraisal when it comes to one's readiness to discover Shakespeare to be a Catholic. Two final questions remain: why the papist push, and why now? For even a 2011 opinion piece in the Vatican's *L'Osservatore Romano*

8 Pearce, *The Quest for Shakespeare: The Bard of Avon and the Church of Rome* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 112. Pearce also overlooks important details. For example, he seems unaware that the Shakespeare scholar Edmund Malone issued a retraction concerning the Spiritual Testament of John Shakespeare. Malone came to see it as a forgery, and many critics since have likewise doubted its authenticity. See Kastan, 22–26; and Robert S. Miola, "Thy Canonized Bones," *First Things* (August 2008), <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/08/001-thy-canonized-bones>.

declared that there is “little doubt” that Shakespeare was Catholic.⁹ The critical reappraisal described above has helped inspire this movement, but other motivations seem to be at work. It is possible that we are turning to earlier periods because we lack a major Catholic presence in the contemporary literary world. We cling to the likes of Flannery O’Connor and J. R. R. Tolkien, and their work merits continued attention, but we are also looking for a new voice, a fresh perspective. Lacking that, we turn to the past. And Shakespeare’s name keeps surfacing in association with early modern Catholic culture, which makes us all the more willing to seize upon him.

The experience of early modern recusant Catholics may also be inherently attractive. Today’s Catholics who are intentional in living out their faith have, in some sense, been radicalized by a secular culture increasingly hostile to expressions of Christian faith and ethics. In Shakespeare’s England we are able to find a parallel historical construct, one which also demanded a radical response to the gospel message. In search of validation, we wish to claim Shakespeare in the process. But if it is heroic Catholics we seek, the early modern period offers us unambiguous saints like Edmund Campion and Southwell, not Shakespeare. Where practicing Bardology would fail to bring us more fully into the presence of the true God, a meditative reading of Southwell’s poem “The Burning Babe,” which details in moving fashion a mystical vision of the Christ Child, could succeed.

Our fascination with Shakespeare’s religion also reveals our indebtedness to particular ideas about the relationship between the literary artist and his art, ideas that have only emerged centuries after Shakespeare’s time. For we live in an era shaped by the notion of the autobiographical self, popularized by works like Walt Whitman’s flamboyantly self-expressive “Song of Myself” and by theoretical movements like Freudian psychoanalysis. (Our indebtedness to such trends, particularly Romanticism, has

9 *L’Osservatore Romano*, Nov. 18, 2011.

helped efforts to resist the late-modern denial of the author and the perceptibility of authorial intent, referenced above.) While we are quite comfortable reading *out* from a literary work to make judgments about the psychological state of its author,¹⁰ we are less trained in thinking critically about the assumptions with which we read ourselves *into* the same literature. As much as the former may be available to us, we should be just as cognizant of the latter. Certainly Dante's and Milton's religious affiliations are clear from their poetry; each made the explicit choice to utilize his faith to shape his art. Theirs is a kind of "theopoetics." We should recall, however, that the stakes were different for Shakespeare. He was not only a dramatist but also a principal shareholder in the theater company for which he wrote. The more popular his plays, the greater his and the company's profit. Catering to an ever-expanding and confessionally-diverse metropolitan population, it is not surprising that his plays are so hard to pin down in terms of their theological or spiritual essence. It seems that, like St. Paul, Shakespeare sought to be all things to all men (1 Cor 9:19). Unlike St. Paul, he did so not to save some, but rather to edify all. And to make his living in so doing. The existence of works like Joseph Pearce's, as well as James Howe's *A Buddhist's Shakespeare* (1994), Eric S. Mallin's *Godless Shakespeare* (2007), and *Shakespeareer: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare* (2011), edited by Madhavi Menon, are perhaps an unavoidable result of the uniquely universal appeal of Shakespeare's works. Everyone can find what he or she wants in Shakespeare.

Whether it was his intention or not, Shakespeare's elusiveness—the distinct sense that there is something for everyone in his art—continues to draw readers and audiences to him. That broad appeal is why seventeenth-century recusants driven from

10 As part of his study of the debate over the authorship of Shakespeare's works, James Shapiro calls attention to the impact of this development in the history of reader reception. See *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 10, 112–14.

their homeland made the effort to bring a copy of the First Folio along with them. Shakespeare’s art was able to enhance their lives in some capacity, to teach and delight them, as it does the same for us. Is that because Shakespeare was a Catholic writer? We cannot say for certain. But Shakespeare was undoubtedly a religious writer, as scholar Stanley Wells asserts. He is one “who is aware, and makes his spectators aware, of the mystery of things.”¹¹ This fact remains sure, whether or not he prayed the *mysterium fidei* at secret Catholic Masses held in Stratford or London.

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11 Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare: For All Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 173.

DISPUTED QUESTION:

ON THE PLACE OF TELEVISION AT HOME

In the Middle Ages, the disputed question was one of the major forms of academic investigation. A master of theology would pose a question on which great authorities seemed to disagree, then entertain objections from fellow masters and students. After others attempted to reconcile the various authorities, the master would give a determination that resolved the question.

In our form of the disputed question, two student brothers approach a difficult issue from different angles in order to reveal its complexity. These essays are meant to be complementary, not contradictory. Each of the brothers is then given the opportunity to reflect upon the contribution of the other. The section closes with a final summary provided by the editors, who do not pretend to play the role of master.

THE QUESTION

In a world becoming ever more saturated by sources of information and stimulation, it may be only natural to take a step back and ask about the proper place of television in the family. While we may think that such a question pertains solely to staunchly conservative and patently Catholic homes, a much broader swath of contemporary society is ruminating over this very issue. Such a question concerns human flourishing, which is a universal concern, not the purview of a select few.

The Church teaches that the human experience requires careful consideration of the interplay between nature, technology, and morality (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* 16). Such meditations are not only personal but inherently social concerns. Consequently, it is important for all of us to consider the place of television in the family, the integral unit of society. Is there a place for watching television in the modern Catholic household?

NO TV: IS IT POSSIBLE TO LIVE THIS WAY?

Athanasius Murphy, O.P.

In his work *On Christian Doctrine*, St. Augustine distinguishes between the goods of the world that are *used* and the goodness of God that alone is to be *enjoyed*. The modern Catholic family has before it many created goods which it can choose to use or do without. With respect to television, I argue that the Catholic family can and ought to do without this good. My reasons deal with the type of good that TV offers and the degree to which that good relates to the family's perfection in the Christian life.

To be clear, television is not evil. TV offers a definite and limited good in the realm of leisure and social recreation with family members and other folks. The issue, however, is not whether TV offers any benefit, but whether we can easily discern its benefits in the midst of its numerous detriments. While TV offers several goods, its downsides—the quantity of time we invest, the quality of entertainment, and its influence on daily living—are far more harmful.

On its own, the sheer quantity of time that families spend watching TV is a compelling point. It is hard to speak of a “normal” quantity when the national mean is five hours a day per family. The modern family has a certain amount of leisure time, and most of that is spent in front of the television. Furthermore, in the past twenty to thirty years, as Americans have gained leisure time, they have dedicated nearly all of this “new” time to sitting in front of the TV.¹

1 Bruno S. Frey, Christine Benesch, and Alois Stutzer, “Does Watching TV Make Us Happy?,” *Journal of Economic Psychology* 28 (2007): 283–313, doi:10.1016/j.joep.2007.02.001. This study reports that while the average American has gained six hours of leisure time a week over the past thirty to forty years, the average amount of TV watching has also increased the same amount, meaning that all additional leisure time has been given to TV.

Besides the quantity of time spent watching TV, the quality of entertainment that TV brings into the home is negligible. Watching a show, like FOX's or NBC's 8:00 p.m. lineup, fails to stimulate the mind and offers a quality of entertainment that is usually less than satisfying. Besides TV shows, there are also commercials, which make up about 20–25% of any hour-long series. Some commercials are quite entertaining, but most are annoying and repetitive. Consider the frequency with which your family has watched the same laundry detergent commercial without ever being inclined to change brands. Now think of how many prescription drug commercials displaying old fogeys climbing and kayaking you will watch this week for diseases you will never have in your life. If we are willing to sit through this much unhealthy repetition, what else do we voluntarily choose to watch?

Watching TV can also influence how we view reality. I am not claiming that we become a living replica of the characters from our favorite TV shows. But TV life often influences the way we speak, shapes the way we joke, directs the way we think, and, ultimately, changes the way we live. Ask any family member about his favorite TV show and see whether he has not picked up on the jargon of some of the characters. Now, it is not bad to draw your words or behavior from role models, but consider the type of models that television provides. Some TV shows are able to offer a resolution or lesson worth taking to heart, but many are not. And even when the main point of the show is wholesome, this larger lesson is usually couched in clusters of off-color and vulgar scenes, phrases, and innuendos that are just as, if not more, memorable than the main plot. Why make this the family's nightly viewing?

Habitually watching TV may also encourage the family to see life in an oversimplified way. Most TV shows have plotlines and characters that lack any further depth than can be presented and resolved in a sixty-minute period. Such streamlined stories, especially if watched nightly, goad us to expect a similar, simplified mode of living for ourselves. No one could prove that watching the

heroes of *CSI* wrap up another homicide in one hour leads me to think tomorrow's work day will take care of itself, but it certainly does not leave me without any effect.

Consider the feeling you get after watching some hour-long show that gives you the perceived sense of accomplishing what those characters did, without having done anything yourself but sit on a couch. Why, after watching a detective solve some big case, do I feel as if I have made some big discovery when my son's decline in trigonometry is still just as mysterious as it was before? Why, after watching a war show, do I have the sense of finishing some mission when tomorrow's trip with the wife and kids is just as unplanned as an hour ago? Watching TV may lead us to shirk off higher goods and opportunities in life that fail to fit inside this mold of simplistic TV living.

Television is certainly one form of leisure available to the modern, Catholic family. But it is one option among many others and is chosen with far too high a frequency. Consider the amount of free time a family has together each weeknight. Work, school, homework, and after-school sports leave the typical family with three to four hours together before it is time to sleep. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that those three to four hours are spent watching TV, or at least those hours include having the TV on. Beyond the fact that nearly all of a family's free time on a given weeknight is spent watching TV, only in certain cases is everyone in the same room watching the same show. Oftentimes this is done to the neglect of even having dinner together.

In contrast, consider the number of other leisurely activities available for the family today: A family could prepare and share a prolonged dinner together, with each person taking charge of some part of the meal. A family could pray the rosary or the liturgy of the hours together before or after dinner. A family could sing or do something musical for one hour a week. Or, on the more creative side, a family could read aloud some book or recite some play together, which may not be extremely professional or well done,



GIOVANNI BATTISTA TORRIGLIA — A HAPPY FAMILY

but would certainly be entertaining, if only for comical reasons. (Did not Chesterton observe that whatever was worth doing at all was worth doing badly?) If these choices sound too laborious or complex, then there is always simple conversation about current affairs inside and outside the home.

For these reasons, watching TV, especially to the degree it is done today by families, can and should be done without.

Athanasius Murphy entered the Order of Preachers in 2010. Prior to joining the Dominicans, he studied classics, humanities, and philosophy at Providence College.

KNOCKING AT THE DOOR: VIEWING TELEVISION AS A GUEST

Joseph Hagan, O.P.

The moral concerns of television are legion. Many TV shows glamorize vice, moving their viewers to thirst for that which cannot satisfy, and commercials often indoctrinate their viewers in consumerism, teaching them to view the world in terms of instant gratification and pragmatic utility.

These concerns should give pause to any family that takes its Catholic faith seriously, let alone anyone who wants to live the good, virtuous life. However, such concerns—strong though they may be—do not eradicate all value from television. Rather, they call for prudence. There is still the possibility that television has something to offer the modern Catholic family. But what is this *something*?

Let us begin with a thought experiment. Imagine that every Lshow and commercial on television is a person seeking to come into your house. Each of them in turn rings your doorbell, stands on your porch, and asks to come in. Some are funny, some are dramatic, and some are boisterous. Some are well-behaved; others, not so much.

There are important questions. Who gets invited into your house to be your guest? Who stays at the doorstep? Who is allowed to decide which ones are invited inside? Are children allowed to invite guests in? Are certain guests only to be received by certain family members? How long are different guests allowed to stay? Can they invite in commercials or the next show? Finally, there is the question about the goodness of television: which guests help the family to flourish?

Following this thought experiment, we can identify the shows that we would leave at the doorstep because they add nothing of value to the family. For instance, if you opened your front door and found a man trying to sell you the latest pill for aging baby-boomers, you would most likely shut and lock the door. “No, thank you, sir!” Or think of reality TV shows. Would you really want to open your home to the Kardashians or to the mothers of *Toddlers in Tiaras*?

We can also identify the shows that we would gladly welcome. The doorbell rings, and there is Mr. Fred Rogers, greeting you in song: “It’s a beautiful day in the neighborhood.” Perhaps I am biased, but I would gladly receive him as my neighbor. Maybe it is a Saturday afternoon, and a sports reporter is at your door who wants to give you the play-by-play of the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame taking on—and trouncing—the USC Trojans. For many, such a reporter would be a welcomed guest. Or, perhaps, it is a weeknight, and a great storyteller comes to your door. After a long day’s work, who wouldn’t enjoy a little leisure by taking in an entertaining drama?

From this, I propose three ways that television can bring something good to the family. This is not an exhaustive list, but a starting point.

First, television can provide programming that reinforces family values. Some shows do this directly, such as *Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood*, but many do this indirectly by providing parents with teaching moments. If a show poses a moral question, parents have the chance to shape their children’s response, even if the show advocates an immoral choice. The key is active parenting. Television may pose questions, but parents have the final say.

Second, television can grant a family visual access to cultural events, such as sports, political speeches, or even papal Masses. Watching baseball together, a father can teach his son when and why you call for a bunt. Perhaps that sounds trivial, but through such little things, great bonds are formed. It is also valuable for

families to see their leaders, whether it is the president delivering the State of the Union address or the Holy Father celebrating Easter Sunday Mass. Television provides access to these important moments.

Third, television can provide quality entertainment, the kind of entertainment that brings relaxation and delight. This is probably the most common good of television and the good that needs the least explanation. A little entertainment, a pinch of laughter, or a dash of escape from the mundane can keep the spice in life.



WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT — THE IMPORTUNATE NEIGHBOUR

We must, however, make several important qualifications. First, there are all the issues of prudence already discussed. With all its vices, television requires a stout moral vigilance. Some shows cross the line of moral repugnance and do not possess enough that is redeemable to offset the bad; these shows should be avoided. Second, these goods require one to be purposeful. If we watch television to refresh ourselves, we need to ask if this is

truly refreshing. If we end up exhausted afterward, then we know something went wrong. Third, these goods are best enjoyed with other people. If we get in the habit of using television to avoid other people instead of forming friendships, then there is not much goodness left in television.

Additionally, there are better ways of achieving these same goals. Do you want to reinforce family values? Plan a family outing or make an excuse to spend quality time with your family. Do you want to connect with your culture? Go to neighborhood events, visit your state legislature, or attend Mass at your local cathedral. Do you want to relax and be merry? Play games together, take a walk, or just talk to each other over hot tea. If you think outside the television box, there are countless possibilities.

Families flourish through love, and love is between people, not between a person and his television. Here is a simple test: Does television make us more or less loving? If it brings the family together and helps them engage with each other, great. But if it becomes a vacuum, sucking the life out of a family, or a wedge, dividing people, then there is a serious problem.

In the end, television provides a good that is more quick than satisfying. Television may aid a family, but it does so imperfectly. Those families seeking virtue would be wise to minimize their time watching television and instead develop other, more satisfying means of leisure and recreation. Let television be a guest in the Catholic home—a passing guest—who does not outstay his welcome, but tips his cap and moves along.

Joseph Hagan entered the Order of Preachers in 2012. He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, where he earned a master's in theology.

REPLIES

A REPLY TO *KNOCKING AT THE DOOR*

I am very thankful for Br. Joseph's essay on the virtues of TV watching. He has a way of writing that grabs your attention, and his nuanced approach to this question allows us to think outside the box.

The first part of his essay underlines the value and priority of prudence for any family watching TV. Advocating such a practice broadly reveals his desire to set a firm foundation on which particular instances of good TV watching can be supported. Br. Joseph is also careful not to dictate a family's every move and decision.

His provoking thought experiment at the beginning catches your attention and carries through the essay to remind you of TV's limited and passing nature. The portrayal of TV shows and commercials as guests in the family home is an arresting image that teaches any TV viewer to distinguish between the good stories and false friends knocking at the family's front door.

The second part of his essay is by far my favorite. His three ways that television can bring something good to the family are diverse enough that a family can choose to use all three or just one. That TV can only be an active teaching instrument in the home if there is parental guidance is an important principle. Br. Joseph accurately labels television as a communal good that fosters existing relationships within the family. Connecting to the world-at-large is an excellent way for any family to know its civil or spiritual leaders. Many historic moments are captured on the visual frame, and to deny a family these would be an unreasonable privation.

Relaxation and delight are good things to have, and TV can offer this. I think that Br. Joseph would agree that the quantity

and quality of this delight are the hinge of both our arguments. Br. Joseph cuts and polishes the goodness of TV to its proper and limited size so that you can reject the vices without losing the benefits.

Yet Br. Joseph advocates vigilance along with prudence—a worthy pair of sails for any modern Catholic family voyaging into visual entertainment. These two, combined with the rudder of purposefulness, ought to make anyone's TV travels less of an exhaustion and more of a delight.

One area of his piece where I sought a fuller explanation was in his reference to particular TV shows. The virtues of prudence, vigilance, and purposefulness are indeed universally helpful for any Catholic family. But the question still stands as to which particular shows offer something fruitful for the family. This is where the difficulty lies, but this is also where the named virtues are meant to thrive.

— *Athanasius Murphy, O.P.*

A REPLY TO *No TV*

I enjoyed Br. Athanasius' well-thought-out and well-researched essay. I suspect that we are very much in agreement about television and today's family. Television poses serious threats to the family, both by its content (working against virtue) and by its invasive nature (consuming one's free time). With respect to family growth, the limp glow of the television screen pales in comparison to the living light of real human interaction. In other words, families grow in love more by their time together away from the television screen than before it.

In an ideal world, families would find little need for television, being engaged instead with more fulfilling activities. They might have a television, but would use it infrequently. To some extent, there are some families that already embrace such an ideal, but many families do not and, perhaps, cannot. Some families seem glued to their television. What happens if we live in such a family? Surely, we need not reject both television and our family. So what are we to do?

I propose two approaches. First, find ways of cutting out the commercials. These are both wearisome (dragging out the show you are watching) and worrisome (accosting you with unwanted solicitations). An easy way to do this is through a Netflix account, by watching the DVDs of a television series, or by recording shows through providers like TiVo and fast-forwarding through the commercials. Each of these allows the family to watch a show together and even pause the show for a teaching moment.

Second, find quality television programs. Just as a bookshelf can hold both trashy novels and literary masterpieces, so too television can carry both pitiful and excellent shows. I would recommend finding a good miniseries, such as *Brideshead Revisited*, *Pride & Prejudice*, Ken Burns' *Civil War*, *Blue Planet*, or *Planet Earth*. See what your library has. This may take a little research to find good programs that would interest your family. However, this is a good way of meeting your family halfway. If your family is glued to the television, at least watch quality programs with them.

I propose these two approaches as a way of finding a compromise. There remains the issue that we tend to habitually spend all our free time watching television. Against this tendency, we must grow in stronger habits of enjoying life outside of the box.

— Joseph Hagan, O.P.

RECAPITULATION

So, what is there to say about the value of watching television? There is certainly a plethora of reasons to tune-out, or even turn-off and unplug the television set. Nevertheless, as the above discussion indicates, TV viewing is not simply an activity devoid of worthwhile benefit. Like much of life, we find in television a mixture of positive and negative elements. While a healthy dose of television requires the practice of prudence and its attendant virtues, watching TV can and does still constitute a good source of recreation, education, and communication.

In the thirteenth century, Saint Dominic tirelessly worked to uphold the goodness of God's creation against those who saw the material world as purely evil. Likewise, we should not be too quick to denigrate the technological advances of human beings, simply because they can be—and often are—used to negative ends. As Brs. Athanasius and Joseph agree, television can be introduced in the Catholic home in a virtuous and productive manner. Thus, the question leads us to begin discerning the proper bounds in which we should welcome TV into our homes. And so, the conversation continues.

— *The Editors*

THE LOCUTORIUM

STORIES FROM THE GROUND

CONVERSATIONS AT THE MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY

Timothy Danaher, O.P.

WHY WE TELL STORIES

We can consider conversions in the abstract, but they do not occur that way—they are concrete, life-changing experiences in a person's story. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta said, "I look at the individual. I can only love one person at a time—just one, one, one. So you begin. I began—I picked up one person. Maybe if I didn't pick up that one person, I wouldn't have picked up forty-two thousand."

Since their founding in 1950 by Mother Teresa, the Missionaries of Charity have expanded by thousands across the globe into every nook and cranny of the world's inner cities. Much can be said in broad terms of their unique mission in the Church, caring for the souls of the "poorest of the poor." Perhaps a better approach is to tell stories. Individual stories capture life on an individual basis, where conversion happens. They also offer a glimpse of the sisters themselves, who stand out conspicuously in photographs or as they stroll down a street in white and blue Indian saris, yet whose true marks are their humor, beauty, and holiness.

SISTERS OF NEW YORK

One source of these stories is a long-time volunteer for the sisters in New York City. He wishes here to remain anonymous, yet he is omnipresent to their houses and known by all who have likewise volunteered there. Earlier this year I crossed paths with him at the convent in Harlem, and the sisters smiled at his arrival, saying, “We say that he owns the house. He owns every house.” His stories begin with the sisters’ first arrival to the city in 1971.

“My father was in the bar business. He owned thirty-two bars in Harlem. When I graduated college in 1955, I owned three bars myself. I’ve known over one hundred men murdered, who used to come to the bar. It’s a crazy world. But many of the guys from the bar, I’d see thirty years later at the soup kitchen.” As soon as the sisters had moved into the New York neighborhoods—some of the most dangerous in the Bronx and Harlem—he and other lay volunteers were at their side. “None of us could go in there alone, but the sisters immediately had the respect of the people. Because everybody knows they’ve come to help. They recognize immediately that they’re women of God.” He adds, “The men from the street especially respect the sisters. Many of them were raised by their mothers, and in their mind, any woman who feeds you, that’s a good woman!” It was not only the foreign dress and the smiling faces which ingratiated the sisters to the new neighbors, but the holiness of their hands, which they used to feed the people in their basic needs. Another brother recounts a Eucharistic procession through the Bronx, when the sisters began yelling up to people in their apartments to turn the radios off. And they all obeyed!

These acts, however, are always accompanied by the Gospel. In their soup kitchens, the sisters have a policy of singing a hymn with the guests and reading Scripture before the meal. “In Harlem there was a Muslim man who would come in and listen to the readings every day. Soon he stopped showing up and was gone for years. Then one day he comes in and says, ‘I want to be baptized

a Catholic.’ It turns out he had stage IV cancer. So the sisters had him baptized by a priest in the Bronx, whom he formed a close relationship with. He still comes by the kitchen, saying that his faith keeps him going.”

In 1985, years after their arrival in the north part of the city, the sisters founded a new house—Gift of Love—in the West Village. Mother Teresa wanted to respond to the growing AIDS crisis and opened a hospice for these victims, the first of its kind in the world. My anonymous source continues, “I didn’t tell anyone I was working there, not my friends or co-workers, but only my immediate family. At the time, doctors couldn’t even tell you whether or not you were vulnerable to getting the virus through a mosquito bite—the disease was still uncharted territory. That’s the risk we took. But the sisters were wonderful with it! Many people were saying how difficult that kind of work would be, how we would get depressed after a few years, etc. But it was more rewarding than anything else we did! People come and go at the shelters, but in that work you got to see your reward, as you saw each person go to heaven. In the first five to seven years of opening, we didn’t lose a single one of the men without them getting a priest and getting baptized.”

In their care for the poor, the sisters would offer baptism for the people under their care, while always respecting their free choice. Some patients would agree to the offer, then later flee when the time came. One man had agreed to the invitation, so the sisters bought him a suit and set a date for the baptism. Every time it came around though, he would go missing, and after three or four tries he finally disappeared. “He was gone for almost twenty years, then one day he showed up again. Would you believe it, he had been baptized in jail, but by now he had full blown AIDS and was dying. He had come back to ask the sisters if he could give their phone number in case anything happened to him. They said he could, and when he died soon after, they did everything for him: called together his family, had a funeral Mass, buried him, everything.”

Another story tells of the sisters' persistence in never letting someone out of their sight. "Every evening before dinner, the sisters would pray the rosary with the men and discuss Scripture. Well this one guy, with no religion, when he heard Jesus say to forgive your brother seventy times seven—well, he flipped out! He just couldn't believe it! We didn't see him for years, but one day, the sisters found out he was dying in Harlem Hospital. So they found a priest and went and tracked him down. He asked to be baptized, and he had such joy the moment it was happening, that he started having diarrhea. But the priest kept right on with it, saying to him, 'Don't worry about it, you're doing fine.' He didn't miss a beat!"

SERVING CHANGES US

Those who lay down their lives in service to the Church hope that their work will change other lives. Yet Christ promises change to the giver as well. "Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Mt 16:25). Yet this truth often rebounds off of our ears, not making sense to our usual way of thinking. Nonetheless, it finds its affirmation as it is lived out, as something tasted in the efforts of those who love Christ and love others for His sake. All who find Christ find true life. And those who give their lives to His work in the world begin to find joy in the work and begin to "find themselves," to put it colloquially.

Many who hear of the Missionaries' lifestyle are shocked by their austerities: they own nothing but their simple clothing; they spend all day in work or prayer; they are sent across the world to serve, multiple times over; they visit their families once every ten years; they eat, pray, and sleep on the floor; they do not even have pockets! But the impression one gets from meeting the sisters in person is far different: it is one bursting with the joy of living for Christ.

A few summers ago, a group of Dominican brothers and I were privileged to work with the sisters in New York. Trying to enter into their routine is a lesson in delightful chaos, where the only plan is “whatever happens, happens.” The first sister I met at the soup kitchen lost her sandal as she opened the door, and then began laughing at herself while gesturing for us to enter. Ten minutes later, fifty homeless people from the street entered the dining room, and a sister smiled at me and said, “You are a Dominican. Preach to them!” “How long,” I asked. “I don’t know how long,” she said. And when that was finally over, a whirl of serving, dishwashing, and chatter commenced. A fellow brother recounts an early conversation with one of the sisters that summer: “You know what MC stands for, Brother? Much confusion!” Then she laughed. All MCs laugh when the subject comes up; they candidly admit that part of their charisma is to be organizationally challenged. And that is how God uses you for the Gospel!

The rest of the summer was an ongoing lesson about how many lives the sisters touch on a weekly basis: teaching children music and catechesis at summer camp; playing soccer at summer camp and not taking it easy on the boys; walking into homeless tent villages with sandwiches and giant pitchers of orange Tang; visiting shut-in couples in their apartments, hearing about their grandchildren or singing old songs with them in their own dialects; or planning a trip to the beach for the homeless, then enlisting the help of the lifeguards to lead a blind man into the waves so that he could sit in shallow water and let it wash over him. The main reason why the sisters reach so many lives is simple: they just go! They neither wait for the plan to be perfect nor reevaluate every factor. Whether it is in the chapel or the street, the sisters place a high value on just *showing up*, then letting the Lord do the rest.

It was not only the poor who were changed that summer. My own life was changed. By the end of the summer, I was no longer uncomfortable with the poor, but I had learned from the sisters how to approach them with confidence and the importance of simply

asking their name. Mother Teresa knew our job as Christians was not to change the whole world, but simply to show love wherever we are in that world, to any given person on any given day: “We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But if that drop was not in the ocean, I think the ocean would be less because of that missing drop. I do not agree with the big way of doing things. . . . If we wait till we get the numbers, then we will be lost in the numbers. And we will never be able to show that love and respect for the person. I believe in person to person; every person is Christ for me, and since there is only one Jesus, that person is the one person in the world at that moment.”

It is not only the poor who are changed, or even the volunteers who help the sisters. In time, you begin to hear the sisters talk about how they have changed. One sister, after spending many years working with children, was assigned to an AIDS hospice. She recalled her first time with a woman moments away from death; she was afraid to look into the dying woman’s eyes. So instead she sat by her head and looked in the direction of the woman’s feet! In a moment, however, she knew that what the woman needed most was someone to be with her and to look at her, face to face. So she did, and the moment was instead very beautiful. She has not been afraid ever since.

Such is the strange beauty of these houses. Patients from across the globe arrive as total strangers, as persons following just another reference. Those who die, die in the care of women they hardly know; they die holding the hands of women who love them so that in their final moments they might know they are *someone*. Many live a long while and end up becoming proverbial members of the family—an Asian businessman, bankrupt after he contracted the disease; an old Haitian man who lost his family in the earthquake; others who had spent their lives on drugs or the gay scene right down the street. The sisters feed them, clean for them, bring them to Mass; and many have even entered the Catholic Church. Yet

all is joy, and the jokes are constant, as the message on the sisters' faces is clear: they truly love the people they serve.

JOY WITHIN, JOY WITHOUT

It is surprising to see such joy and hilarity among sisters with such serious work. Yes, their life is difficult. They repeated to us many times, "Being an MC is very difficult, Brother." Many wrongly assume the sisters are referring to their constant work with the poor. True, they work and pray non-stop. In addition, situations often grow overwhelming to the untrained spectator: I remember attending a party they had for hundreds of guests, while starting a Holy Hour right across the hall at the same time. I also cannot forget the field trip we took with a bus full of children, forgetting to give the bus driver directions, then getting horribly lost, and feverishly reciting the *Memorare*. The driver soon found the way, and only ten minutes late! But MCs thrive on this routine. They laugh it all off. What is most difficult, they will tell you, is living together. Like the rest of us, love of neighbor is easy with strangers, but seemingly impossible at home.

Thus, Mother Teresa's insistence that love must begin at home strikes to the heart of the Christian vocation. We can only love if we have been loved first (1 Jn 4:10). Forgiveness is divine, and it comes to us only by first receiving God's love. For the MCs, He also loves them through the poor, *as they love the poor*. This becomes fuel for their life at home. Mother Teresa always exclaimed that the poor teach us more than we teach them. Once we see beneath their "distressing disguise" to the real and living and beautiful person within, we bring our discovery home. We learn to recognize what is underneath the conflicts we have with one another, because like the poor, we all wear a "distressing disguise" to cover our own loneliness, our fears, and our hunger for love. Only then can we look with love on one another, and so continue in God's ways for us, full of newfound joy.



PIERRE PUVIS DE CHAVANNES — CHARITY

There is only one source of joy: it is the effect of being in love with God. But no Christian life on earth is one of uninterrupted joy. I have heard MCs repeat many times, “We have a simple teaching, but it is very hard to live.” And that simple teaching is to love all people as Christ. Yet just as brothers and sisters can be crosses for one another, they are ironically blessings as well—we only survive because we do not live alone. Even Mother Teresa stood in need as she endured long periods of darkness: “As for myself... I have nothing to say—for the darkness is so dark, the pain is so painful.

Sometimes the grip of pain is so great—that I can hear my own voice call out—My God, help me. When I help the Sisters draw very close to Jesus—when I teach them to love Him with a deep—devoted—personal love—I long to be able to do the same. —The Sisters in front of my very eyes I see them love God—come so close to Him—grow daily so much like Him... I am happy to see Him loved—to see the Sisters grow like Him. I am happy to love Him through them.” While their founder floundered in the dark night of faith, her joy was to see their joy. She was a silent sufferer for her sisters, and they were her joyful offering to God. Christ knows that the way to holiness is difficult for us, and He does not call us to journey alone. He calls us as a community, shouldering each other’s burdens, as we plod the path towards the joy that awaits us. As the anonymous volunteer above testifies after many years, “Really when you see the sisters, you see Mother. So many of them knew her firsthand, and they really emulate her. It’s amazing to see.”

EPILOGUE

There is no proper way to conclude a collection of stories and experiences. By their nature, they speak for themselves and leave us with resounding impressions far better than any summary could achieve. In light of this, I will finish with one last story, as a testimony to the Missionaries of Charity and their gift of joy to the world.

Two years ago I was returning from a Christmas visit to my family in Phoenix. I sat in the airport terminal at 6 A.M. feeling miserable: my family had had another fight; I was going through a patch of confusion and temptation; in my spirit I wrestled God over the burden of my vocation, saying to myself, “What good am I even doing anyway?” As I sat there, forcing my way through the psalms of Morning Prayer, two short, happy Missionaries of Charity walked across my path. They appeared confused about

Southwest boarding policies, looking around for assistance. So I introduced myself and asked whether they were in group A or B? One replied, “I’m in S group, for Sister Susan.” I smiled and explained the boarding policies—it turned out they were in group B—and when I returned to my seat, my storm had been stilled to a “great calm” (Mt 8:26).

An hour later during my flight, I came to the last page of the novel I had been reading all week, *Deep River* by Shusaku Endo. The main character, a Japanese woman visiting India, is waiting to board her flight home and going through a crisis of faith. Out of the crowd emerge two Missionaries of Charity to carry off a dying person in the street—now they walked into my novel! I proceeded to fling my book against the passenger window—give the shock its due—then resumed reading. The character interrupts them and asks why they are helping that person: “The nun opened her blue eyes wide and stared at Mitsuko. ‘Why are you doing this?’ Her eyes still brimming with surprise, the nun slowly answered. ‘Because, except for this... there is nothing in this world we can believe in.’”

We cannot solve all the evils of the world. We cannot even hold ourselves together in the daily demands of life without the grace of God. We are called to show love to the people three feet in front of us. Love of neighbor is not one of many options in living the Christian life; rather, “there is nothing else in this world.” Nor is it a unique charism reserved for the Missionaries of Charity—though they do it with a unique sort of flair, let us say. They remind us that there is no other way to live. We have only to begin right where we are: “Stay where you are. Find your own Calcutta. Find the sick, the suffering, and the lonely right there where you are—in your own homes and in your own families, in your workplaces and in your schools. You can find Calcutta all over the world, if you have the eyes to see.”

Whoever we are, wherever we are, we too must write our own stories. Rather, we must hand over the pencil to God and agree to play the main character from now on, not the author. He does not promise it will be easy, but it will be a good story. We will be happy, journeying together. And we will arrive at home, having tasted the goodness of the Lord all our lives long.

Timothy Danaher entered the Order of Preachers in 2011. He attended Franciscan University in Steubenville where he earned a degree in literature and theology.

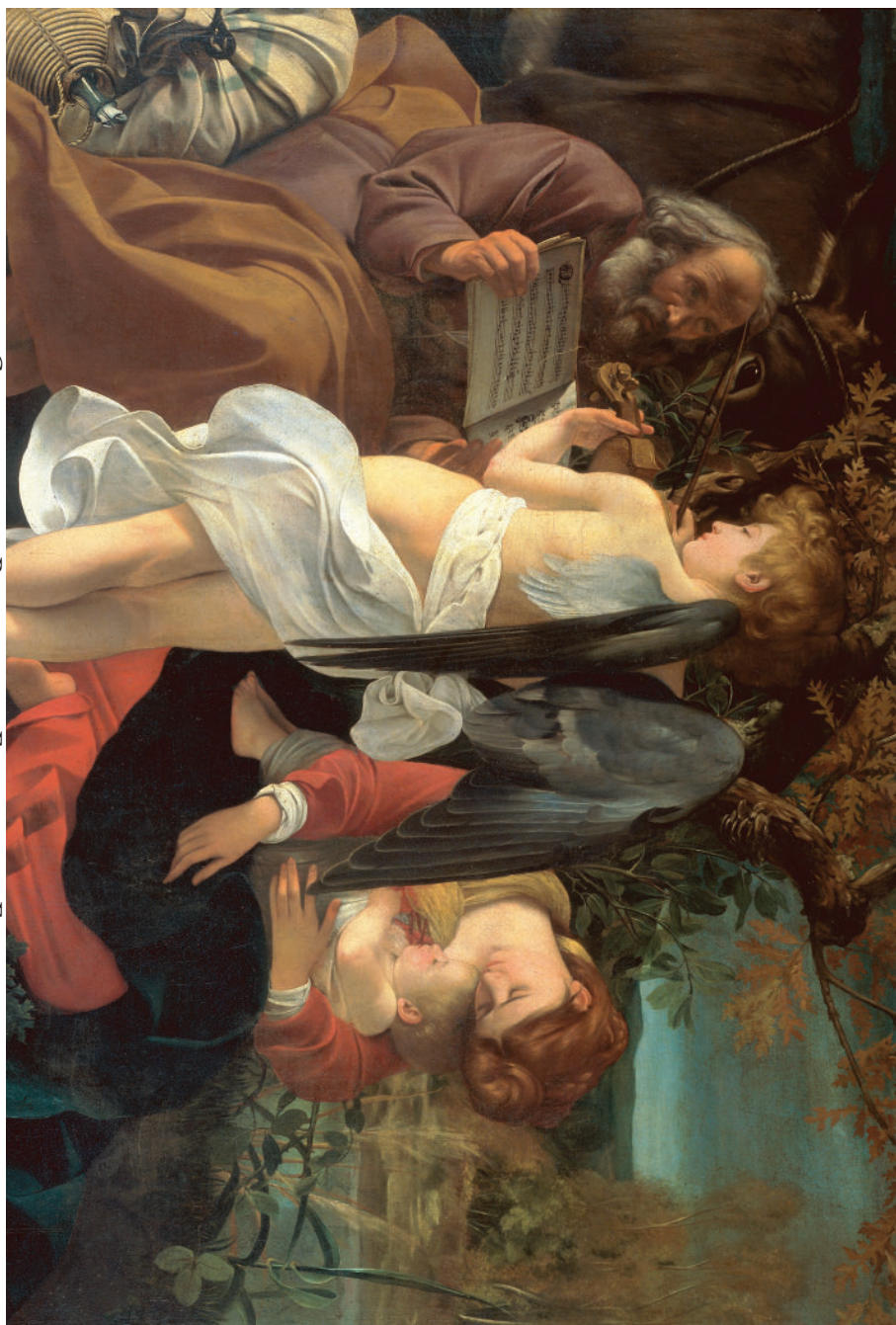
THOUGHTS FROM THE RHINELAND

Thirteenth-century Germany boasted a flowering of Christian mysticism. Meister Eckhart, John Tauler, and Bl. Henry Suso rank among the prominent Dominican figures who belong to this school. Inspired by this heritage, Thoughts from the Rhineland features meditations and commentary that seek to aid prayer and nourish contemplation.

SEEING THE INVISIBLE GOD

Gabriel Torretta, O.P.

The boy rests, innocent of all that has passed; a full-stomached, rosy-cheeked only child who seeks in sleeping to save those who seek in waking to destroy him. The mother, having interrupted the family's mortal flight to answer her son's cries of hunger, now wraps him with her body like a mantle, swaddling him with the limbs he made, warming him on the bosom he fashioned. The father sits gently slouched, face wrinkled with age and weariness; he has exhausted all his resources to care for his wife and child, abandoned all he has owned, yet his eyes are lustrous with attention.



CARAVAGGIO — REST ON THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Child. Mother. Father. A doleful donkey. The scene is simple. Rest. Weariness. Peace.

But the family is not alone. An angel bursts forth from the space between the mother and the father, careless wings fluttering over the child, nearly brushing him in his sleep. No salutation is needed, no “Do not be afraid,” no announcement of the Lord’s presence; the family knows who he is. There is no fear here. The father’s hands, lifted in praise, reveal themselves to be holding music, a score by which the angel praises the mother and child through beauty offered to Beauty.

Caravaggio’s *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* (ca. 1596) intoxicates with its splendor; the work easily stole the show at the recent *Picturing Mary* exhibit at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. Its splendor derives from Caravaggio’s unheralded blending of the visible and invisible elements in the scene he depicts. To understand the drama of the painting, we must first mentally remove the luminous angel with his unexpected viol, leaving only Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, haphazardly disposed around a clearing, looking tired and utterly ordinary. If a wanderer were to pass by the scene, his eyes would see only this: a child, a mother, and a father, wanderers and travelers like anyone else, without halos or miracles or radiant light to identify them as central players on the stage of salvation. But to the eyes of faith, the scene erupts with glory: there in the midst of them, emerging from the love of the father and the mother that in turn arises from the child held sleeping, an angel appears—not to give warning or to bestow news, but merely to praise, to delight, to sing God’s goodness. The whole scene is held together spatially by the angel, because the whole scene is held together dramatically by its least active participant: the Christ child. The invisible reality of Jesus is made visible; we see the glory of God.

Caravaggio’s composition is even more striking when considered in the light of the text from which the scene derives. Like

many events in the life of the Holy Family beloved of painters and sculptors through the centuries, the source for the rest on the flight into Egypt event is an apocryphal text, in this case a work known as the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*. Apocryphal Gospels belong to roughly two camps: one set was written by pious but unsophisticated people to fill in the gaps of the biblical stories with imaginative legends, and the other set was written by religious syncretists and practitioners of various Middle-Eastern religions (collectively called “Gnostics”) to incorporate biblical characters and events into their own religious vision. *Pseudo-Matthew* (ca. 400–800 AD) belongs to the former camp, being intended especially to aid Christian devotion by fleshing out Matthew’s and Luke’s infancy narratives through fanciful stories about Mary’s childhood, the event of Jesus’ birth (both of these borrowed verbatim from the equally fanciful *Protoevangelium of James*), and the flight into Egypt.

Modern readers cannot help but notice that the authors and compiler of *Pseudo-Matthew* had more religious enthusiasm than they had literary caution: One night the travelers stayed in a cave which turned out—naturally enough—to be full of dragons (this being long before the days of St. George), at the discovery of which the newborn “Jesus got down from his mother’s lap and stood on his feet before the dragons; and they worshipped Jesus and then departed” (§18); as they headed to Egypt “lions and panthers adored him and accompanied them in the desert” (§19); and, taking a rest underneath a palm tree, the infant Jesus said to the tree, “O tree, bend your branches and refresh my mother with your fruit,” which it obligingly does (§20). The Holy Family was also accompanied by three boys and a girl (§18), forming quite a crowd with all the “lions and the panthers and various kinds of wild beasts” and “oxen and asses and the beasts of burden” which they took with them across the desert to Egypt (§20).

Despite their vast differences in method, the writers of *Pseudo-Matthew* and Caravaggio have surprisingly similar goals: to

make apparent to the senses the invisible splendor that God brings into the world through his Incarnate Son and in his saints. Let me explain.

The rustic, countrified authors of apocryphal texts like *Pseudo-Matthew* and the *Protoevangelium of James* have no particular art, literary ability, historical knowledge, or even theological acumen; what they have is a love for Jesus Christ, his mother Mary, and his foster-father Joseph, and a desire to make their holiness obvious to all. The intent is not to invent new teachings, but to convince the listener of what the Christian people have always believed: specifically, that Jesus is Lord. No one can miss the point in this text: Jesus makes clear that he is the eternal Lord of space and time by issuing orders as a newborn, ignoring the laws of nature (later on in the text he has the Holy Family teleport thirty days' distance in one day), and commanding the obedience of wild creatures. What is at times implicit or veiled in the canonical Scriptures is undeniably, even embarrassingly, overt.

In trying to unveil the hidden holiness of Christ and his parents, however, *Pseudo-Matthew* and the other apocryphal texts transform these real people into mythological or legendary figures: we may understand that Jesus is God after reading them, but we lose any real sense of his humanity. The lines between grace and magic, between miracles and legend, and between the specificity of history and the generality of myth all become lost.

Caravaggio approaches the rest on the flight into Egypt from a different angle. Here there are no other figures, no retinue, no tame beasts or monsters in thrall. All we see is the Holy Family, a humble beast of burden, and the radiant lightning strike of the musical angel in the center. Caravaggio, too, wants to make the invisible mystery of the Incarnation visible, but in doing so he refuses to compromise the genuine humanity of Jesus, Mary, or Joseph. Only the angel is a signal of the remarkable interior reality of the unremarkable exterior scene; only the music in Joseph's hands

and his prayerful gaze on the angel reveal how interconnected the visible and the invisible aspects of the scene are.

For Caravaggio, the revelation of the invisible cannot sacrifice the coherence of the visible; God is made man in Jesus Christ not to wipe out human nature or the laws of the world humans live in, but to purify humanity, to redeem fallen man, and to bring all people, body and soul, into perfect unity with the Father by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Caravaggio's genius is to reveal before the physical eyes what is fully apparent only to the eyes of faith: that salvation begins with the birth of a child in Bethlehem, through whom we are made nothing less than "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pt 1:4) by grace.

One more detail in the *Rest on the Flight into Egypt* brings out the perpetual relevance of the Incarnation for men and women of every age. The musical score that Joseph is holding is not just a random collection of dots and lines, but an actual motet written by Noel Bauldeweyn in 1519. The piece is called *Quam pulchra es*, a musical-poetic setting of six verse-fragments from the Song of Songs depicting a dialogue between the Bridegroom and the Bride. Caravaggio's choice of Bauldeweyn's piece, composed about seventy-five years before he painted this image, draws the viewer—and the listener—into the invisible drama of salvation that is being rendered visibly on the canvas. The birth of Christ is not a mere historical fact that we reflect on wistfully; it is the present source of our life in grace, our transformation in the image of God, and our incorporation into the body of Christ. Past, present, and future burst into polyphonic song to accompany the angel's musical articulation of Mary and Joseph's praise of the infant Jesus.

The text of the motet, placed in the scene of the rest on the flight into Egypt, completes Caravaggio's visual rendering of the invisible life of grace by making it audible as well:

Sponsus:

*Quam pulchra es et
quam decora
carissima in deliciis
Statura tua assimilata
est palmæ,
et ubera tua botris
caput tuum ut carmelus
collum tuum sicut
turris eburnea*

Sponsa:

*Veni dilecte mi; egrediamur
in agrum
et videamus si flores
fructus parturiunt,
si floruerunt mala punica.
Ibi dabo tibi ubera mea*

Bridegroom:

How beautiful and fair
you are, my beloved,
most sweet in your delights.
Your stature is like a palm-tree,
and your breasts are like fruit.
Your head is like
Mount Carmel
and your neck is like a
tower of ivory.

Bride:

Come, my beloved, let us
go into the fields
and see if the blossoms
have born fruit,
and if the pomegranates
have flowered.
There will I give my
breasts to you.

Caravaggio has led us out into the far fields, where the “beautiful and fair” Virgin Mother has finished giving physical food to the “beloved” who has given her every beauty by filling her with every grace. Joseph here plays the role of the inspired author of the Song of Songs, who sings the praises of the Bridegroom and the

Bride by drawing all peoples of all times into that one song of love. In the quiet majesty of his painting, Caravaggio has done what the faithful authors of apocryphal works like *Pseudo-Matthew* could never do with all their bombast and wonder: he has let us see and hear the hidden glory of the Incarnate God. May God give us eyes to see and ears to hear.

Gabriel Torretta entered the Order of Preachers in 2008. Before entering the Order, he studied pre-modern Japanese literature at Columbia University.

THE LIVES OF THE BRETHREN

HOPE IN FUTURE GLORY

*An interview with Father Jacob Restrict, O.P.,
by Aquinas Beale, O.P.*

Fr. Jacob, what initially attracted you to the Order of Preachers, and what ultimately led you to stay?

I remember when I wrote the obligatory “autobiography” for my application to the Order that I used the image of Francis Thompson’s “hound of heaven” yapping at my feet. I had been a diocesan seminarian during the Second Vatican Council, though I didn’t continue seminary studies after college. Instead, I threw myself into the world where “the action was.” In the eclectic menageries of New Age spiritualities and the turbulence of the late sixties and seventies, I continued a search for meaning and truth, in the highways, byways, and back alleys of Chicago, Boston, and New York City.

When the “reversion” to Christ as the only Way, Truth, and Life hit me, my first reaction was to join a newfound monastic community in Providence, Rhode Island. With all the fervor of a new community, we strove to live an intense, enclosed, monastic life. None of us were priests, however, and we had the privilege of having Dominican Fathers from Providence College come to our “monastery” for daily Mass. Three of us began summer school and

evening classes at Providence College towards the Master's Degree in Theology, in lieu of the priesthood. I think the seed of my Dominican vocation was planted there by the Dominican Fathers at PC, but I didn't know it at that point. Our small community eventually ended, and three of us entered at the sponsoring Cistercian Abbey in the Province of Quebec. We were apple growers (and pickers), but after four years of Dominican teaching, I came to see that the "orchard" I was longing for was prayer and study, preaching and teaching Christ, instead of "picking apples." I came to see that that "dog" yapping at my feet all these years had a torch in its mouth and belonged to St. Dominic.

I always loved the Order for its blend of monastic and active lives for the sake of preaching for the salvation of souls. It's the "*contemplare et contemplata aliis tradere*" thing: sharing with others the fruit of one's contemplation. I think that's what led me to the Dominicans and keeps me here.

Eventually, you served as a chaplain at a number of the monasteries of cloistered nuns in our Order. What were some of the greatest blessings and challenges for you in that position?

In my early priesthood I served as a hospital chaplain, itinerant preacher, and pastor in one of our parishes. From there I was sent temporarily as chaplain to cloistered nuns. My own love for and dabbling in monastic life made it an easy fit, as well as a great blessing, to share in the nuns' life of prayer, silence, and especially their liturgy. A challenge for any chaplain serving the same "congregation" daily is keeping one's homilies fresh, interesting, inspiring, and meaningful for the group. The advantage is that one can also develop a liturgical or seasonal journey with the nuns through the Scriptures of the day or season. To preach to a congregation of cloistered nuns—who love the Lord, love His Word, love His Church, and who pray that Word throughout the day, every day—is a challenge (and a blessing!).

One particular “blessing” for me (and I hope for the nuns!) was the creation of Sr. Mary Baruch. She was a fictitious nun who had lived in this very monastery I was chaplain for and who often wrote her reflections in a journal, which I would quote from. A visiting sister, who was present at one of these homilies, not knowing Sr. Mary Baruch was made-up, was so moved by what she had written in her journal that after Mass she went out to the monastery cemetery to pray at Sr. Mary Baruch’s grave. Not finding it, she eventually went back in and asked: “Where is Sr. Mary Baruch’s grave?” The nuns got a great laugh over her little misadventure. Sr. Mary Baruch still makes occasional appearances in my homilies!

Our nuns held a very special place in Saint Dominic’s initial vision, praying for the success of the friars’ preaching, as well as providing a viable way for women to devote their lives to God. How do you see their offerings and sacrifices supporting and supplementing the work of the Order today?

I would hope every friar comes to know the nuns and visits them, not just to offer conferences, retreats, or classes, but to be spiritually renewed by their prayer and silence, as well as their joy and living reminder to us all of the “one thing necessary.” They are still as vitally needed today as in St. Dominic’s vision, perhaps even more, as St. Dominic could never have envisioned the life and culture of the 21st century. As many young men seem to be coming to the Order to embrace a radical kind of life, in the face of the vacuous secularism and culture of death that surrounds us, so the enclosed life, if authentically lived, can be a real and radical kind of life for young women who have come to love the Lord and His Mystical Body, the Church. To quote our Carmelite cousin, “*I found my vocation is to be love at the heart of my Mother, the Church*” (St. Therese). Only love can make any sense of the

cloistered life, and in truth, only love makes sense of our life as Friar Preachers—we need the nuns to remind us of that.

More recently, you spent some time as a chaplain to our Dominican Sisters at Hawthorne. How do the needs of a community of active sisters differ from a community of contemplative nuns?

After twelve years of being chaplain to the cloistered nuns, I became chaplain to the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne. While it was a very different setting, the Sisters are also women of deep prayer, who live a really authentic religious life, and whose apostolate is quite unique: caring, totally free of charge, for those dying with cancer. The life at Rosary Hill, their Motherhouse in Hawthorne, New York, is intense, but ever so peaceful. One would think it would be depressing and gloomy to be with the dying; on the contrary, the Home was full of joy, lots of laughter, and, yes, at times, lots of tears, but surrounded by the peace, love, and fervor of the Sisters and a dedicated lay staff. Advent in Rosary Hill's chapel and convent is kept till the day before Christmas, but the Home where the residents live was bursting with Christmas from early December. Every room has its own unique tree, crèche, and decorations. And this is true for all the religious and secular holidays. Being chaplain was a blessing and also a challenge to keep the "Dominican balance" between prayer and apostolate, community and patients, living and dying. Like the cloistered nuns, the Hawthorne Sisters' life was the liturgy lived out in a real Paschal Way for themselves and all who came through their doors.

As you mentioned, you were able to spend a lot of time with terminally ill cancer patients while you were serving the Sisters at Hawthorne. How has that experience affected your life as a Dominican friar?

Avery interesting question, the answer to which I am still sorting out in my thoughts and prayers. For anyone living among the dying day after day, it will have an effect on one. You ask

how it has affected my life as a Dominican. As you know, whenever Dominicans pray the Divine Office in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, we pray first St. Thomas Aquinas' Magnificat antiphon he composed for Corpus Christi: *O Sacred Banquet...the soul is filled with grace and a pledge of future glory is given to us.* As Dominicans we preach much about the life of grace. We teach that grace builds on nature; that the sacraments are all efficacious signs which give grace; that to live the intimate Divine life of the Blessed Trinity is sanctifying grace, and truly heaven on earth, heaven present within our souls. To be present when people pass from this world to eternal life is truly a privileged moment.



JAN DAVIDSZOON DE HEEM — EUCHARIST IN
FRUIT WREATH

I would often think of St. Thomas' antiphon, especially if the dying person had been a faithful Catholic. The *pledge of future glory* is a breath, a heartbeat, away. And for many, of all faiths or no faith, one sees miracles of grace touch people's souls when it all comes down to this moment. I've also realized that all our study, our prayer, our striving to live a life of virtue with others in community, that it all comes down to this moment. Dominicans intuitively know how blessed and precious every human life is. And being with people who were dying or close to death, I realized, in a way no homily or study ever taught, that every life is unique and precious. Every human being has a story, a whole history. Many surround themselves with old photos of when they were young or newly married, or school pictures of their children and grandchildren. Death has a way of putting life into a different focus, and as Dominicans we can put the focus on the ultimate Happiness for Whom, and through Whom, and in Whom we are created. Dominicans preach in many ways: sometimes we use words, and sometimes we hold a hand and smile and assure one who is dying that God loves them. The Sisters preach that loud and clear.

Finally, in his letter to religious on the Year of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis has urged us to "embrace the future with [a] hope...[that is] not based on statistics or accomplishments, but on the one in whom we have put our trust" (3). What hope do you have for yourself, our province, and our Order, as religious who are called to witness to the Gospel in a world that seems to become ever harder to relate to?

This question could fill up a whole edition of *Dominicana*! The men coming to the Order today are children of Vatican II, as well as children of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. We who were children of Pius XII have a treasure of good to pass on, along with the lived experience of the Faith, which will soon be forgotten. And the Order, like the Faith, is entrusted into the minds and hearts and hands of the next generation who will do what the Church has done since the very beginning: preach Christ and Him

Crucified, Risen, and sending His Spirit into our hearts. I see it in the eyes and voices of our young Brothers. I hear it in their newly spoken homilies and am awestruck at what the Lord is doing. I have great hope for the future of the Order and for the preaching of the Gospel which is coming and will continue to come from the Province of St. Joseph.

Y oung Dominican friars are indeed facing a world I didn't know when I was their age. The technological revolution will give a whole new spin to our "preaching," but I have great hope that the Dominicans are up to the task and will use it all for the salvation of souls. The young Brothers love the traditions of the Order, the chant, and especially the solid realism of St. Thomas' theology. Perhaps the future is scarier, certainly more precarious, secular, and pagan than we can even imagine, but our hope is in the Lord. Isn't it something that for nearly eight hundred years Dominicans have entrusted their lives each night to the care of the Mother of God, Our Life, Our Sweetness, and Our Hope? The older we get, the more we realize just how much we are poor banished children of Eve; and after this our exile, it will be the Mother of the Lord, whose scapular we wear, who will show unto us the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus. That was the early friars' prayer and hope and, please God, is mine and ours today.

Aquinas Beale entered the Order of Preachers in 2011. He is a graduate of the University of Virginia, where he received a master's in foreign affairs.

EX NIHILO

ORIGINAL PROSE AND POETRY

HALLOWEEN BE THY NAME

John Dominic Bouck, O.P.

“**O**ur Father, heart in heaven, Halloween be thy name...” Maddy was participating fully in Sunday Mass. In the minivan afterwards, Leah tried to have a teaching moment with her daughter. “Maddy, let’s say the Our Father again.” “Okay,” Maddy said perkily, “Our Father, heart in heaven...” Mom interrupted, “Close! It’s ‘Our Father, who art in heaven.’” “Oh, I see.” Maddy was quiet for a moment. “What kind of art does God do in heaven?” Mom shook her head patiently, “No, Maddy, not that kind of art. It’s an old-fashioned way of saying ‘are.’ It’s like saying, ‘Our Father, you who are in heaven,’ like saying, ‘Hey, Dad, you who are in the driver’s seat.’ Why don’t you try it now?” Maddy was ready to go, “Our Father, who are in heaven, Halloween be thy name.” Leah let out a small sigh, “Maddy girl, it’s not “Halloween”, it’s ‘hallowed.’” Maddy’s face fell a little. “Oh...I love Halloween though. Remember my bat costume? I was a bat-princess.” The car made its way into the driveway. Adam put it in park and got out, “Alright, Maddy, time to get ready for some football.” With the help of Mom, the little angel got out howling and jumped on the couch, just in time for the Lions to play the Packers.

Leah let them go ahead, her maternal smile slowly fading. She made her way into the kitchen. “Hey, honey, would you make that queso dip like last Sunday? That was awesome.” Leah flashed him a sort of smile. “Alright, Adam. Hey, is Calvin Johnson going to have a big day today?” she said, trying her best to appear relevant to her husband’s hobby. “Haha. No, Leah, he’s been out for 6 weeks.” Face falling into a frown, she got to work, putting together the snack. After a few minutes she brought it to her husband of 4 years. “Thanks, Le...dang it! Come on, that was pass interference!”

She slipped out of the living room and made her way to the bedroom. Leah sat on their bed and wept. Thoughts came into her mind of college, where she and Adam had met. They first saw each other at a Theology on Tap event. Sitting with a couple of their friends, Leah and Adam were both inspired by the lofty language of the presenter, speaking on the Theology of the Body of Pope John Paul II. After quite some time discussing the talk, the others got up to leave, but Adam and Leah stayed for a few more hours, delighting in conversation over their drinks.

“I guess I’d better get backhome,” she giggled at her slow speech. “Haha, yeah I guess, it’s a little late.” Adam stood up and got her coat. “Mind if I walk you back?” “Okay...oops.” Leah stumbled a little as she got on her feet, and grabbed Adam’s arm. “I might need some help,” she giggled again. So the two new lovebirds made their way back to her dorm building. She gave him a polite hug and turned red, “Bye!” and she scuttled up the stairs.

After their first date, they began to see more of each other and, soon after graduation, got married. She got a job at a grade school, teaching religion, and he got a job at an engineering firm. About six months after their wedding, she came to him and kissed his cheek. “Hey, what’s going on, Leah?” He noticed the joy in her eyes. “Adam. Guess what?” “Umm...your school kids all have the measles and you get the week off. Am I right?” Leah shook her head, grinning from ear to ear. “Nope. Not even close.” “Umm...

I'm terrible at this game. I give up. What's so good?" She leaned her head into his. "We're pregnant!" "What! oh my..." He grabbed her and they performed a strange post-mating ritual dance. "That's so...oh my..."

The months transpired, and Leah began preparing herself for her role as a mother. She had come from a good family: moderate discipline, good means, reasonable expectations. The only thing that she wished had been stronger was formation in the faith. They had attended Mass most Sundays, and she had gone to Catholic school. But there was a certain conviction and fervor that were missing. She knew that she and her husband were committed to raising their new daughter as a beloved child of her Creator and His Church. Their daughter would be full of faith from the moment she could speak.

Beautiful Madeleine was born, baptized, and loved. Almost all of their college friends came to the baptism party. Leah decided to leave her job at the school after her first year. Adam was making plenty for the family, and she wanted to be there whole-heartedly for her daughter, and for future children.

"Hysterectomy." The doctor wanted to deliver this news in the most comforting way possible. But Leah was screaming at him, "What...what...do I have to do?" Her panic increased as he uttered that awful, mechanical term. He tried to console her, but she was beyond relief. Leah grabbed her purse and ran out of the office. She could barely see, but made it home out of habit. Adam was sitting at the table. "My God! Leah, what happened?" She fell into his arms, wailing and beginning to hyperventilate. "Leah, relax. You're okay. You're okay...relax."

"Ad...Ad...Adam. I can't..." She began to hyperventilate again. "Relax," he whispered into her ear, "I'm here." After more weeping, she eventually informed him of her condition and the action that was necessary. His stomach dropped. But he knew he couldn't let

her get back into a panic. “I love you, Leah.” They sat down on the couch, and fell asleep.

A couple years passed after the surgery, and Leah was able to move on and focus on raising their daughter. They considered adopting, but not yet. Life went on as usual, ups and downs. Her relationship with Adam was alright, but they only really talked about practical things now. Gone were the elevated chats or Bible studies. Most of her time was consumed with Maddy.



THEO VAN RYSSELBERGHE — MADAME THEO VAN RYSSELBERGHE
AND HER DAUGHTER

“Honey, wake up. Honey...” Adam was standing over her, fetal-like on the bed. “Mmmh? Oh, sorry, just taking a little nap I guess.” Maddy scampered into the room, “Mommy, why are you crying? Are you sad?” Leah rubbed her eyes and forced a smile, still groggy. “No, Maddy, don’t be silly. I just was a little tired. Did the Lions win?” “I dunno. Daddy, did they win?” Adam

smiled. “No, it’s just halftime. Maddy, why don’t you run around in the backyard for a few minutes.” As she left, he sat down beside his wife. “Leah, what’s wrong?” She grabbed his hand. “Nothing, really. I just thought it was going to be different. Maddy still can’t say the ‘Our Father’ and I wish you would have helped. I made the queso dip and you don’t even make eye contact with me. And then I slip out and you didn’t even notice till halftime...What happened to what we planned?” She, of course, didn’t say any of this out loud. What she did say was, “Oh, nothing’s the matter. I just was tired is all. I have a bit of a headache.” Adam looked at her and said calmly, “Well, take a rest. I’ll get you some aspirin. I’ll make sure Maddy and I stay out of your way for the afternoon. Then we can order pizza for dinner. How’s that sound?” Leah sighed, turned up the corners of her mouth for the closest thing to a smile she could muster. “That sounds great, dear.” As she said that, he got her the aspirin, and began to watch the second half. Adam turned out the lights.

Leah resumed her rosary. The Holy Family’s example weighed on her. As she said the Hail Mary’s silently, she wondered how her young family could ever measure up to that one. “The second Joyful Mystery, the Visitation.” She paused as she began to recall the account of the family of Elizabeth, Zechariah, and John the Baptist. The barren womb of Elizabeth, the divinely inspired comedy of Zechariah’s encounter with the angel. “Maybe she was glad when he couldn’t talk for all that time,” she teased her husband in her mind. And the kid they raised! He was a wild man, didn’t even go to college.

Thinking back to her surgery, she felt bad about blaming Adam for never bringing it up. “It’s probably just as difficult for him to talk about as it is for me.” And why was she putting so much pressure on herself for being the perfect religion teacher for Maddy? As she thought back to the car ride, maybe she should have been learning herself. “What kind of art does God do in heaven and on earth?”

Leah managed a real smile in the dark, a muted laugh through the tears. Her family probably wasn't going to win the parish family of the year. "Who cares? There's no shame in having an imperfect family." As the beads passed through her fingers, she said to herself, "Well, we can at least be like the cousins of the Holy Family."

John Dominic Bouck entered the Order of Preachers in 2012. He studied at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota and graduated with a degree in philosophy, Catholic studies, and classical languages.

FRIARS' BOOKSHELF

AN EVERYMAN'S GUIDE TO THOMISM

Peter Kreeft, *Practical Theology: Spiritual Direction from Saint Thomas Aquinas*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2014.

Sometimes I will pick up a volume of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* and scroll through the pages at random. I will flip past objection after objection, response after response, each of them nestled within articles within questions within treatises within volumes. Bold-faced queries flash by like **Whether the angels exercise functions of life in the bodies assumed? or Whether the prohibitive precepts relating to the vices opposed to prudence are fittingly propounded in the Old Law?** And then sometimes the thought will occur to me: *This is totally nuts.*

But then I will remember all the wisdom which belies that drab surface of meticulously arranged theological data.

Nonetheless, that initial reaction is indeed many a person's ultimate experience of the *Summa*. The question arises in such skeptics: what does all this have to do with real life?

Peter Kreeft seeks to address this question in his new work *Practical Theology: Spiritual Direction from Saint Thomas Aquinas*. In the introduction, he explains his own experience of reading Thomas' work: "In a lifetime of browsing through Aquinas, my amazement has continually increased not only at his theoretical, philosophical brilliance and sanity but equally at

his personal, practical wisdom, his ‘existential bite’” (xi). Indeed, if someone experiences Aquinas’ masterwork as a detached labyrinth of abstract questions, it is quite likely that they are missing something.

And indeed, Aquinas’ aim in writing the *Summa* was immensely practical. At its core, the *Summa* was and still is a training book for any who aspire to receive and to pass-on the splendor of Christian faith to real, concrete people.



JAN STEEN — SCHOOL TEACHER

In his work, Kreeft takes a multitude of passages from the *Summa*—358, to be exact—and helps his reader to see how the various truths illumine one’s daily experience of the world

and beckon to a holier life. He continually reveals the necessary connection between intellect and will, between thinking and doing. As he explains, "Truth is our ultimate standard for all practice. That is why St. Thomas is so practical" (23).

The passages that Kreeft highlights are a tour across the whole *Summa* landscape—from the immanent life of God through the world of creation, into the virtues and vices, and on through Christ and the sacraments. As with the *Summa*, therefore, to read through *Practical Theology* is to embark on a journey across the wide world of the Christian life.

On this journey, you have two guides: one who speaks in a wise, old, and lofty voice, and a second who sounds a good deal more ordinary and lively and who serves as something of a translator.

The first one (Aquinas) says things like, "Goodness is rightly divided into the virtuous, the useful, and the pleasant." And the second one (Kreeft) will later comment, "So if a thing is not virtuous, useful, or pleasant, it's not really good...If the answer to all three questions is no, then dump it! A house without a garbage can becomes cluttered and smelly" (11). Or, the first will say, "All created perfections are in God. Hence He is spoken of as universally perfect, because He lacks not any excellence which may be found in creatures." And again, the second will later add, "Every finite perfection we love and seek in the creation is to be found in an infinitely perfect form in God. What are we seeking in human love, in nature, in creativity, in thought? It's desirable only because it's a little like God" (8-9).

In his introduction, Kreeft compares this work to *midrash*, the practice of Jewish homiletic expoundings upon the Law, wherein one applies an abstruse subject to daily life. And that is indeed what *Practical Theology* is like. Time and again, Kreeft picks up a difficult theological topic and sums it up in a compact sentence. Primacy of grace in a free creature? Basically, "Grace does not turn off, but turns on, nature, and therefore our nature, and

therefore our souls, and therefore our souls' wills, and therefore their freedom" (43). Essence/existence distinction? In short, "The 'essence' of a thing is its nature, *what* it is; its existence is *whether* it is. Unicorns have an essence but no existence; horses have both; square circles have neither" (7).

My final note goes without saying, but I cannot help but mention it anyway: Kreeft, while not himself a Dominican, is nevertheless living the Dominican dream. A Dominican lives to receive the wisdom of the Faith and to speak it to others in such a way that they can receive it. In *Practical Theology*, Kreeft is doing exactly that—and he does so by way of a treasure of the Dominican tradition, no less. This work is, therefore, both an invitation to Christians to be good Christians and to Dominicans to be good Dominicans.

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LOVE THY FRIEND AS THYSELF

Anthony T. Flood, *The Root of Friendship: Self-Love and Self-Governance in Aquinas*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014.

Whom should one love more: God, one's neighbor, or oneself? When Jesus is asked which commandment is the greatest, he responds, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37). St. Thomas Aquinas explains that God is most deserving of love, because He is the supreme source of happiness for creatures (*Summa Theologiae* II-II q. 26, a. 3). He is infinite goodness and, therefore, infinitely lovable.

But what about one's neighbor? The Christian emphasis on love of neighbor might suggest that one's neighbor ought to be preferred to oneself. Having identified "the greatest and the first commandment," Jesus continues, "And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:39). Thomas notes that the phrase "as yourself" seems to imply that love for oneself is the model of love for another. And since "the model exceeds the copy," he concludes somewhat surprisingly, "out of charity, a man ought to love himself more than his neighbor" (*ST* II-II q. 26, a. 4). Elsewhere, Thomas follows Aristotle and the book of Sirach in describing a friend as "another self" (*Nicomachean Ethics* b. IX, ch. 4; Sir 6:11). The phrase indicates a high estimate of friendship, but again self-love is presupposed as a kind of measure.

The fundamental role of self-love in the anthropology of St. Thomas is the topic of a new scholarly book by Anthony T. Flood, *The Root of Friendship: Self-Love and Self-Governance in Aquinas*. Influenced by the philosophy of personalism, Flood argues that Thomas' theory of self-love can contribute to contemporary

discussions of typically modern themes in philosophy, particularly, self-experience and personal autonomy or self-governance.

In Flood's reading of Aquinas, "self-love *constitutes* the interior, heart, or primal self-experience of the person," and "all other conscious experiences depend on the love-based self-relation" (17–18). To better understand Flood's meaning, consider some fundamental points of Thomistic ethics. Human nature inclines toward certain basic goods—self-preservation, procreation, to know the truth especially about God, and to live in society—and basic moral awareness apprehends these goods as things to be pursued, that is, as things that are good for the human being, perfective of the self. The perception of such goods as desirable presupposes a kind of self-concern—a fundamental wish that the self reach its goal, true happiness.

This view of ethics, Flood argues, is distinct from a theistic account in which moral deliberation is reduced to obedience and the goal of action is restricted to subsequent reward. The human person is not simply enslaved to divine power. For Thomas, the human person is properly autonomous because human reason perceives good things as such (not merely as tied to reward). As Flood points out, through the perception of the moral law, human reason participates in the eternal law, and through good action the human person participates in divine providence by providing for himself and for others. The human agent, moreover, maintains and increases his autonomy by consistently acting well. Repeated right action engenders the virtues which, goods themselves, enable the person better to know what is good and obtain it.

According to Flood, as virtue and happiness increase, self-love develops into self-friendship. And as self-friendship increases, so does the capacity for friendship with others, since self-love is the model for love of others. The fact that self-love is the exemplar of friendship, however, does not prevent Thomas from applying the properties of friendship to love for oneself. Again following



HERMANN KERN — GOOD FRIENDS

Aristotle, Thomas lists five ways in which the virtuous man is a friend to himself:

[Good people] love themselves, as to the inward man, because (1) they wish the preservation thereof in its integrity, (2) they desire good things for him, namely spiritual goods, indeed (3) they do their best to obtain them, and (4) they take pleasure in entering into their own hearts, because they find there good thoughts in the present, the memory of past good and the hope of future good, all of which are sources of pleasure. Likewise (5) they experience no clashing of wills, since their whole soul tends to one thing. (ST II-II q. 25, a. 7)

Flood's survey of Thomistic texts on self-love is surprisingly large and betrays the range of Aquinas' sources and the sophistication of his synthesis. Plato, Aristotle, the Psalms, St. Paul,

St. Augustine, Boethius, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Peter Lombard all play a role. Since, moreover, the topic of human subjectivity is at the intersection of ethics and metaphysics, Flood is able to give a sense of the depth of Aquinas' theory of the human person. For example, Thomas begins one of his arguments with the highly metaphysical principle "to be one is better than to be united" (*ST* I q. 60, a. 3, ad 2).

Flood's attempt to bring Thomas' theories to bear on contemporary debates is a helpful guide for students of Aquinas and shows the fecundity of his thought. For Flood, Thomas avoids a common criticism of Kantian accounts, viz., that moral action precludes authenticity and wholeheartedness. Self-love, by way of the virtues, unites the different levels of desire in the person and directs the agent to the good of the whole person. Flood also argues that Thomas avoids the pitfalls of an ethics that depends on an exaggerated notion of autonomy, since for Thomas the virtue of prudence includes the virtue of docility, and since the moral life comes under the influence of grace.

One obscurity in Flood's account is the role of the intellect in self-love. Flood claims that for Aquinas self-love constitutes subjectivity or self-consciousness. But love is an act of the appetite, sensitive or intellectual, and not of the intellect itself. This is a point for clarification especially since Aquinas is often taken to be an intellectualist rather than a voluntarist.

Ultimately, Flood offers a dense though succinct analysis of Thomas' teaching on self-love as the ground for true friendship.

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MARY: MOTHER OF GOD OR TYPE OF THE CHURCH?

Aidan Nichols, *There is No Rose: Mariology of the Catholic Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015.

There is no rose of such virtue/ As is the Rose that bare Jesu

It is from these verses that Fr. Aidan Nichols, O.P., takes the name of his new book *There Is No Rose: The Mariology of the Catholic Church*. The book, he tells us, aims “to contribute to the revival of a more full-blooded body of Marian teaching,” following especially the very Marian pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II (x). The context of the book is Mariology following the twentieth-century *ressourcement* movement and the dogmatic treatment of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a type of the Church in the Second Vatican Council’s dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*.

Attempting to write a theological account of Mary today involves standing at the intersection of several strong currents: questions of theological method (including the *ressourcement* emphasis on Scriptural exegesis and return to Patristic sources), ecumenical studies, liturgical studies, pious devotion, and debates about the interpretation of the Second Vatican Council. Aidan Nichols is well situated to articulate an overview of Mariology given his extensive treatment of many of these subjects in his book *The Shape of Catholic Theology*, his knowledge of and sympathy with *la nouvelle theologie*, his treatment of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange in *Reason with Piety*, and his general commitment to doing Catholic theology within a “hermeneutic of continuity,” which in this case requires a synthesis of what may seem to be very disparate elements.



STEFAN LOCHNER — MADONNA OF THE ROSE BOWER

One model of Mariology, which came to prominence in the mid-twentieth century—and which some consider enshrined in *Lumen Gentium*—treats Mary primarily as a type of the Church. Another, however, treats Mary in her relation to Jesus Christ as the Mother of God. Nichols judges decisively that “early modern Mariology was...fundamentally correct. The divine motherhood is primary and determinative, and the emphasis on it is also, so attention to the sources of revelation would suggest, fully

traditional” (25). By this, he refers to Mariology as begun by St. Cyril of Alexandria and the Council of Ephesus, which declared Mary the *Theotokos*, the Mother of God, or literally, the God-bearer.

This form of Mariology was further articulated by St. Thomas Aquinas, who was able to show how, by virtue of her divine maternity, Mary exceeds all the saints. “Thomas’s new approach entails that Mary belongs not only to the order of grace...In the scheme put forward in the *Summa theologiae* she belongs to a higher order than that of grace, she belongs to the divinely hypostatic order, the order of the communion of the Trinitarian persons” (41). And Nichols notes, “This affirmation will be heavy with consequences for the Mariological future. It places Mary in a different order, or as we would say demotically, a different ‘ballgame,’ from the other saints” (41).

Nichols’ challenge, then, is to synthesize the positive insights of the ecclesio-typical approach to Mariology that have become prominent since the mid-twentieth century. He makes clear his interpretation of the Second Vatican Council on the Blessed Virgin Mary—namely, that it does not propose the image of Mary as a type of the Church to be the fundamental Marian doctrine. He supports this argument by situating it within the trajectory of the Marian documents which come after the Council. Besides various papal documents, he also notes the importance of the *Collectio Missarum de Beata Maria Virgine* (1986), the collection of special votive Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which (as he argues) evinces very high doctrine on subjects like Mary as co-redemptrix.

He begins with Scriptural exegesis in the first chapter. His treatment is reminiscent of Pope Benedict XVI’s work in *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, perhaps due to dependence on similar sources, like René Laurentin and Ignace de La Potterie.

After this treatment, he spends several chapters on particular Mariological doctrines. Once Nichols covers the divine maternity in the second chapter (already discussed above), he continues on

to the Immaculate Conception. The chief problem in this doctrine is figuring out how Mary could both be immaculately conceived and subject to Christ's salvific action. He highlights the Franciscan tradition which, anticipated in William of Ware and fulfilled in John Duns Scotus, offered the careful distinction between the "preservative and reparatory application of Christ's merits" (59). He also highlights the Thomistic distinction begun in Cardinal Cajetan which spoke of Mary's indebtedness to being inserted into the order of grace, which further helps to explain Mary's dependence on Christ's salvific action.

Nichols looks carefully at the Patristic tradition in his treatment of Mary as co-redemptrix. He roots his treatment especially in the thought of St. Irenaeus, who portrays Mary as the second Eve. "The parallelism between Eve and Mary which this doctrine posits runs as follows: by investigating the role of Eve at our creation and fall we can work out the role of Mary at our recreation and rehabilitation" (72). He helps to expand this through a treatment of the medievals, who see Mary's work as one of uniting herself to Christ's passion. For example, Arnold of Bonneval developed the theology of Mary's co-offering of Christ on the Cross and declared that she "was co-crucified by love" (76). Pseudo-Albert calls Mary the "*adiutrix Redemptoris*," and his *Mariale* "understands Mary's compassion...as her cooperation in Christ's redeeming intention" (76). Through these examples, Nichols argues strongly that this doctrine of Mary as co-redemptrix is both fitting and necessary.

Differing consciously from some more "austerely-minded theologians" (i.e., neo-Scholastics like Garrigou-Lagrange), Nichols wishes to put more weight on the Patristic evidence of the *Transitus* literature about Mary's Assumption. This literature adds real richness to the investigation of the doctrine of the Assumption. But, by differing from such neo-Scholastics, it also raises an implicit methodological question about the value of this type of source, which I would have liked to have seen treated explicitly.

Nichols draws back from the strongest affirmations of Marian piety in his treatment of Mary as the mediatrix of graces. Nichols explicitly drops the “of all” [graces] in the title, because he thinks a strong notion of Mary as a physical instrumental cause would encroach on the Incarnate Word’s prerogatives, especially in the area of sacramental grace. Instead, he holds that Mary is a cause of the distribution of graces on the moral order—by her petition alone, and not by direct action.

One of the important concerns of the Second Vatican Council on Mary was the ecumenical import of the definition of Marian doctrine. Nichols points out, of course, that this question is at its strongest amongst Eastern Christians, for whom downplaying Mariological doctrine in the face of Protestantism might seem a retreat from the faith. Throughout the book, Nichols tries to include Eastern sources, not least of which—as mentioned above—in his treatment of Mary as the co-redemptrix and as assumed into heaven. At the end, Nichols offers an exposition of Eastern Orthodox theology and art with respect to Mary. Since he has already completed his investigations, he can point more easily towards areas of concurrence between Eastern and Western doctrines, despite different modes of expression.

Overall, Nichols’ book is quite successful in showing the need to ground Mariology primarily in Mary’s divine motherhood, while also showing the importance of synthesizing the key Scriptural and Patristic evidence about Mary. His short book is accessible and digestible enough for a beginner and, yet, offers enough ideas and citations to be interesting to someone with more extensive interest in Mariology.

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THE SAINT IS NOT HIS OWN

Laura Ackerman Smoller, *The Saint and the Chopped-Up Baby: The Cult of Vincent Ferrer in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.

The Saint is not his own. And neither is the story of a saint possessed solely by his country, his order, or even the Church. *The Saint and the Chopped-Up Baby* details the development and growth of the cult of the Dominican friar St. Vincent Ferrer, following his death in the early fifteenth century. While the title suggests a lively tale of piously held beliefs regarding the “Angel of the Apocalypse,” this work by Laura Ackerman Smoller proves to be an engaging, strictly factual account of how the *traditio* of St. Vincent Ferrer began to take shape. Instead of the life of the saint, *The Saint and the Chopped-Up Baby* tells the development of how his life came to be viewed and used in the generations after his death.

A controversial figure in his day, St. Vincent Ferrer preached the Gospel for the salvation of souls at a contentious period in history. A vocal defender of the Avignon Papacy during the Western Schism, he sought to bring support to his close friend and confessee (the antipope) Benedict XIII. A Spaniard by birth, St. Vincent entered the Order of Preachers around the age of eighteen. Later, he became a famed master of *sacra doctrina* in his own right. However, after many years of teaching and service, he left everything to follow a call from the Lord to preach repentance. Tasked with the mission to preach throughout Europe, he spent the last twenty-one years of his life at the head of a traveling band of preachers, proclaiming the coming Judgment. He died in 1419.



GIOVANNI BELLINI — POLYPTYCH OF SAINT VINCENT FERRER

After recounting basic biographical information about St. Vincent Ferrer, Smoller details the lengthy canonization inquiries and processes, ultimately culminating in his canonization in 1455. Late medieval canonization inquiries themselves were subject to strict liturgical customs and methods, and the author navigates them well. While the narration at times becomes bogged-down in excess description, the picture given is nonetheless riveting. The accounts of his canonization tell of an impressive ceremony (with at least four hundred Dominican friars in procession) for the celebration of St. Vincent being raised to the Church's altars.

Subsequent to his canonization, several biographies of the saint were written, and the story of his life began to take on a more definite shape. Each work emphasized different aspects that would have had special meaning for the intended audience. Eager to overlook both his association with the Avignon popes and his predictions about the impending apocalypse, the saint's biographers focused on his intercessory power in healing those affected by the plague, his preaching of repentance, his work for the end of the Schism, and other more fantastic tales of miraculous deeds. One such story, the tale of the chopped-up baby from which this book takes its title, grew to have special importance. The legend of St. Vincent miraculously reconnecting and resurrecting a quartered child, either through his intercession or his direct aid, may seem

like little more than a fantastic tale. However, while viewing them somewhat humorously, Smoller does point out that these sorts of legends have a purpose; they came to be seen as an allegory for the reunification of the Church as well as a story rich with Eucharistic imagery.

Smoller argues that often the lives of the saints tell us more about the culture and priorities of the authors than about the saints themselves. If, as Aristotle argues, history is not a science but rather an art, the twelve authors who composed lives of St. Vincent Ferrer were artists who endeavored not to be Realists but rather Impressionists. While the canonization inquests were often tedious and meticulously factual affairs, the subsequent written lives tended to go in different directions, showing the big picture but also bringing into relief certain pious aspects of the saint. Whether they were to emphasize the observant strand seen in St. Vincent's appreciation for strict adherence to the Constitutions of the Order of Preachers, or the legitimacy of the Breton royal family, lives of St. Vincent Ferrer were written as catechetical, polemical, and exhortative works intended for specific readers in specific places.

So, whose saint is St. Vincent Ferrer? Is he the hero of Breton, the Exemplar Dominican, the figure of Church unity, the Spanish ideal, or even the popular saint of the New World? In the end, a saint is a saint for the Church, not for himself or herself. St. Vincent Ferrer lived for the love of God. However, as the life of his afterlife convincingly shows, the saint takes on new meaning for the people inspired by his example. The Dominican, the priest, the saint, is not his own man. We appropriate the lives of great saints in order to find powerful intercessors and paradigms for the life of grace. In illustration of this point, Smoller concludes with a personal reflection on a visit to the Dominican Church of St. Vincent Ferrer in New York City, reminding us that the saint continues to serve the Church in the afterlife, even if some of the stories that have

edified us have little in common with actual events in the life of the saint.

Constantius Sanders entered the Order of Preachers in 2013. He is a graduate of Boston College, where he studied mathematics and philosophy.

CLOISTER CHRONICLE

COMMUNITY

On March 14, in the Crypt Church of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, eleven brothers were ordained to the diaconate by the Most Reverend Roger Foys, Bishop of Covington, Kentucky. These brothers are Br. Clement Dickie, Br. John Baptist Hoang, Br. Dominic Mary Verner, Br. Raymund Snyder, Br. Joseph-Anthony Kress, Br. Michael Mary Weibley, Br. Patrick Mary Briscoe, Br. Louis Bertrand Mary Lemoine, Br. John Sica, Br. Gregory Maria Pine, and Br. Athanasius Murphy.



PLEASE PRAY FOR OUR NEWLY ORDAINED DEACONS

The Dominican Province of Saint Joseph joyfully announces the ordination of Br. Thomas More Garrett, Br. John Maria Devaney, Br. Boniface Endorf, Br. Gabriel Joseph Torretta, Br. Innocent Vincent Smith, Br. Charles Shonk, Br. Vincent Ferrer John Bagan, and Br. Philip Neri Jordan Reese to the priesthood of

Jesus Christ by the Most Reverend Charles John Brown, Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, on May 22, 2015, at Saint Dominic Church in Washington, DC

PREACHING

On Tuesday, January 27, the friars at the Dominican House of Studies joined The Catholic University of America for the annual Saint Thomas Aquinas Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. The celebrant and homilist for the Mass was the Very Reverend Kenneth Letoile, O.P., Prior Provincial of the Dominican Province of Saint Joseph.

In the holy season of Lent, the student brothers preached a series of conferences at the Dominican House of Studies and Saint Dominic's Parish in Washington, DC, and at Saint Thomas Aquinas University Parish in Charlottesville, Virginia. The conferences, entitled *Made Perfect through Suffering: The Cross and the Consecrated Life*, were preached by Br. Timothy Danaher, Br. Irenaeus Dunlevy, Br. Thomas Martin Miller, and Br. Edmund McCullough. Recordings of the conferences are available on the *Dominicana* website.

During the spring recess, student brothers traveled to the campus ministries of Dartmouth College and New York University, where they engaged in a variety of Lenten preaching engagements and pastoral activities.

On April 5, Easter Monday, *Dominicana* launched its newly designed website. The new website for the Journal features daily reflections written by the student brothers, as well as occasional audio recordings of conferences given at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC.



SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS MASS AT
THE BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION