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ARGUMENT

*As the family goes, so goes the nation, and
so goes the whole world in which we live.*

- Pope St. John Paul II

What could one find, at a root level, that is more influential than the family? As the ground from which every human life springs, the family contributes to the larger currents of a society in a powerful and irreplaceable way. In light of this, it is important for us to reflect more closely upon the realm and calling of this essential unit of human community, a need underscored by the two recent Synods on the Family.

In the apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope St. John Paul II identified four general tasks for the family: forming a community of persons, serving life, participating in the development of society, and sharing in the life and mission of the Church (*Familiaris Consortio*, 17). These tasks delineate the principal modes by which the family can express God's truth and love to the world and thereby renew the world by letting God work through it. This issue of *Dominicana* seeks to further the development of a richer Christian understanding of these tasks.

Br. Joseph Hagan meditates upon the virtues by which a man may become a saint himself and in turn sanctify his own family. Conversely, Br. Henry Stephan's essay on the fiction of Wendell Berry reveals the way in which a community shapes individuals. Br. Simon Teller offers a reflection on the suffering distinct to motherhood and the opportunities of grace that occur therein, and Br. Damian Day draws attention to the need for an education in virtue, which parents can offer in a privileged way to their children. Bros. Paul Clarke and Ephrem Reese grapple with the ideological forces at work in the film industry by discussing the archetypal role of the female heroine, while Br. Anthony VanBerkum examines the rhetorical impact of violence

in film more generally. Br. Hyacinth Grubb shares the fruit of his contemplation on the story of the family of Maccabean martyrs, and Br. Justin Bolger speaks to theologian Matthew Levering about the interplay of faith, family, and the world.

Additional offerings include a powerful biography of our Dominican brother Fr. Thomas Heath by Br. Barnabas McHenry, Br. Daniel Traceski's translation of a work by St. Albert the Great, another Dominican brother, new fiction from Br. John Thomas Fisher, and reviews of recent works in theology, history, and fiction.

It is our hope that these pieces contribute in some small way to a better understanding of and appreciation for the family and its calling to offer the world a representation of the love and truth found ultimately in God alone.

Br. Jonah Teller, O.P.
Editor

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ESSAYS

IMAGES OF MATERNAL SUFFERING

Simon Teller, O.P.

Love makes us vulnerable. It roots our happiness in the life of another, bringing us outside of ourselves and placing all our hopes and joys in those whom we love. The bond of love makes two become one: lovers rejoice in each other's presence, sharing each other's joys, each one living, as it were, through the life of the other. But because of this shared life, love also opens our hearts to new possibilities of suffering: fearing the pain that the loved one may experience, agonizing in the other's affliction, and grieving that one's absence. A mother's heart is especially vulnerable to this kind of suffering, for with every birth comes the potential for love and for loss.

We can see this vulnerability play out in the lives of two different mothers: Kristin, the heroine of Sigrid Undset's *Kristin Lavransdatter*, and Sarah, the wife of Abraham (as depicted by an anonymous Syriac poet). Kristin experiences her intense love for her sons as a death sentence. The potential suffering and loss of her children constantly plagues her soul, casting her into unbearable anguish, and she fears that she would not be able to survive such a loss. Sarah, on the other hand, is somehow able to endure what seems to be the death of her only beloved son, Isaac. The difference

between the two is that Kristin taints her love with self-centered desires of possession and pride, while Sarah faithfully surrenders her own motherly love to God's loving providence. Sarah's love is the only kind of love that can bear the trials of motherhood. Trusting in God's love in all things, Sarah foreshadows Mary, the Mother of God, who shines as an example for all sorrowful mothers.

KRISTIN: EVERY MOTHER'S FEAR

Kristin is haunted by a recurring dream that captures both her deep longing for her children and her greatest fear: that she will be unable to protect them from the evils of the world.

She saw a meadow with flowers, a steep hill deep inside a pine forest, dark and dense... Halfway up the slope, standing deep in the avalanche of alpine catchflies and globeflowers and the pale green clouds of angelica, she saw her child... (Undset, 853)

As dream-Kristin sits and watches her son playing in the flowers, her heart feels both an aching sweetness at the loveliness of her child and a clutch of dull anguish, some premonition of an impending evil. Then, it happens.

...she sees emerging from the darkness at the edge of the woods a furry bulk that is alive. It moves soundlessly, its tiny, vicious eyes smouldering. The bear reaches the top of the meadow and stands there, its head and shoulders swaying, as it considers the slope. Then it leaps. Kristin had never seen a bear alive, but she knew bears didn't leap that way. This is not a real bear. It runs like a cat; at the same moment it turns gray, and like a giant light-colored cat it flies with long, soft strides down the hill. (Undset, 853)

The mother now is thrown into a deathly fright, unable to reach the child to protect him, unable to speak or shout a word of warning. In her helplessness, she must simply watch the terror that unfolds.

Then the boy notices that *something* is there; he turns halfway and looks over his shoulder. With a horrifying, low-pitched cry of terror he tries to run downhill, lifting his legs high in the tall grass the way children do. And his mother hears the tiny crack of sap-filled stalks breaking as he runs through the profusion of blossoms. Now he stumbles over something in the grass, falls headlong, and in the next instant the beast is upon him with its back and its head lowered between its front paws. Then she wakes up. (Undset, 853)

For hours, Kristin would lie awake, trying to reassure herself, cradling her youngest child between her arms, practically crushing him in the embrace. She would tell herself that if it had been real she could have done this or that, *anything*, to scare of the beast.

But just when she had convinced herself in this manner to calm down, it would seize hold of her once again: the unbearable anguish of her dream as she stood powerless and watched her little son's pitiful, hopeless flight from the strong, ruthlessly swift, and hideous beast. Her blood felt as if it were boiling inside her, foaming so that it made her body swell, and her heart was about to burst, for it couldn't contain such a violent surge of blood. (Undset, 853)

Kristin has a fierce love for her sons. But when faced with her own inability to protect her children, she is overwhelmed by the fear of losing them. Her fear grows into a paralyzing despair as she sees that she is unable to endure such a loss. This despair ravages her soul and imprisons her heart in constant anguish. While Kristin gives all her strength to protecting the wellbeing of

her sons, she is interiorly plagued by “a secret, breathless anguish: If things go badly for them, I won’t be able to bear it.”

Kristin is grieved and perplexed by her memory of her own mother and father, who over the years suffered the tragic death of many of their children. Though this submitted them to intense suffering, they had somehow managed to bear the weight: “They had borne anguish and sorrow over their children, day after day, until their deaths; they had been able to carry this burden, and it was not because they loved their children any less but because they loved with a better kind of love” (Undset, 854). In comparing her parents with herself, Kristin sees that there is a love that can bear sorrow and loss, and a love that cannot.



Félicien Rops — Mater Dolorosa

Kristin is unable to endure the agonies that come with motherhood, for she has the wrong kind of love for her children. There are two aspects to this imperfect love. First, she desires *above all else* to possess and treasure her sons as her own. She has set all the hope and vitality of her heart upon cherishing her children. Second, this love is rooted in pride: she relies on her own strength to provide for the health and happiness of her children, struggling “to protect her sons with wings that were bound by the constraints

of earthly care” (Undset, 853). In other words, Kristin has put all her hope for happiness, and all her trust in attaining that happiness, in the fate and strength of created persons. Her dream terrifies her because it attacks these two aspects of her love: it confronts her with the uncertainty of her sons’ safety, her eventually unavoidable loss of them, and her own inability to save them from evil.

This love is unable to endure the death of the beloved; because of this, its fruition is the death of the lover’s heart. Kristin sees this, and agonizes over the fate she has chosen for herself. She has put her whole heart into the lives of her children, and when her sons are taken from her, her heart will go with them, while somehow leaving her behind. Even while her sons are with her, Kristin is plunged into anguish, for she knows all too well her inability to keep them from being taken from her. Eventually, they will either leave her to live out their own lives in the world, or death will devour them. Since her heart is rooted in no other love but the love of her sons, Kristin sees that she will be unable to bear this inevitable separation. In a moment of reflection, Kristin catches a glimpse of the consequences which her earthly love holds in store for her:

Was this how she would see her struggle end? Had she conceived in her womb a flock of restless fledgling hawks that simply lay in her nest waiting impatiently for the hour when their wings were strong enough to carry them beyond the most distant blue peaks? ... They would take with them bloody threads from the roots of her heart when they flew off, and they wouldn’t even know it. She would be left behind alone, and all the heartstrings, which had once bound her to this old home of hers, she had already sundered. That was how it would end, and she would be neither alive nor dead. (Undset, 854)

SARAH: OUR MOTHER IN FAITH

Sarah has the “better kind of love” that Kristin sees in her parents: the love that is able to suffer the death of the beloved. We see this especially in a Syriac poem that recounts Sarah’s experience of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, her son. In Genesis, Sarah doesn’t appear in this part of the story. However, in the fourth and fifth centuries, some Syriac Christian authors wrote poems that filled in narrative gaps in Scriptures, retelling many of the Biblical stories from points of view that were hidden in the inspired texts (see Sebastian P. Brock, “Creating Women’s Voices: Sarah and Tamar in Some Syriac Narrative Poems.” In *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, 125-42). One of these poems gives an account of the (near) sacrifice of Isaac, but from Sarah’s perspective. Here, Sarah suffers the deep anguish of losing her only son. Unlike Kristin, however, she is able to endure this suffering, not because she loves her son less than Kristin, but because her heart is sustained by her trust in God’s loving providence. In fact, Sarah’s trust not only sustains her in difficulty, but also deepens and elevates her motherly love, moving her to love Isaac in a more powerful and eminent way.

During Abraham’s great trial of faith, God demands that Abraham offer his only-begotten son Isaac as a burnt sacrifice to the Lord. This has the potential to be a great moment of confusion for Abraham, since God had sworn to him many times that he would become the father of a great nation through the descendants of Isaac. But Abraham’s faith shines as he willingly obeys God’s command while still trusting firmly in the Lord’s promise. Abraham’s faith is rewarded: an angel is sent from heaven to prevent him from sacrificing Isaac.

In this poem, Sarah is portrayed as the true hero of the event because her faith is tested not once, as Abraham’s was, but twice. In the first trial, she shows her willingness to entrust her son entirely to God’s care by handing him over to Abraham, knowing full well her husband’s intentions. Then, in the second trial, she

shows that this offering of her son was done unconditionally with a pure and selfless heart.

The poet describes how soon after God calls Abraham to sacrifice his son Sarah finds him sharpening a knife. At this sight, her heart groans, and with dread she approaches her husband:

Why are you sharpening your knife? What do you intend to slaughter with it? This secret today, why have you hidden it from me?

Though Abraham is unwilling to reveal his purpose to her, Sarah perceives his intention, and cries out,

You are drunk with the love of God, who is the God of gods, and if he so bids you concerning the child you will kill him without hesitation.

Despite her anguish, Sarah does not try to convince Abraham to disobey God, but rather begs that she be able to accompany him to the place of sacrifice, so she can be with her only son as he dies.

If you are going to bury him in the ground, I will dig the hole with my own hands, and if you are going to build up stones, I will carry them on my shoulders; the lock of my white hairs in old age will I provide for his bonds.

But even this is denied her; it is not for Sarah to accompany her son in his final hour. Though her heart is tortured, Sarah accepts this, and tearfully embraces both husband and son, uttering in prayer, "Go in peace: may God who gave you to me return you to me in safety." Then, taking Isaac by his right hand, she hands her only son over to Abraham, as if she were entrusting her child to God Himself.

The poem concludes with Sarah's second test. Upon arriving home from the mountain, Abraham at first hides Isaac from Sarah, saying,

My son, please stay back for a little: I will go in and return to your mother, and I will see how she receives me. I will spy out her mind and her thought.

Abraham's purpose in this is to see if Sarah truly offered her son to God, or if she did so merely on the condition that Isaac be preserved from harm. As Abraham enters his home, alone, Sarah rises up to receive him, bringing him a bowl to wash his feet and greeting him with these words:

Welcome, blessed old man, husband who has loved God; welcome, O happy one, who has sacrificed my only child on the pyre; welcome, O slaughterer, who did not spare the body of my only child.

Overwrought with grief, Sarah implores Abraham to relate the whole event:

Did he weep when he was bound, or groan as he died? Was he greatly looking out for me? But I was not there to come to his side. His eyes were wandering over the mountains, but I was not there to deliver him. By the God whom you worship, relate to me the whole affair.

In reply, Abraham gives a cursory description of Isaac's death: there was no groaning, no weeping, but yes, as he died he asked to see his mother. At this, Sarah is thrown into a great lament: if only she could visit the site of her only son's death, to see his ashes, to recover some of his blood, his hair, so that their smell and sight might comfort her in her suffering! But despite her great grief,

Sarah never curses God or Abraham for what has happened to her son, and at last her second trial comes to an end:

As she stood there, her heart mourning, her mind and her thought intent, greatly upset with emotion, her mind dazed as she grieved, the child returned, entering safe and sound. Sarah rose up to receive him, she embraced him and kissed him amid tears, and began to address him as follows: "Welcome, my son, my beloved, welcome, child of my vows; welcome, O dead one come to life!"

KRISTIN AND SARAH: TWO KINDS OF LOVE

Sarah's trials force her to endure the fate that Kristin fears, experiencing in reality the terror of Kristin's dream. However, where Kristin crumples in weakness, Sarah endures with strength, and the source of this strength is her "better kind of love."

Sarah's love is better because it is selfless and rooted in faith, its purity revealed in a time of trial. In her response to God's requests, she shows a heart unstained by the two vices that warp Kristin's love: self-reliant pride and overly-possessive desire. By handing Isaac over to Abraham, Sarah surrenders her power of motherly protection to God's providential hands; and by receiving her husband with love, she unconditionally accepts God's will over her own desires. Sarah's faith transforms and deepens her love for Isaac. By surrendering Isaac to the love of God, Sarah's maternal love receives its strength from God's divine fatherly love. Unlike Kristin, whose love is constrained to the limits of the earth, Sarah loves Isaac with a love that knows no bounds.

Faith is at the heart of Sarah's selfless love. Because she believes in God's love for His people, Sarah is able to surrender everything that she loves. This faith is neither blind nor spontaneous. She does not just generally hope that things will all work out for the best. Rather, her faith is a specific response to the covenantal promise that God gave to her: that she would be the

mother of a great nation through the descendants of Isaac (Gen 17:16). God tests Sarah's trust in this promise by confronting her with a terrible mystery: God Himself demands the death of the boy Isaac. In doing this, God is looking for Sarah to trust in Him unconditionally. He asks Sarah to suffer because He wants her to know the surety and power of His love. He wants her to know that even if all that she loves on earth should be taken from her heart, He would remain there with her. He wants her to know that, in the darkest hour, He will provide for those whom He loves.

By asking for her son, God seems to reduce Sarah again to a barren wife, a mother void of motherhood. It is her trust that enables her to survive what destroys Kristin: even when all created things are taken from her, her heart remains firm in the knowledge of God's love. Sarah's faith does not take away the suffering of losing her son, but it situates her suffering within the providential love of God. Such a trial would have destroyed Kristin, who put her whole heart into her children. However, Sarah is able to endure this crisis because her heart was strengthened by her faith.

Sarah's faith allows her not just to endure suffering, but to receive the reward that God has promised. With a heart purified by her surrender to God's will, Sarah now receives Isaac as one risen from the dead. The Syriac writer seems to apply to Sarah what is said of Abraham, who "considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence he did receive [Isaac] back" (Heb 11:19). From the depths of her suffering, God brings her to a new moment of motherhood, where she sees Isaac not just as her own beloved son, but as the 'child of her vows'—the child of God's loving promise. Though Sarah's *fiat* leads her through great suffering, its fruit is an abundance of life and love.

MARY: OUR LIFE, OUR SWEETNESS, AND OUR HOPE

Sarah's trial of faith foreshadows that of Mary. The Blessed Mother's anguish over her son far exceeds that of both Kristin and Sarah. From the foot of the Cross, she sees the hideous beast

of Kristin's dream devour her little child, and, unlike with Isaac, God sends no angel to put a stop to his death. On Calvary, Mary's heart breaks as she beholds mankind's greatest offense against God and the seeming failure of Christ's salvific mission. For, in this dark moment, God's promise that her son "will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21) seems an impossibility. As her only child hangs on the cross, it is as if Mary's very motherhood is being stripped from her. The amount of pain her heart suffers in union with her son's passion throws her into such an agony "that she would have died of the experience had she not been especially strengthened" (Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Mother of the Saviour: And Our Interior Life*, 193).

Despite this, her faith never wavers: "She sees the hand of God where even the most believing see only darkness and desolation" (Garrigou-Lagrange, 192). Like Sarah, Mary's faith does not relieve her sufferings, but rather allows them be transfigured by grace. For, sharing in the passion of her divine son, she also shares in his fruitfulness as he merits our salvation. With Christ, Mary suffers for the salvation of souls, which makes Calvary a great paradox for our Mother of Sorrows. There, the very pain that she suffers as she loses her only son becomes the pangs of a new birth as God elevates and perfects her motherhood.

Mary gave birth to Jesus without pain: but she brings the faithful forth in the most cruel suffering. "...She can be mother of christians only by giving her Son to death. O agonising fruitfulness! ... It is for [this] purpose that providence has brought her to the foot of the Cross. She is there to immolate her Son that men may have life." (Garrigou-Lagrange, 190-1)

Every mother experiences to some degree the sufferings of Kristin, Sarah, and Mary. There are so many ways in which a mother can experience the loss of a child. But Mary is there for all suffering mothers, showing them a love that "bears all things,

believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:7). When our loved ones are wounded or taken from our sight, Mary teaches us to pray to her son on their behalf, “*intra tua vulnera absconde me*”: in your wounds hide me (from the “*Anima Christi*”). With Jesus, she has suffered for us, so that we might share her faith in his love for us.

Br. Simon Teller entered the Order of Preachers in 2014. He is a graduate of the University of Dallas, where he studied English. Before entering the Order, he spent some time as a busker playing folk music in Asheville, NC, and worked as an oil-field hand in Dickinson, ND.

SAINTLY FATHERS AND MANLY VIRTUES

Joseph Hagan, O.P.

God is our Father. For Christians, this truth is a fundamental one, yet it has fallen on tough times.

I once led a retreat for high school students. The main talk focused on God as our Father. Midway through the retreat, a worried teacher pulled me aside. She was concerned that this discussion of fatherhood and God was problematic. A few students had strained relations with their fathers, she explained, and others suffered something worse. She thought that all this talk of God as Father would leave these students feeling alienated and angry toward God.

What a sad reality! God's fatherhood is a central part of Christ's revelation of God. This teacher's objection shows the need for good earthly fathers as well. A failure in earthly fatherhood can confuse our knowledge of God as our true Father. Conversely, virtuous fathers prepare their children to know and love their true Father, and to be His children forever. Of course, mothers also play a crucial role. They too are an image of God. Ideally, mothers and fathers are best when they work together. Yet each parent plays a distinct role.

What does virtuous fatherhood look like? Here the example of the saints is formative. Saints are our models, and those who were earthly fathers can help those who are fathers now. These saints can show how the grace of God works in our lives. This article focuses on three saintly fathers: St. Joseph, St. Thomas More, and St. Louis Martin. Each of these saints exemplifies virtues important for the modern father, such as humility, a love of truth, and holy detachment. I end with a brief consideration of St. Martin de Porres, to illustrate the connection between fatherhood and the need for mercy.

ST. JOSEPH: THE HUMBLE HEAD OF THE HOLY FAMILY

Among models of Christian fatherhood, St. Joseph is prime. His life exemplifies so many important virtues for married men, as well as for spiritual fathers. Here I would like to focus on his title as the head of the Holy Family, in order to show how Joseph's paternal authority was displayed through selfless service.

The comedian Jim Gaffigan has revealed something telling about how this idea of the father as head of the family has evolved in our culture. In one of his routines Gaffigan juxtaposes his style of fatherhood with how his own father ruled the family. His father was the unquestioned authority, the traditional head of the family. Now, in the 21st century, that's changed. Jim jokes that modern fathers are reduced to being vice president. Their main job is to toe the party line of president-mom, and to fulfill the "ceremonial role of attending pageants and ordering pizza." Gaffigan admits to accepting this limited role, feeling totally inadequate to be the head of the family. Perhaps this feeling of inadequacy is greater than ever.

It would have been easy for St. Joseph to feel entirely inadequate for the title of head of the Holy Family. His wife, Mary, was conceived without sin and is holier than the angels—literally. His son, Jesus, is the Incarnate God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, whose true Father is the unbegotten God. Joseph comes in a distant third. For most men, such inadequacy would be reason enough to get discouraged and just give up.

Joseph does anything but give up. He obeys God promptly, and fulfills his calling. At the angel's command, he takes Mary as his wife, caring for her during her pregnancy and labor. He offers two turtledoves to redeem the Redeemer and gives him the name Jesus. He leads Mary and Jesus to Egypt and back, protecting them from harm. He earns a living for the Holy Family by the sweat of his brow. Joseph was not head of the Holy Family as a domineering authority. Joseph instead showed his headship of the family by service and responsibility.

Elsewhere in the Scriptures we are presented with these two types of authority—the authoritarian and the servant. After the first sin, Adam dominated his wife Eve. The New Adam, Jesus Christ, redeemed man from sin, and He taught His disciples a new type of leadership: to lead as a servant, as the least. Jesus exemplifies this redeemed leadership, from washing His disciples' feet to dying on the Cross. And in Joseph, we see a forerunner of this leadership. Of the Holy Family, he was the least. Of the Holy Family, he was the servant.

Joseph is a patron for all fathers. To those who feel inadequate, Joseph exemplifies the courage to accept one's role and to fulfill it manfully. To those who tend to dominate, Joseph shows a way of leading through service and humility. To all fathers, Joseph shows a way of loving through the gift of self.

ST. THOMAS MORE: MAN OF TRUTH

St. Thomas More was an impressive man. The first half of his biography reads as a string of successes: his flourishing career in law and politics, his commitment to loving and educating his children, and his friendships with some of the greatest minds of his age. We may envy these successes, but More's crowning moment came on July 6, 1535, as an executioner's axe ended his life.

More's example speaks loudly to us today, for his age shares much in common with ours. In both ages, many deviate from their Christian heritage, and some even deviate from natural truths evident to all of good will. They first demand license for their deviation, under the name of liberty or some human right. And having attained this license, they then demand the approval of others for their deviation.

In More's age, King Henry VIII demanded the right to rule the Church in England and to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Henry got what he wanted, but he could not endure the tacit disapproval of More. The king's insecurity and need for

approval is juxtaposed by More's integrity. More chose truth over political correctness. For this choice, More lost his head.

In our age, Christian men face a similar choice between love of truth and compliance with political correctness. Unlike More, we need fear neither king nor executioner. For us, there is the court of public opinion, the mob's witch-hunt, and the subtle blackball. What happens to the gynecologist who refuses to end a life within the womb? What happens to a family member that holds marriage as between one man and one woman, lasting until death? We may keep our heads but lose our promotion, our reputation, and even our friends and family.

To men of today, More's example offers three lessons: integrity formed by a life of virtue, meekness formed by a life of prayer, and hope for all formed by a life of charity.

St. Thomas More witnessed to truth not just with his death, but by his whole life. He was a man of integrity. By pursuing a life of virtue, he walked as a true disciple of Jesus Christ, the Truth Incarnate. Indeed, this virtue strengthened him to persevere until the end, seeking union with Truth.

Secondly, More suffered the king's wrath with meekness. More did not argue with self-righteous or arrogant speech. Rather, he humbly and quietly prayed for king and country. Aware of his own sinfulness, he simply begged God's forgiveness. By this meekness, he endured terrible injustices because he trusted in the justice of the Just One.

Finally, More faced his death with a firm hope in Christ's mercy for himself, and even for those who condemned him. At his trial, More ended his speech by invoking the example of St. Stephen and St. Paul. Paul consented to Stephen's death, but now they are forever friends in heaven. And so, More told the court: "... I verily trust and shall therefore right heartily pray, that though your lordships have now in earth been judges to my condemnation, we may yet hereafter in heaven merrily all meet together to our everlasting salvation." Such hope is forged by a life of charity, a charity capable of loving one's enemies.

ST. LOUIS MARTIN: PRESENCE AND DETACHMENT

Our last example of saintly fathers is St. Louis Martin, the father of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Of his many virtues, let us examine two. On the one hand, he was present to his family in ways both life-giving and intimate. On the other, he exercised a heroic detachment, suffering the loss of loved ones and freely surrendering his beloved daughters to cloistered life.

Many families suffer from an absentee father. Our culture can also glorify the independent male. Movies portray the self-sufficient man as some sort of hero, from *Rambo* to *The Lone Ranger*. Yet this type of hero can instill a false virtue of unholy detachment, to the detriment of the family.

In his *Four Quartets*, T.S. Eliot comments on this dearth of men engaged in meaningful relationships. He writes:

Do not let me hear
Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,
Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,
Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God.
The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless. (ll. 93-98)

The great folly of man has less to do with himself and more to do with others. The great folly is a fear of “belonging to another... or to God.” There is a contrast, in other words, between folly understood as an *isolated* problem (“I’m a fool because I have foolish thoughts”) and folly understood as an *isolating* problem (“I’m a fool because I feared to belong to another”). Against this latter fear, the deeper fear, Eliot offers the wise hope of humility, a humility that recognizes in our very fabric a need to belong to others and to God. In Louis Martin, we see this wisdom.

In his Thérèse’s *Story of a Soul*, Louis appears on almost every page. The word “Papa” appears a hundred twenty-eight times in Manuscript A alone. He is present at the key moments



St. Louis Martin

of Thérèse's life before she enters Carmel. He teaches the child Thérèse about forgiveness. He beseeches the Virgin of the Smile to heal her. He witnesses her Christmas conversion. He supports her decision to enter Carmel. He journeys with her to Rome to beseech the Holy Father. And on Thérèse's entrance day, he takes her to the cloister door and kneels together with her, giving her his blessing.

The story of Thérèse's life is unthinkable without the presence of Louis. His role was vital, and he fulfilled his role thoroughly. And yet, Louis did not hover. He did not impose. His was a life-giving presence.

Even more, Louis matched his life-giving presence with a true, holy detachment. He suffered many losses. Four of his children

died in in childhood or infancy: Helene before turning six years old; Joseph before six months; Jean Baptiste near nine months; and Melanie before nine months. He also lost his wife, Zelig, after nearly twenty years of marriage. And of his five remaining daughters, he freely surrendered them to religious life. Only one remained with him as he declined, but even then, he knew that she awaited his death to enter Carmel. Louis even suffered the very loss of himself, being debilitated by strokes that left him paralyzed and dumb.

Note the shape of his detachment. He didn't actively burn any bridges. He didn't value a false virtue of independence. Rather, his detachment was passive. He remained present until his beloved wife or child was to leave him. For a man who lost so much, we would expect him to be protective of himself. Like Shakespeare's King Lear, he could have demanded that his beloved daughters care for him and sweeten the last years of his life. But Louis gracefully chose obscurity. He never turned his back on relationships, but he let others walk away toward God, when and how God called them. Yet God did not leave him orphaned. Through the cloister grille, God kept the Martin daughters at Louis's bedside in prayer. And Celine, who had not yet entered, attended to her father at his deathbed, invoking God's mercy as Louis breathed his last (see Sir 3:12-14). Louis freely offered all he treasured to God, and humbly received God's gracious return. This is the masculine virtue of holy detachment.

CONCLUSION: A FATHER BEYOND FATHERS

These saints provide us with ideals, not only for fathers but for all Christians. Their example may inspire us to greater virtue, but they may also reveal the failures within us and others. Becoming a father doesn't come with a user's manual. By way of a conclusion, allow me to draw upon one final saint whose life speaks to this relationship between the need for mercy in general and human fatherhood in particular.

At his birth, St. Martin de Porres was unclaimed by his earthly father. His baptismal register reads: “Martin, son of an unknown father.” Later in Martin’s life, his relationship with his father would mend, but his father’s canonization process is not likely.

Martin’s earthly father was a faulty image of the Heavenly Father, yet this placed no roadblock in his son’s spiritual growth. The baptismal register named no earthly father, but baptism itself drew Martin into the Body of Christ, making him a true child of the Heavenly Father. Martin’s life dramatically shows the unfolding of this grace of baptism. From a young age, Martin embraced God as his true Father through a life of prayer amid his chores and responsibilities. Entering the Dominican Order, Martin grew in the spiritual life by leaps and bounds. He became known for excelling in fraternal charity and his care for the poor. He entered into mystical prayer and even worked miracles. These are the fruits of this divine adoption.

Moreover, Martin in turn became a spiritual father to others. For his care of the poor of Lima, Martin was named “the father of the poor.” Dominican novices also turned to him as a spiritual father. Though uneducated, Martin had the grace to remind these novices of learned truths from the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. In his spiritual fatherhood, Martin became an icon of the God the Father.

Martin’s story gives us hope that God the Father is not limited by the failures and shortcomings of earthly fathers. By baptism, Christians are adopted as sons and daughters of God. Earthly fathers still have the great responsibility of imaging the Eternal Father, yet God’s mercy is never outdone by man’s brokenness.

Br. Joseph Martin Hagan graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 2009. He spent the following year trekking around Ireland, serving with N.E.T. Ministries. Then, he returned to Notre Dame’s Echo program and completed an M.A. in theology, while serving in the Diocese of Wilmington, DE. Br. Joseph entered the Order of Preachers in 2012.

AN EDUCATION IN HAPPINESS

Damian Day, O.P.

“I know that happiness isn’t the goal that we pursue.” It was just a passing remark, almost a throwaway line. But in a room full of Dominicans, the comment elicited groans of consternation. What was so shocking about the remark from *Les Innocence*, a French film set in Poland during the winter of 1945, was that the speaker was not some nihilistic atheist or pessimistic workaholic, but a Catholic nun. It was frustrating to see our hyper-secularized society portray the Christian life as one contrary to the pursuit of happiness.

The scene raises a still more distressing thought: how many Christians themselves, especially among the young, do not understand that the goal of Christianity *is* happiness? There is a desperate need to teach society generally, and young people in particular, that the goal we pursue—indeed the very purpose of our lives—is everlasting happiness.

The virtues are aids that help in this endeavor. As a society, however, we no longer have a vocabulary of virtue. The world seems to have forgotten about the virtues and their purpose. And so man’s deepest desire for happiness is constantly frustrated. Without an awareness of the virtues, which are a constitutive element in the pursuit of happiness, we tend to misidentify what our final happiness consists in. Society in turn mis-educates the young, directing them towards vice, not virtue—towards goods and pleasures, not Goodness and joy. But our longing is not satisfied when we try to make finite goods or fleeting pleasures into our ultimate happiness. Parents, Catholic schools, and the Church in general have received the mission to articulate the relationship between virtue and our desire for happiness. It is time to rededicate ourselves to this mission.

THE NEGLECTED PATH OF VIRTUE

A lot of people these days are unhappy. And yet, everyone is searching for happiness, many frantically. Some young people search for it in the party scene or the hook-up culture, while others throw themselves into a cult of experience, trying to fill their lives with adventure and novelty. What has become scarce in our culture are people who are searching for happiness through a life of virtue. Most people do have some idea that they ought to be a good person. But, unfortunately, this perspective has mostly been reduced to a notion that they should not offend others. What is needed, especially in the Church, is a more robust understanding of virtue and clearer preaching concerning its relationship to happiness.

One reason for the current state of affairs is that most people have never been taught that a virtuous life is a happy life. In a society that values and stresses education, we have neglected to teach how to truly live a happy life. Pope Benedict XVI, addressing Catholic educators assembled at the Catholic University of America in 2008, reflected that while “we have sought diligently to engage the intellect of our young, perhaps we have neglected the will” (*Meeting with Catholic Educators*). Without a will strengthened by the virtues, the young, buffeted by the vicissitudes of life and the ideologies of the day, are left without a crucial aid in the search for happiness. It is necessary for Christians to fill to this void, with the confidence that God has revealed the answer to our desire for happiness.

TEACHING VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS

Virtue begins in the home. It is from their parents that children first learn how to act. The Second Vatican Council referred to the family as “the first school of the social virtues” (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 3). Most parents, even if they are not conscious of running a school of virtue, are engaged in teaching their children

some system of right and wrong. When a father tells his son, for instance, not to steal his little sister's toy, he is teaching the virtue of justice. This comes naturally to parents because they love their children and have an intuition that it is best for their children to learn to do what is right. This process is more fruitful, however, if the parents have a clear understanding of what virtue is and why they should teach it. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines virtues as "firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith" (1804). Virtues are what help us to order our lives in light of our final happiness. Parents want their children to be happy. By teaching virtue in both word and deed, parents help their children in the search for happiness.

Catholic education also plays a special role in directing youth to happiness. In a society where morality and virtue are almost completely absent from education, Catholic schools have an especially urgent mission to teach and form youth on the path to happiness. Pope Benedict stressed the need for educators to have "intellectual charity," realizing that their "responsibility to lead the young to truth is nothing less than an act of love" (*Meeting with Catholic Educators*). One who loves desires the happiness of others. Educators are called to form, with love, the young in truth and virtue so that they know how to seek happiness. The very purpose and dignity of education is this fostering of "the true perfection and happiness of those to be educated" (*Meeting with Catholic Educators*). The goal of education, then, is happiness. Education consists in the discovery of our true happiness and the formation of the habits that assist us in reaching that happiness.

In evangelization and in the formation of youth, it is necessary to stress repeatedly that the totally satisfying happiness we all seek is found only in God. Perhaps the reason so many people today are not excited about the idea of heaven is precisely because this has not been emphasized enough. If the conception of heaven in the mind of most people is something like a boring



The Holy Family at Home (Photo: Lawrence Lew, O.P.)

church choir that never ends, it is no wonder many do not see it as worth the effort. This common view is summed up by Billy Joel: “I’d rather laugh with the sinners than cry with the saints / The sinners are much more fun” (“Only the Good Die Young”). Virtue seems to stifle the vitality of human life, leading to eternal boredom or sadness rather than eternal happiness. Sin is more exciting and fulfilling. This mentality marks a brazen rebellion against true happiness, inspired by deep confusion about who man is and what he is made for.

Another source of confusion is found in the misconception that the moral life is nothing but a life of obligations and prohibitions. That it is strictly duty-based. Seen in this way, the moral life is stifling. But properly understood as a search for happiness, the virtuous life becomes much more attractive; it leads us towards what we desire above all else. Living a virtuous life means living a happy life, if imperfectly so. The Christian practice of the virtues opens man to his final happiness and bestows a certain

happiness now, so that “the virtuous man is happy to practice them” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1810). As a man grows in virtue, he grows closer to his final happiness. The practice of the virtues then brings with it a taste of heaven. Dorothy Day loved the quotation attributed to St. Catherine of Siena: “All the way to heaven is heaven.” Striving for virtue, we participate incompletely in the totally satisfying happiness of heaven.

DIRECTED TO HAPPINESS

To the Church has been entrusted the mission of proclaiming clearly and confidently that, far from stifling our human desires, the Christian life can produce total human fulfilment. From all her members, the message must go forth: man has been made for a much deeper happiness, and that happiness is found in the one everlasting and perfect God. Our Christian goal of growing in union with God ends up corresponding to and being nothing other than the fulfilment of the desire that is in every human heart for happiness. The pursuit of holiness is the pursuit of happiness. As the Dominican moral theologian Servais Pinckaers puts it, “Our God does not love unhappiness” (*The Pursuit of Happiness—God’s Way*, 28). God desires that we seek and find happiness. As Christians, we know and proclaim that happiness is indeed the goal that we pursue—contrary to what a film like *Les Innocence* may suggest. God has given us the desire. In Him, it can be fulfilled.

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VIOLENCE TO THE TRUTH

Anthony VanBerkum, O.P.

If you take the news and put it in theaters, you can make big money—or at least this seems to be the thinking behind many blockbusters in recent years. Themes of terrorism and insurgency have become common, for example, and they are often portrayed in film with much of the violence that accompanies them in reality. Yet there is something fundamentally false about this. It goes without saying that Hollywood violence is supposed to be entirely fabricated. Indeed, the rare slip-ups become part of directors' commentaries or lawsuits, generating headlines either way—Harrison Ford's injury while filming *The Force Awakens* is a recent example. This fake violence can nevertheless be extremely gruesome, so much so that some people will decide to avoid purported entertainment precisely because of its graphic content.

There is a real tension here between entertainment and bloodshed. Why are we comfortable being entertained by practically the same images that we sympathetically mourn in the news? The Second Vatican Council took up this question, concluding that

the narration, description or portrayal of moral evil, even through the media of social communication, can indeed serve to bring about a deeper knowledge and study of humanity and, with the aid of appropriately heightened dramatic effects, can reveal and glorify the grand dimensions of truth and goodness. Nevertheless, such presentations ought always to be subject to moral restraint, lest they work to the harm rather than the benefit of souls, particularly when there is question of treating matters which deserve reverent handling or which, given the baneful effect of original sin in men, could quite readily arouse base desires in them. (*Inter Mirifica*, 7)

While there are various ways in which moral evil can be depicted in film, violence is one of the most powerful. The Council makes clear that investigating evil in this way is permissible, but how precisely does a movie “serve to bring about a deeper knowledge and study of humanity” by portraying violence? To function properly, film intended as entertainment must be rooted in two core principles: the true purpose of recreation and the fundamental way in which storytelling works. Then, a movie—or, really, any medium of entertainment—which seeks to address the darker aspects of life can approach the question of the portrayal of violence.

This is not only a question of morality but also of art. When violence crosses a certain threshold, the blood we see onscreen turns into mere colored water on a set, and any seriously-intended effect is lost. Violence is particularly difficult to handle well because it bears on the struggle between good and evil in the depths of the human heart. Our inner self is both very close to us and yet often very unclear to us, so any attempt to penetrate there can easily fall into unreality. Art that falls to excess in its portrayal of violence violates the reality of the human heart and indeed of all of creation, thereby losing its power to speak. Ceasing to be an entertaining story, it instead becomes a sadistic glorification of evil.

RECREATION

In our ever more distracted age, recreation is becoming harder to find. Instead, we often settle for mere distraction, whether just one more level of a video game, checking Facebook or email yet again, or even working while watching a movie—so-called multitasking. True recreation, paradoxically, requires effort. We need the strength of will to put aside both work and distractions to truly rest in mind and body.

Saint Thomas Aquinas, the timeless Dominican theologian, illustrates this with a story. Someone came to visit Saint John the

Evangelist and his disciples, only to discover that they were not praying or studying but engaging in an archery contest—mere play! When the visitor voiced his surprise at this, Saint John asked one of his disciples to shoot an arrow a couple times. He then asked whether this could be done indefinitely, to which the archer answered that it could not, for eventually the bow would break. By analogy, Saint John concludes, so would the mind break if it were never allowed to rest—and, clearly, also the body, although we can see this even without a story.

However, rest is not achieved in inactivity. If you have ever been cooped up for several days while sick, you know that after our need for sleep has been met, sitting still or lying in bed is no longer restful. Even in heaven, our hopeful state of final rest, we shall be joyfully engaged in an eternal exploration of the boundless activity of God.

Instead, rest comes from achieving the proper balance in action. We know from experience that desk work needs to be balanced with exercise, and similarly after a day of hard manual labor resting with a good book is greatly satisfying. Balance is necessary even within the bodily and mental realms. A body in which only the arms or legs are exercised is unbalanced, and likewise, while we respect focus, someone who is literally single-minded is difficult to be around.

True recreation allows us to find rest precisely by providing a balanced use of mind and body. Different people recreate in different ways, of course. Sports are a common and excellent form of bodily recreation, but simply taking a walk can serve just as well. For the mind, it is often helpful to relax by reading a well-written story, whether fiction or non-fiction. Many games, both physical and digital, keep one's mind active by presenting puzzles or decisions that differ significantly from the day-to-day stress of schedules and time management.

A well-constructed film can also be a good form of mental recreation. As we watch a movie, we are invited to enter into a world that springs from another's imagination, and accepting

this invitation requires a certain amount of mental work. This is a learned process, but once we have attained it we can often slide into a story without conscious effort. We then lose ourselves in the activity of keeping track of the film's hints about the world it inhabits, the actions and motivations of various characters, and the progression of the plot. Eventually, we are able to turn our attention back to the world in which we live and see it in a new light.

All of this is precisely the kind of unusual mental work that can provide us a recreational balance. This can be done poorly, however. Most clearly, content which incites us to sin is not recreational—sin is never balanced. Artistic failures, which range from tacky special effects to poor acting, can break the immersive effect of a movie and thrust us back into daily life, ending the attempt at recreation. When done well, however, film can offer us the experience of briefly entering someone else's world. We then return to our own lives truly rested and perhaps with a renewed perspective on reality.

STORYTELLING

A good movie must be a good story, but telling a story well cannot be done without thinking. J.R.R. Tolkien was a master both of telling stories and of thinking about them. His essay, "On Fairy Stories," provides a deeply insightful analysis of storytelling. His argument centers around the process of subcreating a secondary world, the world in which the story takes place (he uses the language of "subcreation" to reserve creation to God). While this is most strongly applicable to the genre of fantasy, no work of fiction really takes place within our own world, by the simple fact that fictional stories have not actually happened.

Tolkien argues that the process of subcreating a secondary world takes place by borrowing concepts from the primary world and recombining them in unexpected and interesting ways. For example, a fictional world might have a green sun. Now, we have

never seen a green sun, and yet we can easily picture one when asked or recognize one when shown it. How does this work? We're able to take the concept of "green," which we have learned perhaps from grass or a lime, and combine it with the concept of "sun," producing a green sun. Depending on the demands of the story, this can be done to greater or lesser degree, producing both centaurs and an angry queen—regardless of centaurs' not existing or whether we have actually met an angry queen in our primary world.

The fact that the very language of stories is derived from the real world is precisely why we are able to comprehend and believe them, in the sense proper to story. This closeness to reality extends beyond language. We also expect stories, even the most fantastic ones, to conform to the deepest aspects of reality as we know it. While the color of the sun is tightly connected to a whole interplay of physical laws, we are able to accept a green sun quite easily because we know that color is not really key to reality. Human nature, on the other hand, is, and so having unrealistic characters is one of the worst ways in which a story can fail.

This closeness to reality then allows storytelling to fulfill its recreational purpose. A story that remains aware of its fundamental dependence on reality is able to draw us in in such a way that our minds rest in the story. However, this rest is not passive, for the world of the story is not *entirely* familiar and therefore invites us to consider it carefully. A skillful story-teller is able to use this effect to introduce us to a new way of looking at the primary world. Stories can make the small great and the great small, or anything in between, drawing our attention to aspects of life that we might otherwise miss. For example, the talking animals of Narnia draw our attention both to unexpected sources of human wisdom and to the great dignity of nature, also a creature of God. This sort of investigation of reality by means of parallels in the world of story is one of the highest uses to which storytelling can be put, and it is also key to the truly recreational aspect of a story.

VIOLENCE IN STORIES

Violence in film seems to function on three levels. On perhaps the lowest level, a kind of slapstick violence, in limited quantities, can serve a recreational purpose. In real life, all too often the good guys lose to the bad, and it is pleasurable and balanced to occasionally see the opposite. *The Avengers* and *Hogan's Heroes* are good examples of this.

The second level is the least interesting. Here, violence simply serves the continuation of the story. It is often either brief or set aside in its own, heavily choreographed moment. Lighter war movies, such as *Kelly's Heroes*, often fall into this category, although of course any given film can vary between levels. *The Matrix* and *Star Wars* often tend in this direction as well, with carefully scripted action sequences that are more dance than violence. This sort of violence invites us to admire the actors' (or effects teams') skill, which is not a bad thing. It can also help anchor a film in reality, for it is true that some things done in the normal way simply require force. However, this use of violence falls short of its full artistic potential.

On the third and most sophisticated level, violence becomes an intentional tool of the director. This kind of violence is often integral to the story and affects the overall tone of the film. This use of violence can expand into excessive quantities of blood and gore, excruciating scenes of torture, or even sexual violence. This latter is rightly regarded as the most offensive, for it of necessity breaks into the primary world as real-life actors portray this content on camera.

Sometimes excessive violence is used simply because controversy drives up ticket sales—*Deadpool* is a recent example that seemed to function in this way. Many directors, however, consider gruesome violence an essential part of their story. This is often defended on the grounds that horrific violence is a part of real life, and so omitting this violence would be “false and dishonest,”

as George R.R. Martin, author of the book series on which *Game of Thrones* is based, explained to the *New York Times*.

This is not a completely satisfying justification, however. If it were, there would be no controversy, but the controversy-for-tickets mode of violence continues to be profitable. This portrayal of violence to conform to real life belongs properly to the middle level, which does not require excess. Indeed, because most people in their day-to-day life do not encounter brutal violence, taking violence to excess tends to separate us from the flow of the story. This is the moment at which blood turns into red water and severed limbs into painted plastic—an artistic failure.



Unknown Artist — *The Unicorn Defends Itself*

Even this lack of experience does not quite explain the failure of violence in this regard, though. Our minds are capable of understanding a green sun; why can they not similarly make the jump from a paper cut to the aftermath of a grenade? This is admittedly hard to see without the light of faith, but excessive, dark violence is not one of the key principles of reality. It is absolutely the case that terrible things happen in the world. However, at its deepest level, the level to which a believable story must conform, reality is rooted in the creating love of God. In fact,

story is especially bound to this truth, for just as a secondary world depends on language, so does the primary world depend on God. As we distance ourselves from Him, it becomes harder to really see the goodness of creation, but there remains some part of our nature that is awake to this truth and therefore cannot be entirely satisfied by a story soaked only in violence. We can see this most clearly in the truest story of all: the mystery of the Cross.

This does not mean, however, that violence has no role to play in a story. Christ Himself did not shirk from telling such stories as that of the Good Samaritan, which begins with blows and bloodshed. The third level can be purified of excess to allow violence its proper place in the making of stories. Just as the green sun draws attention to the vibrant beauty of common grass, violence in a story can help us to ponder one of the deepest mysteries of life: evil. Torture and rape in real life are of course horrific examples of evil, but precisely because this is so clear, we do not need to see reminders on film. Violence is more effectively used to make visible the aspects of life that would otherwise lie hidden. For example, *The Mission* uses physical warfare to reflect the real interior struggle that faithful life calls us to, and *High Noon* uses a duel to make cowardice (and courage) visible. This sort of investigation inevitably leads into the depths of the human heart, where we find the source of much of the evil that afflicts the world.

Martin recognizes this, explaining that the “true horrors of human history derive not from orcs and Dark Lords but from ourselves.” Of course, his idea only reaches halfway, for the whole point of orcs and Dark Lords is to render visible the evil within us. We know that greed and a thirst for power operate in people, including in ourselves, but in the average person these desires are limited to a rather petty extent—not the stuff of drama. However, this does not mean that a thirst for power cannot damage even the weakest and least powerful of people. An orc is a creature of story that takes precisely these notions of “weak” and “power-hungry,” generally invisible when seen together in the primary world, and makes visible their true ugliness. Martin’s own *Game of Thrones*

fails to recognize this and instead tries to investigate human evil by amplifying violence past the point of excess.

Violence used in this way must still remain faithful to reality. At the root of our identity, we are beloved creatures of God, so no matter how much evil we perpetrate, a true story cannot end entirely in darkness. This is why pervasive violence fails as a storytelling device: in the derived language of story, excessive violence teaches that man is utterly depraved, which is not the reality. Instead, violence appropriate to the concerns of genre and audience can be used to draw our attention to our own very real defects without leading us to despair upon our return to the primary world.

Thoughtful movies ultimately want to serve both as social commentary and as recreation, and telling a story is a powerful way to fulfill both of these goals. Telling a story well requires that one properly subcreate a world for the story. Within this secondary world, our minds are recreationally stretched to view the primary world in new ways. Because reality is deeply good, violence need not be a part of any story, but an artful use of violence is possible. Violence which is kept within the bounds of reality can at least help drive a plot forward while keeping those receiving the story comfortably within its world. Provided violence stays free of ultimately unrealistic excess, it can illuminate the evil tendencies hidden within us, helping us to understand and combat them. In so doing, a story-teller's work takes some small part in the True Story being directed by the Lord.

Author's note: The use of films as examples does not constitute an endorsement.

Br. Anthony VanBerkum entered the Order in 2013. Before entering, he studied Physics at Stanford University.

SUMMA KENTUCKIANA

THEOLOGICAL NOTES ON WENDELL BERRY

Henry Stephan, O.P.

The *Summa Theologiae* tells a story. A history, to be more precise. In his *magnum opus*, St. Thomas Aquinas offers in propositional, scholastic form the drama of the Scriptures, the narrative of God's creation and salvation of mankind. Though few would make it bedside reading, the essential structure of the *Summa* follows a clear dramatic movement, the *exitus/reditus*, or going out/return. Michael Pasquarello puts it well when he writes, "As they unfold the pattern of divine revelation—God creating, saving, and perfecting—the first two parts of the *Summa* may be seen as an elaborate statement of the *dramatis personae*, God and humanity, with a supporting cast of other creatures. This drama consists of bringing together God and us in beatitude, which is a happiness created by grace in loving communion, or friendship, with God" (*We Speak Because We Have First Been Spoken*, 75).

What makes St. Thomas such a compelling theologian—and, as it were, dramatist—is his account of reality. What St. Thomas writes is profoundly *true*. He answers the most important questions—Who is God? Who is man? What is his condition, and his final end? How does God bring man to that end?—in a way that resonates deeply with lived experience, human reason, and divine revelation. St. Thomas does not seek to put pious, rose-colored lenses on with which to see the world. Rather, he recognizes that our sins, and the disorder in our nature, puts blinders on us, and prevents us from seeing the truth of who God truly is, and the power of his providential love for creation. It even prevents us from knowing who we are, and what will make us truly happy. Instead, we become alienated from God, from our neighbors, and from ourselves. Only through Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, can this brokenness be healed. By becoming part of him, we are made

into adopted sons and daughters of God, and the life of divine friendship is restored.

Enter Wendell Berry. On the face of it, Berry would seem to have little in common with Aquinas, if anything. A poet, novelist, and essayist from Henry County, Kentucky, Berry has become a well-recognized voice in the American literary firmament for his reflections on agrarian life and society. He is, if nothing else, a man “of his place,” deeply rooted in the Kentucky soil where he was raised and which he farms to this day. Berry’s politics do not map easily onto the contemporary American discourse—a fierce defender of the environment and foe of large corporations, he is at the same time a stalwart promoter of an un-cosmopolitan way of life that follows traditional social patterns. While he confesses to be deeply influenced by the Gospels, and considers himself a “forest” Christian, he follows the Protestant tradition of deep suspicion of any ecclesiastical institution or organization (Interview, *The American Conservative*, February 17, 2015).

Let’s establish at the outset, to allay any suspense: Wendell Berry is not a Thomist, by a long shot. Yet, insofar as his works show a deep understanding of reality, of the truth of human nature and society, we should expect some deep resonance with the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas. Sure enough, in his novels set in the fictional Kentucky town of Port William, the same drama of man’s character and community that animates the thought of St. Thomas finds compelling expression in literary form. The town of Port William is itself a central character in Berry’s novels, for it has its own existence in which the relationships and virtues of its members are realized. This sense of the *common good* is a central idea for Aquinas, and informs the way he understands the life of the Church and human communities alike. The movement towards concord and flourishing is opposed by forces of disorder and selfishness, both within and without.

II

The town of Port William is more than the sum of its parts. This is what makes it a character in its own right in Berry's novels, and also why it serves as a fitting example of a *common good*. One of the first things that Berry tells us about Port William is that it's not really a port at all. With characteristic wryness, he writes, "The town was not built nearer the river perhaps because there was no room for it at the foot of the hill, or perhaps because, as the town loved to reply to the inevitable question from travelers resting on the hotel porch, nobody knew where the river was going to run when they built Port William" ("The Hurt Man," *That Distant Land*, 5). This answer hints at a recurring discussion of Port William: the town has an existence all its own, that transcends the lives of its members, with origins in a past before the rivers knew their very courses.

This existence seems to be eternal—or at least it does to a young Mat Feltner, one of the stalwarts of the town who appears in several of the novels. "Port William did look as though it had been itself forever. To Mat at the age of five, as he later would suppose, remembering himself, it must have seemed eternal, like the sky" (5). Though it has an independent existence, with its own good, this does not mean that there is not lively individuality within Port William. "However eternal it might have been, the town was also as temporal, lively, and mortal as it possibly could be. It stirred and hummed from early to late with its own life and with the life it drew into itself from the countryside. It was a center, and especially on Saturdays and election days its stores and saloons and the road itself would be crowded with people standing, sitting, talking, whittling, trading, and milling about," Mat recalls. Yet even "this crowd was entirely familiar to itself; it remembered all its history of allegiances, offenses, and resentments, going back from the previous Saturday to the Civil War and long before that" (5).

Perhaps the best metaphor for this kind of existence is that of a body—a living unity, with many distinct members. Sure

enough, this is precisely the language that Berry uses to describe the community of Port William: the *membership*. There is a fitting, and almost certainly intentional, resonance with the familiar passage from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, in which he describes Christians as being but different members of the one Body of Christ. "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ... For the body does not consist of one member but of many... But God has so adjusted the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor 12:12, 14, 24-27).

St. Paul uses this metaphor of body and members to describe the relationship of Christians with Christ and his Church, and this ecclesial dimension has strong overtones in Berry's writing, especially in the novel *Jayber Crow*. More broadly, though, the language of membership, of wholes and parts, points to another touchstone of Thomistic thought: man is a social and political animal. Put another way, human beings are only able to flourish fully as part of human society—they aren't meant to live as isolated individuals. One of the tragedies of sin is the disruption of the order and concord that is essential to man's fulfillment. As St. Augustine puts it, man is at once "social by nature, but quarrelsome by perversion" (*City of God*, 12.28). Now, he is faced with a profound difficulty. Only by loving a *common good*—a good that transcends his own individual, particular good—can man hope to be fulfilled, yet his selfishness and self-assertion disinclines him to do precisely that.

These common goods are at the heart of the matter. They are goods of wholes, not parts; goods that can only be enjoyed as a unity, and not divvied up between individuals. One analogy is an orchestra: the beautiful music of a symphony can only be produced by the concerted unity of the members of an orchestra,

all pursuing (indeed, loving) the common good at stake. No one of them could ever produce a symphony alone. Nor could they each pursue their “own” symphony alongside the other; rather, their individual fulfillment as musicians depends on submitting to a common good that transcends each one. At the same time, their individuality is not lost—each contribution to the common effort is distinct and necessary. We encounter common goods all the time: the common good of the family, of the community, of the state, of the Church. Ultimately, *God himself* is the highest common good: no one person could ever exhaustively adore or comprehend his glory. In the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, the common good is a central part of human happiness. St. Thomas holds that man must develop certain virtues in order to realize the common goods of the family, the city, and heaven itself. This is a central pedagogy in the Christian life—coming to love higher and higher common goods:

To be a good politician one must love the good of the city. But if a man, insofar as he is admitted to participate in the good of some city and is made a citizen, has need of certain virtues to accomplish the things that fall to citizens and to love the good of the city, it is the same with a man who has been admitted, by grace, to participation in celestial beatitude, which consists in the vision and enjoyment of God; he becomes in a way a citizen and member of this blessed society which is called the heavenly Jerusalem, according to Saint Paul to the Ephesians 2:19, *You are citizens of the city of the saints, and members of the family of God...* Therefore, certain gratuitous virtues are necessary to man when admitted to the celestial society: these are the infused virtues whose proper exercise presupposes love of the good common to the whole society, namely, the divine good insofar as it is the object of beatitude. (*Quaestiones Disp. de Caritate*, a. 2, cor.)

III

Jayber Crow, one of Berry's most moving characters, is a man who comes to experience, and love, the common good of Port William in all its varied respects. More than most, he experiences the pedagogy of virtue and love that living in the membership can offer. Jayber's personal story is marked by tragedy and loss. As a result, he becomes conscious of *Port William*—the town itself—as a defining part of his life. After a time of youthful wandering, he finds himself drawn back. Providentially, it is the town that even gives him his name: "My rightful first name is Jonah, but I had not gone by that name since I was ten years old. I had been called simply J., and that was the way I signed myself. Once my customers took me to themselves, they called me Jaybird, and then Jayber. Thus I became, and have remained, a possession of Port William" (*Jayber Crow*, 11).

Jayber's role as barber (and later, as church janitor and gravedigger) is actually larger than it would first appear. For what gives life to Port William as a community is not a set of structures or a government, but a network of relationships—perhaps put more theologically, the ties of civic friendship, or even the bonds of charity. "In its conversation, its consciousness of itself, its sleep and waking, Port William has always been pretty much an unofficial place. It has, really, nothing of its own but itself. It has no newspaper, no resident government, no municipal property... Port William would remember bits of its [history] occasionally, but mostly it forgot. Mostly the town's history had become its ways, its habits, its feelings, its familiarity with itself" (300).

It is in the context of this membership that the most meaningful relationships in Jayber's life—his great loves and friendships—are formed. He writes with understated grief of his best friend, Burley: "Forty years Burley Coulter was my friend. When he died—or, rather, disappeared clean out of the present world—my life was changed. You will know how much, practically and otherwise, my life in Port William and here at the river had

been his gift. In a way, I had been living out a vision that he had seen. I had, after all, lived as a man who'd had his dwelling place and his place of business right together, as he had said at the beginning" (318). This kind of friendship was only possible because both Jayber and Burley were part of the same membership—because they sacrificed for the same common good. It is the shared love of the same common good that allowed their friendship to take deep root, and for a lifetime of generosity and patience to unfold between them. Of course, the most transformative relationship for Jayber within the membership was with Mattie Keith, and this self-sacrificing love is at the heart of his growth in virtue and love for the highest good. So as not to spoil the story, further detail will be spared here.

Jayber gradually finds himself transformed by his incorporation into the life of Port William. The onetime restless wanderer has set down deep roots; the man who formerly was invisible is now deeply enmeshed in others' lives (even if he does still like to escape now and again). He has been decidedly *caught* by Port William, and it has changed him decisively:

I had been the barber in Port William for fourteen years by then, and the grave digger and church janitor for six years. My mind had begun to sink into the place. This was a feeling. It had grown into me from what I had learned at my work and all I had heard from Mat Feltner and the others who were the community's rememberers, and from what I remembered myself. The feeling was that I could not be extracted from Port William like a pit from a plum, and that it could not be extracted from me; even death could not set it and me apart. (204)

Berry then channels eighteenth-century political philosopher Edmund Burke, in both eloquence and thought, with a profound reflection by Jayber on what it means to be part of *the*

membership, part of a communion held together by the bonds of love and perhaps even transformed by grace:

What I saw now was the community imperfect and irresolute but held together by the frayed and always fraying, incomplete and yet ever-holding bonds of the various sorts of affection. There had maybe never been anybody who had not been loved by somebody, who had been loved by somebody else, and so on and on... It was a community always disappointed in itself, disappointing its members, always trying to contain its divisions and gentle its meanness, always failing and yet always preserving a sort of will toward goodwill. I knew that, in the midst of all the ignorance and error, this was a membership; it was the membership of Port William and of no other place on earth. My vision gathered the community as it never has been and never will be gathered in this world of time, for the community must always be marred by members who are indifferent to it or against it, who are nonetheless its members and maybe nonetheless essential to it. And yet I saw them all as somehow perfected, beyond time, by one another's love, compassion, and forgiveness, as it is said we may be perfected by grace. (204-5)

In these passages, in which Jayber reflects at the greatest length on what it means to be part of Port William, it is unsurprising that his language begins to sound decidedly *ecclesial*. His description of a body with members imperfectly and indifferently united to it is soundly Thomistic language to describe the relation of many Christians to the Catholic Church; this language has a solid pedigree in Scripture and the tradition, and Berry uses it to great effect to underline the way in which Jayber experiences Port William as a kind of local church, having its own unity and its own common good. He does this still further in borrowing the language of Christ from Matthew 23:37: "And I could imagine a



Enoch Wood Perry — Talking It Over

Father who is yet like a mother hen spreading her wings before the storm or in the dusk before the dark night for the little ones of Port William to come in under, some of whom do, and some do not. I could imagine Port William riding its humble wave through time under the sky, its little flames of wakefulness lighting and going out, its lives passing through birth, pleasure, suffering, and death. I could imagine God looking down upon it, its lives living by His spirit, breathing by His breath, knowing by His light, but each life living also (inescapably) by its own will—His own body given to be broken” (252).

In the end, Jayber himself admits that his language isn’t accidental: “This is a book about heaven,” he observes. “I know it now. It floats among us like a cloud and is the realest thing we know and the least to be captured, the least to be possessed by anybody for himself. It is like the grain of mustard seed, which you cannot see, which you cannot see among the crumbs of earth where it lies. It is like the reflection of the trees on the water” (351).

Given the quotation from St. Thomas' *De Caritate* at the end of the previous section, it is eminently reasonable that this should be the case: man's life in common here on earth is an anticipation of, and preparation for, our common life in heaven. Anthony Esolen describes Jayber Crow as Dante "in the key of Kentucky," noting that Berry seems to self-consciously model the novel on Dante's *Divine Comedy* in several important respects ("If Dante Were a Kentucky Barber," *The Humane Vision of Wendell Berry*, 272). If that is the case, it makes sense why there would be strong Thomistic overtones discernable as well: the *Comedy*, after all, has justly been called "the *Summa* in verse." All of these works are about journeys through and towards eternal cities—albeit in very different modes!

IV

Throughout Berry's novels, there is a palpable sense that Port William is slowly dying. In this, one can discern the fraying bonds of communion, and Berry's concerns about a national uprooting of our sense of place. Towards the end of her life, Hannah Coulter reflects:

There was a time when Port William drew its members into itself every Saturday night to shop, trade, talk, court, play, argue, loaf, or whatever else they had to be together in order to do. Now Port William, or what is left of it, is most likely to assemble, not in Port William at all, but in the Tacker Funeral Home in Hargrave. The survivors of the old life come to pay their respects. The neighbors, old and young, come. People who have moved away, maybe a long time ago, come back. You see people you knew when you were young, and now don't recognize, people who may never come back again, people you may never see again. We feel the old fabric torn, pulling apart, and we know how much we have loved each other. (*Hannah Coulter*, 164)

How many small towns—and neighborhoods and communities more generally—could this paragraph describe? The rituals of death signal something about a society, and for many, death is one of the only occasions that brings together otherwise separated or far-flung family and friends. This is a new state of affairs: such widespread and constant migration makes the notion of a “hometown” weak indeed for most people under the age of fifty. We are increasingly upwardly-mobile nomads—but it comes with a terrible cost. Greater freedom at any cost isn’t genuine freedom: it’s merely a different sort of alienation. If the sense of the common good described by St. Thomas, and depicted in Berry’s works, correctly describes a necessary part of human flourishing, then we have gone a long way to uprooting those essential virtues.

Returning to Hannah Coulter, the unbowed matriarch is facing the defection of all her children, one after the other, from life in the membership—a familiar story that played itself out across countless households and towns in America. She expresses her concerns to Andy, who seems to understand intuitively her deeper concern:

[Andy] nodded. He knew what I meant. It used to be that we sort of knew, we sort of could guess, how the lives closest to us would end, what beds our dearest ones were likely to die in, and who would be with them at the last. Now, in this world of employees, of jobs and careers, there is no way even to imagine. Andy said, “You’re worried because they’ve left the membership,” and he smiled, knowing we both knew whose word that was. “They’ve gone over from the world of membership to the world of organization. Nathan would say the world of employment.” One of the attractions of moving away into the life of employment, I think, is being disconnected and free, unbothered by membership. It is a life of beginnings without memories, but it is a life too that ends without being remembered. The life of membership with all its cumbers is traded away for the life of employment that

makes itself free by forgetting you clean as a whistle when you are not of any more use. (133)

This neatly summarizes the sense of *rootlessness* that now pervades American culture, and that makes fostering a love for the common good increasingly difficult. Nearly all the ties that bind us to people and places in ways that require commitment and self-sacrifice have been weakened over the past half-century: families, neighbors, a shared culture, a sense of the past, a common faith. Even reality itself is increasingly seen as a subject to redefinition based on one's desires and preferences, no matter how disordered. As a result, we are more profoundly restless, and rootless, than ever before.

Wendell Berry doesn't offer a solution, but he does give us cause to reflect on the reality of what leads us to genuine happiness. Turning one last time to *Jayber Crow*, let us read how Jayber deals with the prospect of a love that wounds:

If God loves the world, might that not be proved in my own love for it? I prayed to know in my heart His love for the world, and this was my most prideful, foolish, and dangerous prayer. It was my step into the abyss. As soon as I prayed it, I knew that I would die. I knew the old wrong and the death that lay in the world. Just as a good man would not coerce the love of his wife, God does not coerce the love of His human creatures, not for Himself, or for the world or for one another. To allow that love to exist fully and freely, He must allow it not to exist at all. His love is suffering. It is our freedom and His sorrow. To love the world as much even as I could love it would be suffering also, for I would fail. And yet all the good I know is in this, that a man might so love this world that it would break his heart. (*Jayber Crow*, 254)

Jayber, the dropout preacher who doubted God, makes good here. He gets to the heart of God's love for us—God wants us

to love him as he loves himself, freely and abundantly. The cost of this great gift is the sorrow of rejection, but the promise of it is the possibility of entering into a communion of love and commitment, of abiding friendship with God and man. We are called to enter into the kind of closeness and commitment—this membership—that makes possible self-sacrificing love. God wants to draw us into closer friendship with himself *through* those he also loves, those whom we must love more and more *in God* and *for his sake*. Marriages, religious communities, close friendships—these will always be marked by our human imperfections. In the end, Berry's work is not principally about nostalgia for rural Kentucky, but about the bonds of charity that break us open to God's own love. "As much as you will let it, Port William will trouble your heart," Jayber observes (230). We should all be so fortunate as to have our hearts troubled by a Port William. We should all be so blessed to have a Jayber there as our friend.

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THE LOCUTORIUM

THE FORMING HOME

AN INTERVIEW WITH MATTHEW LEVERING

Justin Bolger, O.P.

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I. CULTURE AND IMAGINATION

We Dominican student brothers live in a house of formation. But the first house of formation is the domestic home. These questions will focus on how the home influences the imagination, the virtues, and the Faith.

First, let's talk about the imagination and its influences. How did stories influence you as a child and how do they influence you as a father?

I read a lot of children's books as a child, but not necessarily the most profound! There is a series called *Mrs. Pigglegwiggle*. The basic theme of the series is that Mrs. Pigglegwiggle helps parents who do not know how to handle a particular difficulty or personality flaw that a child is going through. In part by using magic—which I do not endorse (though I don't mind it at all in children's stories, including the magnificent *Harry Potter* series)—Mrs. Pigglegwiggle resolves the child's difficulty and sends the child back to his or her parents cured. The importance of Mrs. Pigglegwiggle is that she advocates a flexible use of varying strategies. In the face of failures of communication, a parent has to use various strategies. Rather than giving up, a parent must seek another strategy for communicating something important. A parent has to be a bit wily!

Charlie Brown of the "Peanuts" comic books is a model for me. Part of parenting is to have a certain patience with one's own inadequacies and with those of others. People who expect that if they and/or others simply prayed and worked hard enough then all would go splendidly, have not accurately gauged the present condition of human nature. We are often faced with being not great at things. Charlie Brown knows what this feels like, and he endures criticism without giving up. The painful inadequacy of Charlie Brown is part of every life, including a parent's life, and it is something that we endure and work through with Charlie-

Brownish persistence, rather than overcome triumphantly as Snoopy does in his various imagined exploits (e.g., against the Red Baron). Being “pretty good” is something that belongs to Christian life even as we pray to be perfected. Even Saint Paul apparently had a weak personal presence, as well as a thorn in the flesh! Patience with the humbling “pretty good” aspects of our life and our parenting is necessary, alongside deep patience with others, if we are indeed going to have a hope of Christian perfection.

Another set of books that I enjoyed was the “Choose Your Own Adventure” series. I still recall the delight of opening my first of these books. I figured that I was pretty smart and that I’d be able to choose rightly until finally triumphing. Instead, I was truly shocked when I quickly chose wrongly in a devastating way. I think that it is important to keep a close eye on the choices that we make and that our children make. We may not always get it right, and tragedies can and do happen. We have strong grounds to hope that God will pull us through!

“The Adventures of Tintin” were a constant companion. I love the glorious oddity of the characters who surround Tintin, who himself was rather normal in many ways. The idiotic detectives Thomson and Thompson, the nutty Professor Calculus, the drunkard Captain Haddock, and so many more—a wondrous assortment of complete oddballs! When I grew up, I realized with sadness that in real life, the real oddballs, even when brilliant and extremely talented, often don’t get very far. Of course, once one gets to know people, almost everyone is a bit odd somehow. This is part of what makes life wonderful. The interesting characters to whom we are related and who populate our life help to make it wonderfully rich. In parenting, one expects to discover odd and delightful characteristics in one’s children, and one is usually not disappointed in this—although fully normal people such as Tintin are also wonderful too, and much needed!

Tolkien or Lewis?

Both. It may well be that I owe my faith, humanly speaking, to Lewis. His Narnia books made a very deep impression on me as a child—he opened a very powerful Christian worldview to me. I still think that the Narnia books are a lot more *realistic* than most nonfiction, despite all the inventive elements in the Narnia books. They are realistic about persons, God, and Christ. The inventive stuff makes it exciting, but the realism drives it. For me, Lewis is one of the greatest Christian thinkers who ever lived.

Tolkien's creation of the 'ring'—cleaving to the ring of mammon, and having it suck the soul out of oneself, relying upon grace to escape the power of the ring—arguably offers a more powerful evocation of Christian experience, especially when connected with the journeys through an apocalyptic landscape with scattered places of safe-haven. One sees here an image of the modern world. But when one attends to the particular stories of Narnia, and adds to them great works such as *That Hideous Strength* with its extraordinary indictment of the academic-political-medical complex, then one can see that we need both Lewis and Tolkien (to say the least!).

Do you have a favorite story you like to read to your children?

My two older boys endured me reading to them my own favorites from childhood, whereas for the past few years I have been compelled to read what my younger two boys want. For the younger boys, I found that the *Encyclopedia Brown* stories worked well—very sane stories of an idyllic childhood in which the lead character knows how to solve problems for his father, who is the chief of police. It is interactive because each story requires that you guess how the boy, whose name is Encyclopedia, figured out the right answer. The answers are in the back of the book. Once my youngest son turned nine or ten, I started reading *Sherlock Holmes* stories to them, and by now we have gone through most of them. Those are very popular with my boys, and I am a big fan of Sherlock Holmes. Holmes often gets to the bottom of many of his cases by

careful attention to the oddities of individual personalities. But my own favorite story is *The Wind in the Willows*, which I have read to both sets of boys. The character of Toad exemplifies the treasure of real zest for life, and the character of Rat is a true friend.

What does the term “moral imagination” mean to you and how would you say it is cultivated? What does a moral imagination enable a person to see or do?

I think it means attentiveness to persons, although truly I am not sure. I admire people who are able to draw the best out of other people, in shared enterprises. To me, “moral imagination” means the ability to pursue the universal call to holiness without denying the oddity and weaknesses that we possess and that those whom we are called to love possess. A true love for the weak and vulnerable has to be based on having enough moral imagination to realize that one is weak and vulnerable oneself. I have a feeling that this answer means that I don’t understand “moral imagination”!

I read somewhere that you once tried to be a novelist. If you could write a spy novel what would be the storyline in a paragraph or so?

I did try to become a novelist in the vein of Walker Percy or Dostoevsky. It was the year after I graduated from college. My wife Joy and I got married on January 2, 1993, when we were undergraduates at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I had a college fund that my grandmother had given me, and I had not spent it all during college, so after college I tried to become a novelist for a few months. Neither Joy nor I were Catholic at the time, and in fact I didn’t know that theology existed. I wrote novels for a few months and discovered two things: (1) that I have no ability to write good novels because I have no ear for how people talk and no eye for physical detail; (2) that writing fiction about

religious quests is insufficient to resolve such quests—we need theology and philosophy that explores such questions as whether God exists and whether Jesus rose from the dead.

I think that if I had the gifts to write a spy novel, the lead characters would be based on Fr. Fessio and Mr. Thomas Monaghan! They don't need to worry, however, because I can't even write a storyline for a spy novel! But certainly it would involve intrigue among Christians in a world of nihilist cynics, semi-educated intellectuals, and Brave New World epicureans.

What's the difference between a good movie and a movie with good intentions?

I love the Marx brothers' movies and Woody Allen's movies. Allen explores the beauty of real human relationships in his movies, and he contrasts these with people who have gotten caught up in themselves, whether because they are wealthy or because they are artists or for some other reason (such as sin). His great movies about artists include *Sweet and Lowdown* and *Bullets over Broadway*, in neither of which does he appear as an actor. Recently, his *Blue Jasmine* explores what happens when there is no source of grace and mercy for people who have done evil things. His *Irrational Man* is a devastating attack upon modern philosophy and its rejection of natural law. Allen writes these movies himself, and it seems to me that a "good movie" is one that is honest in some deep way. To write with real honesty about deep internal matters takes a particular gift. Truly great movie scripts, like theatrical plays, touch something deep. Allen takes the internal pain that he must feel (given his history of misdeeds), and he puts this real pain in many of his film scripts. The Marx brothers do the same with their send-ups of social situations. From the position of outsiders who somehow find themselves on the inside, they probe their own foolishness and the painful foolishness of political, academic, and societal leaders. A "movie with good intentions" lacks this

deepest kind of honesty, but may be much easier to watch! I like the original *Star Wars* series because of its powerful sense of the *libido dominandi*, the lust for domination that seduces people.



The Leverings

Back row: Andrew, David, Matthew, Joy, Irene

Front row: Daniel, Lucy, John (photo courtesy of Matthew Levering)

There's an exaltation of adolescence in many movies. This seems to be connected to a kind of Romanticism that rightly acknowledges a human desire for innocence but fails to see how a libertine approach ultimately ends in frustration. What is the Catholic response to this trend?

There is something marvelous about being young! It has been years since I watched *Stand by Me*, but I remember being struck by that movie's combination of the beauty of youth, on the

one hand, with a deep awareness that a libertine lifestyle ends in the destruction of the young, on the other. Movies that take adolescence seriously convey characters who are not innocent in any pre-Fall sense. This was the genius of Spielberg's *E.T.*—the grown-ups have caused so much brokenness that the children have to turn to pets and an alien for solace, and they have to learn to love in that way. It may be that the exaltation of adolescence that you are talking about has to do with grown-ups behaving like crazy sensualists, i.e. movies such as *Animal House* and its many imitators today? In such movies, there is a deep sadness—no one knows how to live, and they go on journeys that lead to nothing. They recognize that libertinism leads to destruction, but if the alternative is a stuffy puritanical liberalism (that also believes in nothing transcendent), one can see why they are taking this path. In the cartoon movies that I watch (e.g., *Kuba and the Two Strings*, *Despicable Me*, *Zootopia*), the young people are the real adults, and the adults are often corrupt or dumb. The young people still believe in ideals. The problem is that their ideals often have no enduring basis, despite their loftiness and often their real goodness.

There's a lot of toxic stuff out there in the secular word. But there are good elements as well. Prima facie it seems that the ideal approach for a parent would be to shield children from the former and expose them to the latter. But I imagine parents also want their children to be able to evaluate and criticize what is base in movies, books, and music in the culture. That suggests some sort of broad education in culture, which also implies an approach to parenting that is not overly protective. How do we strike this balance?

For me, shielding my kids from the culture has not been an option. We have not home-schooled, although many of our friends have done so. My idea has always been to participate in the wider culture and to act as though we have nothing to fear from it because we can judge it. On the other hand, I have also fought a

general battle to restrict kids' computer usage and to avoid getting them cellphones—in order to make the point that governing such things is important, rather than the alternative, i.e. being governed by them. We have found that not talking about hot-button issues in the culture doesn't work for us. We have to talk about them with our kids, because otherwise the culture will be the only voice they hear.

I do not want to claim that I know the “balance,” especially since much depends in families upon the personalities involved and upon financial resources (etc.), and one size is not going to fit all. Essentially I have followed the model with which I was raised, which was to be part of the culture but to look down upon it critically.

II. THE VIRTUES

Classic Dominican formation emphasizes the role of the virtues in the pursuit of happiness—that if we want to be happy (and we all want that) then we must be virtuous. And virtues begin to take shape at a young age. What is unique to domestic life and formation in the virtues?

Well, it is not clear that we have any virtues—that is the main lesson! I think that part of what domestic life teaches is the virtue of humility. There is a real humbling involved in domestic life, since everyone isn't at his or her best all the time, and the experience is humbling for both parents and children. Domestic life is a place where Pelagianism goes to die, but where real striving in Christ continues. Domestic life also is a place where the benefits of real virtue are displayed. True faith, hope, love, prudence, justice, courage, and temperance are all deeply valued in domestic life—the whole household benefits from them, their beauty and value becomes crystal clear.

I know a philosophy professor at a Catholic college who observed that most students are so influenced by secular culture that by the time they get to college a few courses in philosophy and theology are often insufficient to counter the moral and intellectual vices they have unfortunately acquired. Do you think this is true? If it is, what does it suggest about the need for early formation in children and adolescents?

Personally, I'm not sure that there has ever been a good generation, since Adam and Eve. I wish I could blame today's culture, but the study of history persuades me that humans have always been rather wretched. I'm not sure that even a very Catholic culture could succeed in passing the faith on to the next generation, given the massive shifts in culture (both for worse and for better) to which history bears witness.

Catholic professors at colleges are in a difficult position, often in part because of the Student Life offices at their colleges. Often the Student Life office seems to be run in a way that leads to tremendous amount of alcohol abuse, sexual assault, and just general running amuck, in addition to bringing speakers onto campus who attack Catholic teaching. Catholic professors at such institutions often find themselves interacting with a very small group—a 'remnant'—that somehow has built up a small vibrant Catholic culture within the moral chaos of the institution. Most freshman undergrads whom I meet are still somewhat committed to ideals, still somewhat hopeful, and therefore still open to virtue and to Christ who gives true virtue!

The concept of formation in the virtues is a simple one. We have powers of intellect, will, and appetite. Certain virtues perfect those powers in our pursuit of the good. Is there a good resource out there to help Catholic parents understand this truth about the human person and so be able to employ it in the rearing of children? If there isn't, could you write one?

I think that there are good resources! The Church's catechetical material is generally now quite good, at least if the parish buys it from the right sources. Authors such as Christopher Kaczor and many others are doing a lot of good, as are initiatives such as Fr. Peter John Cameron O.P.'s *Magnificat* and all that Bishop Barron does. My wife Joy has a book of Catholic questions that we now use for basic catechesis prior to saying family rosary at night. The materials are there, I think, but the difficulty still remains that the kids have to learn how to function and how to make a living in this culture, i.e. in their own society. I would like to see great improvements in the Catholic colleges and universities (and high schools), and in every case I would begin with reforming the Student Life offices, and then move from there.

What meal does your concupiscible appetite find most enticing?

Definitely Indian food, or Thai! Or Florida seafood. Or Bertucci's pizza.

III. THE FAITH

Most Catholics receive baptism when they are wee babes. But before religious education in the parish, children are catechized by their parents. How does this domestic education in the Faith differ from and complement that of the parish or school?

My experience has been that a lot of it involves 'practices'—prayer before meals, family rosary, Mass, confession. My kids also say that I give lectures to them. CCD programs that give a solid biblical foundation are crucial, and Youcat is very valuable.

Parents hand on the Faith to their children. How do father and mother do this in complementary ways?

Personality is hugely important here. Basically, both parents have to show that the faith is important to them, and have to show that the faith is positive for them. Complaining about the Catholic Church would be faith-killing. My personality is more ‘distant’ than Joy’s, since she is just an incredibly wonderful person—the kids always feel free to talk to her. I think that my job is to be around and to show that I am willing to sacrifice by caring about my kids’ lives.

There are false images of both the Catholic Faith and the family in society now. What is the nature of some of these challenges and respective solutions?

The fundamental challenge is that society is now defining its foundations (such as marriage itself) in ways that are fully anti-Christian. Basically, one has to say to one’s kids, ‘You are going to be a second-class citizen, silenced and persecuted in many ways, and often under financial duress without support from society, for the rest of your life.’ Kids recognize what is going on, and they recognize the cost that they will have to pay. On the other hand, the culture is attacking natural law, and the fruits of the culture are poisonous—kids can see that too.

As far as solutions go, we need joyful priests and parents, and we need confident institutions that make an effort to live out the Catholic faith. We need more of the renewal that Pope John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict initiated. The joyful and confident preaching style of Pope Francis can help in this, even while the universal call to holiness needs to be at the forefront of our minds. Ultimately, the real solution is Catholics who are happy living Catholic lives.

The Holy Family is our model for family life, yet all three persons are so unlike any of us. How should we then see Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as modeling domestic life?

Humility is the key here. Their deep humility and acceptance of humiliations is striking. They lived under deep duress, and then lived without any special prestige. They were faithful Jews who rejoiced in God. Again, I see family life as rooted in humility and also as rooted in humbling experiences (often through foibles of all the members of the family, which is not the case for the Holy Family, whose humbling came from persecution). From humility and humbling, joyful things can emerge.

What about pets in the house? Cats, dogs, hamsters, fish, chickens? All, some, or none of the above?

We have a cat, who is very rat-like and so we call it a ‘crat’, but the cat (whose name is Snickers) is a popular family member. I favor having a pet!

Finally, is there a question you’ve always wanted to be asked and no one’s ever asked it? If so, please feel free to ask and answer yourself. Thanks!

I’ve never thought that anyone would really want to ask me questions, and so I’m just honored that you thought to do so!

Br. Justin Bolger entered the Order of Preachers in 2012 and hails from Frederick, MD. He studied business at the University of Baltimore and earned a masters degree in philosophical studies from Mount Saint Mary’s University in Emmitsburg, MD. He also wrote, recorded, and performed as a singer/songwriter.

DISPUTED QUESTION

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, and 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. While traditionally the dispute was settled by a master, here we will allow readers to form their own decision.

GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

Ephrem Reese, O.P. & Paul Clarke, O.P.

STATEMENT

Br. Ephrem Reese (ER): Recently, there has been a spate of action movies with female leads: for example, there are the four *Hunger Games* movies, the three *Divergent* movies, *Rogue One*, *Lucy*—together, these grossed about 5.5 billion dollars. Some other recent films with female leads who share the lead with a male actor in a thought-provoking way are *Edge of Tomorrow*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, and the more suspenseful sci-fi movie *Arrival*. Now, whatever the motives of the makers of those movies, let's consider whether the trend is something to embrace or reject, and why. I'll support this trend, but I'm going to ask you first: what are your thoughts about it?

Br. Paul Clarke (PC): I'm more pessimistic about the trend, on account of the way it warps and shrinks the woman warrior motif, so that the films end up drifting, ironically, in a misogynistic but also, ultimately, misanthropic direction. In a nutshell, I think the way the woman warrior archetype is being revisited today tends to compromise a deeply important dimension of womanhood: the way she is the life-bearer.

ER: I happen to think it's well-timed. American Catholicism will not survive on its current set of domestic virtues and needs to rediscover an older tradition of female power. It may be that these recent films are recalling fundamental things that shouldn't be ignored or dismissed out of hand.

THE PROBLEM WITH ARCHETYPES

PC: So you see this trend recalling older, even perennial ideas of the woman warrior?

ER: Right. I think that, perennially, when women find themselves in battle, they discover a potential to exceed the recognizable limits of courage, or the rules of chivalry. Normally, men fight. So, when women fight, they're able to defy whatever standard may have been set by the men. That can be frightening, but it can also be quite stirring. Emily Blunt's character, Rita Vrataski, in *Edge of Tomorrow* is a kind of paradigm of a stunningly fierce woman warrior who overshadows the normal soldier. Jyn Erso in *Rogue One* is another example of this, as are Jael and Judith in the Old Testament.

PC: Fair enough, but I think there's a danger in resorting to archetype in such a way that we forget where certain ideas or images come from. You mentioned "rules of chivalry," and that's already a historically timestamped notion. That's not to say that there aren't parallels in different cultures and different times, of course, but we should note the difference between meaning and

value, between what a word signifies, and the particular resonance it has in a given culture. With “woman warrior,” there in fact may be a common sense spanning different cultures and times, but this comes with the inevitable additions or subtractions of value, where “woman warrior” might actually gain its particular cogency in a given culture from certain common experiences or shared understandings of woman, battle, ferocity, and so forth.

And here’s an example: the charged atmosphere resulting from the way women are underrepresented and underpaid in Hollywood. In 2015, Jennifer Lawrence—the star of *The Hunger Games*—decried the pay gap between male and female actors, and a swarm of big names, female and male, have followed suit. The point being: whatever its native goodness or badness, the trend of “woman warriors” is going to be enlisted in a particular battle of the 21st century, and since this informs the making of such films, it should inform our critical reaction.

ER: Alright, so let’s try to analyze the woman warrior both in a perennial way, and in a contemporary American way. It would be impossible to go back and try to fix the foundations of this political problem at their sources. I would propose that we just have to hope that the supervening force of good artistry can redirect this trend, and that we table the questions of monetary and gender justice so much on the minds of film-industry people.

PC: Sure. I bring up the politics and “monetary and gender justice” issues mostly to make the point that trends in American pop-art are never neutral. If they have distinguished archetypal forebearers, they also have less benign contemporary guardians.

What does this perennial aspect look like?

THE PERENNIAL

ER: We can look at the character of woman that spans the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Ratzinger points out that Eve receives her name after the Fall, after being cast out of the garden; her role as woman in a fallen world is that she's the mother of all the living. So she's the protector of life and its vehicle through time, through the valley of tears, "the keeper of the seal of life and the antithesis of death" (*Daughter Zion*, 17). With the Assumption of Mary, a woman definitively delivers life, by being herself delivered alive, to a realm where death has no power.

This escape from evil, a form of salvation, is both womanly and the essence of much adventure. Tolkien discusses this in his essay "On Fairy-Stories," defending escape against accusations of escapism, and says that we shouldn't confuse "the escape of the prisoner with the flight of the deserter." Think also of the unnamed woman of Revelation 12, and the adventure of her escape from the dragon. So I think we have a classical Jewish-Christian model of feminine heroism—and we might even set that off against the norm of masculine warfare from Cain onward.

PC: Interesting. In fact, that's why I find it unsettling how these films generally seem to construct a zero-sum universe in which men and women are essentially rivals, where the strength or virtue of one entails the weakness or vice of the other. The purpose of this is to heighten the contrast between the woman warrior and the male characters alongside her, but at what cost?

And so notice the use of foils alongside Rita Vrataski in *Edge of Tomorrow* and Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games*: in both films, we find significant male figures portrayed as foils precisely because they're failures. In order to highlight the virtue of the woman, they point up the weakness of the blundering man. Besides being an inept procedure to valorize woman, I think it's a revealing

example of the dialectic we see in the logic of the Fall. The seeds of rivalry and competition in Genesis are growing rank in depictions that try to valorize woman at the expense of man, or, I suppose, to permit woman an escape from man. Post-Fall, there's a fracture in their relationship: man and woman busily trade desire and blame. The way men and women are portrayed alongside each other today in these films takes this logic as *normative*, in the sense that it can't or won't see the deeper truth of who man and woman were created to be, capable of being *together* in a non-competitive harmony.

ER: So you think there's something risky about using biblical narrative when it's being abused by a secular "misandric" impulse?

PC: That's right, though I think it's not so much a consciously invoked influence as the adoption of a certain logic. It's not like the literary clothing of perennial truths or scriptural stories that you find in, say, Tolkien's myths. This is more like a disastrously abridged version of the myth of Adam and Eve, or an adaptation where man and woman were created in a state of war.

ER: I sympathize with your fear. The post-Christian embrace of vaguely Christian archetypes misses important factors; in this case, it conceives of Adam simply as a loser.

PC: And often a *lustful* loser. Another odd feature of this shrunken myth or vague typology is that the woman warrior is at once eminently desirable and yet weirdly dispassionate. I think there's something in this portrait that's simultaneously sophisticated and self-defeating. In the case of *Edge of Tomorrow*, Rita Vrataski is portrayed as both beautiful and fierce, and when Tom Cruise arrives on the scene, you have a portrait of impotent desire: likely a failure as much in love as in war. And yet the woman's indifference to her own attractiveness is at odds with the tendency in the filmmakers' portrayal to heighten the desirability, the sensuality.



Caravaggio — *Judith Beheading Holofernes*

ER: That makes sense, but I want to try to run with it as something true. I've always been fascinated by the idea that, in Genesis 3:16, woman's attraction to man is a curse: that men don't seem to naturally match the gracefulness of women or to merit the desire that women have for them. Men have great powers that don't always cohere, whereas women have this greater integrity of life and grace of movement and attention to both the whole and the details that men lack. In action movies, that makes women a special kind of weapon. While *Lucy* is a pretty bad movie, we see there a caricature of this feminine integration as an enhancement for battle.

PC: The issue, though, is that the story aims to present the woman as a protagonist—and thus as a subject, someone we can identify with—but the details of the portrayal (e.g. dress, attitude) tilt in the direction of objectification. That's a significant ambiguity, since there's something incoherent about a portrayal of the woman warrior where she acts forgetful of the very thing the filmmaker actually fixates on, i.e., her flesh, and the difference it makes. A focus

on the woman's flesh that intentionally excludes from its meaning the notion of "life-bearer" is falsifying. This kind of reduction thematizes and dramatizes a deeply flawed understanding of how man relates to woman, and vice versa.

THE PARTICULAR

PC [cont.]: The trend seems to rely on the zero-sum concept to the point that a victory for woman is only possible on the condition that man loses or lacks something. This raises a concern with one way of reading your idea of escape. In Genesis 2:18, God says that it's not good for man to alone, but it seems that this is what some of these films are attempting to do, to give woman a way to escape man.

ER: I'm not sure that what's happening in these films is really a portrayal of escape in that negative sense. While the woman warrior is more of a lone assassin, or a strong but isolated protector, men in battle are usually cooperating. The band-of-brothers setting of battle highlights camaraderie, loyalty, self-sacrifice, and (albeit in a problematic way) provides an outlet and a resolution to violence in normal life. Alienated from this cooperative spirit, which softens war and makes a game out of it, women in battle move in a world harsher both for them and for their enemies. Escaping from the battle, Sisera stumbles on a domestic scene; he asks Jael for water, and in a strange detail, she gives him milk, which presumably makes him sleepy, and she kills him, using maternal care and domestic hospitality to do what men couldn't.

PC: Do we necessarily want to delineate so strongly between the political and domestic dimensions of life? The opposition between these two spheres has done no favors for anyone. The (typically Marxist) assumption is that all the power is held out in these male-dominated political strongholds, which are beyond domestic boundaries. I think that woman has cooperative gifts and qualities

that are properly realized in the domestic sphere, which admittedly has less extension—it doesn't invade the entire city—but perhaps its worth lies in its tremendous depth or density, such that any sort of "which is better?" question is just the wrong question to ask. If we forget this, and measure value in a sort of quantitative, extensive way, then the woman warrior becomes the obvious vehicle for restoring power to the disenfranchised woman.

ER: I grant that, but I still want to look at the tensions that admittedly do arise between these parts of life, the domestic and the political. Sophocles' play *Antigone* shows this public/private tension tearing a brave woman apart, and I think that surfaces throughout the Western telling of the story of woman in battle. But in the American setting, this tension manifested in a peculiar way, which fascinated Alexis de Tocqueville. He saw the Americans educating their daughters amidst the dangers of the public realm in order to secure their future private good—using that tension to form strong women.

Tocqueville suggests that, in order to prepare women for democratic and industrial life, Americans raise their girls to have supposedly masculine virtues of reason and will. Since democracy required the passing-away of stable political form and authority, the American girl needed "a precocious knowledge of all things," and rather than "hiding the corruptions of the world from her," as a girl's guardians would in aristocratic society, "they wanted her to see them right away and to exert herself to flee them." This entailed a frank and audacious dexterity of speech and gesture that a 19th century European would have found disturbing in a young girl.

PC: How does this sort of sober, pragmatic, distinctively American model of educating young women relate to the movies we're discussing? Because it seems that the *Hunger Games* series, for instance, offers a romanticized rather than realistic portrait of the woman going to war.

ER: I think we see this technique informing the movies we're discussing, especially *The Hunger Games* or *Divergent*, but on the level of fantasy. Fantasy combat translates into the varieties of real violence that teenagers meet in school, at a frat party, or in moving to Brooklyn—arenas where social barriers which once protected girls from a variety of threats have been annihilated. So, while the exposure to violence seems inappropriate and frightening, the perfected woman warrior loves peace and can secure it. While the American frontiers are different (fewer buffalo), and the idea of mature womanhood has transformed in the minds of many, I still think that these fantasy movies do well to stir the fiercer powers of the female soul.

PC: Right. Then the question becomes, what exactly are the frontiers today? Are we talking about economic or social frontiers? Towards what should feminine ferocity be cultivated?

ER: I think we often see women taking charge in religious matters, where men have dropped the ball. Tocqueville saw the true strength of American public society in its implicit religious mores, which, he said, women created and governed. This could be encouraged, and we might promote strong female figures in the public (my favorite being Dorothy Day) as well as the private (say, Tamara Cesare, a lay Dominican who organizes big youth rallies and whose community publishes this journal). Incidentally, this helps to show that women are not oppressed in the Catholic Church—Catherine of Siena didn't need to be ordained to be powerful in the Church and in politics, and American women could take a page out of her book. Or think of the women of the New Testament, spreading the gospel through their wealth, household management (what the ancients called "economy"), and public presence alongside the Apostles. For this, women have to have *parrhesia* [boldness].

PC: Let me ask this: is this *parrhesia* showing up as a traditional virtue that just manifests itself differently depending on the

circumstances? Or is it the case that the woman is actually embodying a virtue that she didn't have to in previous, more tranquil circumstances? In other words, are we talking about the figure and/or traits of the woman warrior as a sort of stable pattern? Or something that arises as an exception, in circumstances of crisis?

ER: I'm not sure—you might say that the stable order *is* instability. There's a volatile quality especially in the Gospel of Luke, in that, despite "the whole world being at peace," as the Christmas Eve martyrology has it, something major is about to change the order of things. The Magnificat of the Mother of God can sound like a revolutionary manifesto. The Christian attempt to "live at peace with all" (Rom 12:8) can look like an effort to "turn the world upside down" (Acts 17:6).

THE PARTIAL

PC: Women are being asked to step into a role which has traditionally been, in American film, a man's role. But simply substituting a woman for a man ends poorly for both of them. One danger in making the *role* the pivot point towards recovering true female identity is that it tries to slough off the narrative as unimportant. But this overlooks the way a role—and therefore a character—relies on the narrative backdrop to be true and *interesting*. It's the world within which the characters move, the explicit and implicit *stuff* that encircles, hangs over, and underlies their actions that enables us, the audience, to perceive qualities like courage and cowardice, and force us to reach for little-used words like *noble* or *treacherous*.

ER: I would agree that these movies lack a context. And because the context or "metanarrative" is lacking, because there is no sense of the human or the real, films seem to resort to this post-apocalyptic moral tale of achieving cooperation—that's in *Divergent* and

Hunger Games, but also *Edge of Tomorrow* and the recent, more contemplative *Arrival*.

PC: In some movies this setting is established intentionally with great effect: culture's demolished and the memory of truth and goodness is receding fast. The characters of *Mad Max* are terribly stark: in the desert, but with histories.

ER: That's also the feel of Old Testament narrative: a people wandering, awaiting a law, and struggling to master their natural-yet-fallen impulses.

PC: Right, and it's that sort of stark storytelling, "fraught with background," that can deploy the warrior woman motif in vastly more compelling ways. I think the comparative strength of *Mad Max* and *Rogue One* results from the way their narratives allow their heroines to serve goals higher than a mere logic of emancipation. Recall the way *Mad Max* portrays the horror and evil of the enslaved women's situation precisely in terms of the reduction of the woman as life-bearer to a vehicle, a producer, a mere means. Furthermore, the rallying cry of the young wives, "We are not things!" and the curiously chaste, reserved way the camera doesn't objectify the fugitive, barely-clothed wives isn't ideological grandstanding, but has a *pathos* that a male character (Tom Hardy) shares. He too has been reduced to a thing, a walking blood transfusion for his captors. In showing how men are also enslaved by oppressive regimes that are not merely misogynist, but misanthropic, there's a deeper critique possible. But these two films are exceptions to the trend, where the absence of context is not because it's unspoken or unspeakable, but because it's thought to be unimportant. And I suppose this is why I find Katniss' character in *The Hunger Games* to be so thin. She's only as deep as her script.

ER: I also found her to be a kind of disastrous, Victorian fainting-away female, who is merely being prodded into hysteria. That's not

new, that a woman's power would be based on some madness or animal passion—that's the pagan vision of female power, but the imagination of "enlightened" culture is also captivated by it.

On the level of political judgments, we would do well to keep in mind the social forms that Tocqueville admired, making sure that girls become sharers in the gymnastics of public life. On the artistic



Utagawa Kuniyoshi — Ishi-jo wielding a naginata

level, I suppose the only solution is better artists in Hollywood. A bad artist produces interactions between puppets; a good one makes a world filled with people.

PC: Fair play. But think for a second about the film adaptation of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Peter Jackson re-shapes Tolkien's female characters ostensibly to give them stronger parts in the story,

but ends up making them narrower, flatter characters. Eowyn is a prime example because of the complex arc of her “shieldmaiden” character in Tolkien’s story. In her conversation with Faramir at the end of the book, we find that she has been in a sort of winter, desiring nothing but “a brave death in battle.” Through the conversation in the Houses of Healing (significantly named), she has a dramatic *spiritual* recovery: “I will be a shieldmaiden no longer, nor vie with the great Riders, nor take joy only in the songs of slaying. I will be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren.” Without rejecting Eowyn’s valor in battle, the emphasis of Tolkien’s passage falls squarely on the theme of new life, growth, and spring in contrast to death, barrenness, winter. Jackson’s film interpretation neglects this—foolishly. There are no Houses of Healing because in the film’s view—and I don’t think this is peculiar to Peter Jackson—there’s nothing about this woman warrior to heal.

ER: So this portrayal of Eowyn mythically reconciles two seemingly opposed aspects of the Virgin Mary: that she’s the one who crushes the head of the serpent but is also the handmaid of the Lord.

PC: Brilliant. But these two aspects aren’t merely compatible, either, as if they were two possibilities sitting side by side. They’re both rooted in that theological vision of woman as life-bearer, the mother of all the living, and “antithesis of death,” which expresses her deepest identity.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

ER: I think that using action stories as fantasy, to escape, is not necessarily an attempt to depict or propose the place of woman—it’s an attempt to train the passions and move us to thought. So I think that when we embrace this way of storytelling, what we’re doing is affirming in women certain gifts which are otherwise obscured by quotidian life. Those chivalric codes limit violence to

a ceremonial exchange of property, a game for noblemen and a tragedy for everyone else. So putting women into *that* role is not something I recommend. But what you do in fantasy is present things in a well-wrought and revealing way that shows qualities. Fantasy can communicate in the abstract, for example, the daring of a martyr like Saint Agnes, in a way that might be duller in a realistic telling, and with a gripping and imaginative quality that speaks to many young hearts and inspires imitation.

PC: I think that's an important point to make, because one of the things that's missing from these movies is precisely that power to grant imaginative access to qualities that could help us live boldly and virtuously. To the contrary, the films offer a sort of primary-colors-only moral vision in which meaning and value are simple, basic, and flat. Where there are virtues, they act as moral props for the film. To an extent, this is an artistic problem, and yet also, I think, a symptom of a malnourished moral imagination. If one always feeds the imagination with care, we have to be doubly, trebly circumspect when the imagination is suffering, even diseased.

ER: We can only rely on inspiration—there may be a hundred inferior movies that mess up the idea, so that a good idea strikes suddenly. To steal a line from Yeats, we have to wait for “heaven blazing out of the head.”

Authors' Note: Mention and discussion of particular movies does not imply recommendation.

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CONTEMPLATA

THE FRAGRANCE OF FAITH IN THE MACCABEAN MARTYRS

Hyacinth Grubb, O.P.

Faith is like a mustard seed; it is the smallest grain until it grows into the largest bush. But mustard is grown especially to be tasted, and to taste a mustard seed it must be crushed, ground up into a powder so that its savor is unlocked and its aroma fills the room. It is the same with faith; trials and persecution bring out the fragrance of sanctity that would have otherwise remained known to God alone. So if we want to taste the flavor of sanctity in its strongest and most pungent form, we look to the martyrs.

This issue of *Dominicana* seeks to understand something of the roles of men, women and children in the Church. Thus, I want to turn your attention to a family of martyrs whose story is recounted in Sacred Scripture. Christians in America will probably never be tested as this family was, although their story is re-lived daily by God's faithful who are still persecuted today throughout the world. In the extremes of martyrdom the principles and virtues that should animate every Christian, even those who will never face martyrdom, are made apparent.

The Books of Maccabees tell the history of Israel in the second century before Christ. The Seleucid Empire, encompassing much of modern-day Syria, had initiated an oppression of Judaism and a time of terrible persecution aimed at replacing faithful

adherence to the law of God with Greek paganism. Israel's champion, Judas Maccabee, for whom the books are named, eventually led a rebellion to free Israel from her foreign oppressors. But during the time of persecution before the rebellion began we find a family whose faith was tested by their enemies. Like a mustard seed crushed in a mortar, the strength of their faith is plain to see, and they exude the sweet fragrance of holiness.

So find your bible and read 2 Maccabees, chapters 6-7.

ELEAZAR, THE DIGNITY OF HIS AGE

First, look at Eleazar, one of the foremost scribes, a man advanced in age and of noble appearance. He was required to violate the law of the Torah by eating pork, an unclean food, but steadfastly refused, "preferring a glorious death to a life of defilement" (2 Macc 6:10). Those conducting the unlawful inquisition, because of their long acquaintance with Eleazar, offered to set up a ruse for him: he would pretend to eat the forbidden meat, but actually eat lawful meat. Thus, his friends argued, Eleazar would remain undefiled, the persecutors would appear successful to their superiors, and nobody would have to die. It seemed so very reasonable!

But Eleazar refused, saying:

At our age it would be unbecoming to make such a pretense; many of the young would think the ninety-year-old Eleazar had gone over to an alien religion. If I dissemble to gain a brief moment of life, they would be led astray by me, while I would bring defilement and dishonor on my old age. Even if, for the time being, I avoid human punishment, I shall never, whether alive or dead, escape the hand of the Almighty. Therefore, by bravely giving up life now, I will prove myself worthy of my old age, and I will leave to the young a noble example of how to die willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws (6:24-28).

Eleazar teaches us a threefold lesson. First, he knows that real faith must be lived publicly. This is a great lesson for us, to whom the temptation to hide our faith as something private is constantly present. The world tells us, over and over in many ways: “You can have your religion—as long as I can’t see it!” But a private faith, even if seemingly fulfilling the letter of the commandments, falls woefully short.

Second, Eleazar stands as a model of virtue attained over a lifetime. Holiness and virtue do not often come quickly, but require a lifelong habituation that prepares for the moment of testing. Because of his constancy in the fulfillment of God’s law in the upright life he had lived from childhood, Eleazar was able to act in a noble manner when his hair had grown gray.

Third, Eleazar is particularly conscious of the example he would set to the next generation, and in this he anticipates Christ’s words: “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea” (Matt 18:6) This theme runs throughout each of these martyrs’ stories: as members of the body of Christ, we are not alone in our faith. Our actions affect not only our salvation, but the salvation of others as well. The example we set can strengthen those who see us and encourage them to cling to Christ, or it can drive them away from his gift of everlasting life. We should tremble to think of this responsibility. If Eleazar had participated in this ruse and publicly renounced the law of God, would the next martyrs in our story have stood firm?

THE SEVEN BROTHERS, COMPANIONS IN MARTYRDOM

Groups of martyrs often appear in the Roman Calendar as St. So-and-so and Companions: St. Paul Miki and Companions, St. Charles Lwanga and Companions, for example. This is practical, as there is only so much text you can fit in one calendar, but there is also something spiritually significant about the custom. Martyrs,

like every Christian, are not made holy on their own. So it was with the seven brothers martyred in Second Maccabees.

These brothers were martyred one after another, from oldest to youngest, each in a horrific and graphic manner. This trial threatened to divide the family and to pit brother against brother, but because of their faith, persecution instead strengthened and solidified their unity. They acted as one, for “one of the brothers, speaking for the others said: ‘what do you expect to learn by questioning us? We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors’” (7:2). Their unity was strong enough that one brother spoke for all in accepting martyrdom, and each in their own moment of testing ratified their brother’s words.

Their companionship was in turn a source of strength that each depended upon, as they encouraged each other in word and in example. As the eldest was martyred, “the brothers and their mother encouraged one another to die nobly, with these words: ‘The Lord God is looking on and truly has compassion on us...’” (7:5). It is all too easy, as each one of us knows, to forget the truth of God’s love in moments of temptation. In these times, the companionship of others can save us, as—like these brothers—we remind each other of the truth we forget or choose to ignore. And in turn, preaching these truths to our companions is itself an act of faith that strengthens our own adherence to them. The whole is indeed greater than the sum of the parts. And this preaching, this reminding, is not only in words but also in actions. By giving his life, each brother testified to the others that “God is looking on,” and through this testimony each brother was strengthened.

But what happened after each brother’s martyrdom? One by one they entered the heavenly paradise, of course, but what then? I would suggest, though certainty of this knowledge is beyond any man, that as each brother entered he turned and prayed for his brothers yet to be martyred. Standing before the throne of the Almighty, he interceded for his brothers whose trial was not yet complete, asking for the grace necessary to stand fast. And, I think, they would have especially prayed for their mother.



Attavante degli Attavanti — Martyrdom of the Seven Hebrew Brothers

MOST ADMIRABLE MOTHER

Mother Most Admirable, *Mater Admirabilis*, is properly a title of Mary the Mother of God. Perhaps we can read the mother in this story as a type and foreshadowing of Mary, for “most admirable and worthy of everlasting remembrance was the mother who, seeing her seven sons perish in a single day, bore it courageously because of her hope in the Lord” (7:20). She watched all seven of her sons die. Seven, a number of perfection and completeness, points towards Mary, who watched her perfect son die at the hands of sinful men.

This mother was, in a way, martyred eight times that fateful day. How did she bear it? “By her hope in the Lord” (7:20). Read her two speeches carefully:

I do not know how you came to be in my womb; it was not I who gave you breath and life, nor was it I who arranged the elements you are made of. Therefore, since it is the Creator of the universe who shaped the beginning of humankind

and brought about the origin of everything, he, in his mercy, will give you back both breath and life, because you now disregard yourselves for the sake of his law. (7:22-23)

I beg you, child, to look at the heavens and the earth and see all that is in them; then you will know that God did not make them out of existing things. In the same way humankind came into existence. Do not be afraid of this executioner, but be worthy of your brothers and accept death, so that in the time of mercy I may receive you again with your brothers. (7:28-29)

This mother's hope was founded upon two truths: God truly created all that is, including her own sons, and God will restore life to the righteous. A faith firmly grounded in these truths can withstand any trial; it is a house built on rock (Matt 7:24). For if God created all that is, then everything she possessed was a gift, even her very life and the life of her sons. She knew that she was a steward, not an owner, of these gifts. She knew that gifts are given out of love, that God's mercy will never fail, and that he has the authority and power to protect those gifts as he wills. Most of all, she knew that the trials of this world are a passing pain, incomparable with the glories that await the just.

JOYFUL SUFFERING

In one way, this day was the worst day of this mother's life as her family was killed before her eyes. In another way, this day was the best as her family, "after enduring brief pain, [drank] of never-failing life" (7:36). In one way, this day saw a family torn apart; in another their unity was never stronger. Her sorrow must have pierced her heart, and yet she must have been so proud of her sons. This paradox is the paradox of redemptive suffering, about which St. Paul says, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake" (Col 1:24). Joy and suffering are united within our participation in the Passion

of Christ. The stories of these Maccabean martyrs can shed light on our own lives and the manner in which we ought to conduct ourselves, whether as a man, woman, or child in the Church. For every life will have suffering, but with the crushed mustard seed of faith, the hideousness of suffering is transformed by the fragrant aroma of sanctity rising up to the heavenly courts.

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GESTA DOCTRINAMQUE

Let the brothers reflect on and make known the teachings and achievements (gesta doctrinamque) of those in the family of St. Dominic who have gone before them, while not forgetting to pray for them (See Liber constitutionum et ordinationum 160).

ON THE NATURE OF THE GOOD

ON THE RESTORATION OF THE GOOD OF NATURE

St. Albert the Great

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

St. Albert the Great (c. 1193 - 1280) entered the Order of Preachers in 1223 and became a renowned teacher of Theology, Philosophy, and Natural Science, writing many works on these subjects, though a number of works attributed to him are spurious. He pioneered the use of experimentation in science and the re-appropriation of Aristotle into Western Philosophy. He was appointed Bishop of Regensburg in 1260, but is perhaps best known for having been St. Thomas Aquinas' teacher. In 1931 he was declared a Doctor of the Church, and he is hailed as the *Doctor Universalis*.

De Natura Boni is the earliest known work of St. Albert, written while he taught in Regensburg, sometime between the years 1236-1243. The work is unfinished; what he completed

follows a systematic arrangement for various kinds of goods, examining first a definition, then the good in general, then aspects and examples in particular, making use especially of the spiritual sense of Scripture. His scope is so encompassing that it may seem strange to us. In his treatise on “Political or Civil Virtue,” for instance, he examines the virtue of virginity under the rubric of the civil virtue of temperance, and finds occasion to dedicate over fifty pages to the Blessed Virgin and what is now the “Hail Mary.”

This translated passage, after the general introduction and outline, is part of the short “First Treatise,” and comprises the entire chapter on the recovery of the good of nature after it has been lost by sin.

THE WORK OF BROTHER ALBERT ON THE NATURE OF THE GOOD

“**W**hy do you call me good? No one is good but God” (Lk 18:19). From this response of the Son of God, *good* is understood to be taken in two ways, namely: for that which is good *per se* and substantially and is itself its own goodness, and this is God alone; in another way something is only said to be good, but is not its own goodness. We intend to treat of the differences morally, invoking the Substantially Good, Who, according to Augustine in the book *On the Trinity* (VIII.3.4), is “the Good of every good,” so that He Who according to the riches of His goodness discloses the treasure to be dug up, will disclose in good form, revealing that which, according to ethics, all have desired, for according to Aristotle in the *Ethics* “they declare *good*, what all long for.”

In this treatise, therefore, we desire to search after the nature of created good, more morally than substantially, making: first a treatise on the good of nature, second on the good of political virtue, third on the good of grace, fourth on the good which is in the “gifts,” fifth on the good of beatitude, sixth on the good of the

fruit of the Spirit, seventh and finally on the good of felicity and beatitude, in which is the perfection of spiritual life to the full.

First Treatise: On the Good of Nature.

Part 1: on the Definition of the Good of Nature.

Part 2: How this Good Shows Itself, Fails, and is Restored,
in Man.

It is to be seen, therefore, how this good is shown in man,
how it fails and how it is restored.

Chapter 1: How the good of nature shows itself.

Chapter 2: How the good of nature fails.

Chapter 3: How the good of nature is restored.

The third consideration about that good which is called “good of nature” is, how is it restored when lost? Proceeding therefore in our customary order, we will say first how it is restored in itself, and after that, how it is restored in its parts.

§ 1: HOW IT IS RESTORED IN ITSELF.

Now the good of nature, which is chiefly the aptitude for good, is chiefly restored through three ways: through avoidance of those things which have been the cause and occasion of corruption, through practice of good things, and through desire and affection of heavenly things.

It is avoidance of corrupting evil when you avoid sin and the occasion of sin like a certain place or bad company. This is said in Proverbs (Ecclesiasticus 21:2), “Flee sin as from the face of a serpent,” and Lot was admonished that he go out from Sodom, that is, from sin, and that he “not stand in anywhere in the region,” that is in the place and company of evil men. Hence the prodigal son (Lk 15:18) said “I will go and return to my father,” and the wife of Lot, looking back to the former place and company was

turned into figment and statue made out of salt (Gen 19:12-17). The nature of place teaches us this also, for a thing naturally is generated and preserved when it is in its proper place but is ruined in a place contrary to it (Aristotle, *Physics* I.4.1-2 208a27-210a13), as the Apostle Paul says (1 Cor 15:33): “Depraved conversations ruin good behaviors,” and Psalm 17:26: “With the holy one you will be holy [and with the innocent man you will be innocent; and with the elect one you will be elect, and with the perverse one you will be perverted].”

About the practice (*consuetudine*) of good things, it is said in Lamentations 3:27: “It is good for a man, when he has carried the yoke of the Lord from his youth,” and about Hanna it is said, that after she had received consolation from Eli the priest about the conception of Samuel, “she went home and ate and her facial expressions were no longer changed into diverse things” (1 Kings [1 Sam] 1:18). For she so became accustomed (*consuevit*) to live in the good, that she was no longer bent down towards the shame of being barren (Eccli 6:37): “Take thought on the precepts of God and be most assiduous in His mandates, and He will give you a heart, and the desire of wisdom will be given to you.” Hence the Philosopher says in the old Latin translation of the *Ethics* [see *Nicomachean Ethics* II.1 1103a17-18]: “That virtue which is customary (*consuetudinalis*) comes to be from making-accustomed (*assuefactione*), from which it takes its name.”

About the desire and affection of heavenly things, it is said (Col 3:2): “Savor what is on high, not what is on earth,” and (Isa 8:15): “He will eat butter and honey, so that he may know to reject the bad and choose the good.” “Butter” is fat of devotion of heavenly things; “honey” is the sweetness of the gifts of God, which should be tasted through experience[.] “to reject the bad,” which earlier was prudent to us, “and choose good” of grace, which restores the good of nature.

§ 2. HOW [THE GOOD OF NATURE] IS RESTORED IN [ITS] PARTS.

The good also restored in parts; and the mode or measure is restored by two studies, namely the study of fervor excluding laziness, and the study of discretion reining-in boundless excess.

About the first study, the Apostle [Paul says]: “Being fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord” [Rom 12:11], and in another place, “Do not extinguish the Spirit” [1 Thes 5:9]. Hence it is, that also the Seraphim (which [name] is interpreted to mean wholly “burning” or “ardent”) are said to have six wings, which then are said to be full of eyes, because while they quickly fly in the will of God, they stretch themselves out to God in six ways, namely with thought, with affection, with memory, with work, with [their] whole strength and with intention, but all things are moderated discreetly, lest they do too much or too little, but all things modestly, according to what is fitting to God and according to what they themselves can sustain. About this Isaiah said (40:31): “Who hope in the Lord, will exchange strength and obtain wings like an eagle’s,” and (Ps 18:10): “I will keep my strength safe unto You.”

Strength is kept safe unto the service of the Lord firstly through discretion, lest by useless and indiscriminate fervor it is spent in a short time. St. Bernard says: “Discretion is not so much a virtue as the chariot-driver of virtue” (Sermon 49 on Canticle of Canticles n.5). Secondly, strength is kept safe unto the Lord’s service through decorum, which expels indecency, and thirdly through integrity or composition expelling crudeness. About the first, Psalm 92:1 says: “The Lord has reigned, [He is clothed with] decorum, [the Lord is clothed with strength and has girded himself].” “Decorum,” says the Philosopher Aristotle, “is the elegant measure of parts” (*Topics* III.1 116b21-22), as, for example, color corresponds to the shape of an image, and color of hair corresponds to the color of the face through a proportion, and the size of the nose corresponds to the size of the face, and so with other things. Similarly in deeds there will be decorum, when the work corresponds to the person, and to the place in which he is,

and to the society with which he is, and to profession, as it is written that Augustine said: “I confess that I blush for shame because of costly clothing offered to me, for it is not fitting for this person [i.e. Augustine himself], nor for these grey hairs, nor for this profession” (Sermon 356 n.13).^{*} About this also Proverbs (33:25): “Strength and decorum are his garment,” “strength” because the good of virtue is



Albertus Magnus (Photo: Lawrence Lew, O.P.)

also difficult, “decorum” because of conduct and beauty. For every art and virtue, as the Philosopher says (*Nicomachean Ethics* II.2 1105a7-9), consists concerning the difficult and good, and Psalm 93:1, “You have dressed yourself in praise and decorum.” Therefore the clothing of the angel announcing the resurrection of the Lord is said to be “like snow,” “of which kind a fuller on earth could not make” (Mk 9:3). For the whiteness of the clothing is the beauty of the manner of life excluding all disgrace of shame and indecency. Integrity is the composition of deeds suppressing everything that was wild and rustic.

^{*} The translator consulted *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century. Sermons, vol. III/10 (341-400) on Liturgical Seasons*, trans. and notes by Edmund Hill, O.P. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995), 180.

A corrupted order is rehabilitated through three goods, which especially reorder everything that is disordered, namely: the consideration of one's proper rank, fulfillment of and solicitude for one's office, and attention to the goal.

The consideration of rank is needed lest, perhaps being proud, one exceeds proper status or perhaps a foolish man unjustly deserts the honor of the humble man of God, for it is such confusion which Solomon said he saw (Ecclesiastes 10:5-6): "It is an evil, which I saw under the Sun, like walking through error from the face of the prince: a foolish man was placed in sublime dignity and the rich seated below," and Proverbs (30:21-23): "By three things the earth is moved, and four it cannot sustain: by the servant, when he reigns; by the foolish man, when he is sated with food; and by an odious woman, when she is received in marriage; and by the handmaid, when she is heiress of her mistress." We must especially pay attention to the grade of spiritual dignity "lest we give to aliens our honor and our years to the cruel one" (Prov 5:9), that is, to the demon, who is alienated from grace and cruel in wrath. The rank of human condition, to which we must attend, is the rank of humility, and if someone has honor in grace, he has it from the position of humility. The Gospel of Luke (14:8) says: "When you are called to the wedding, go and recline in the last place, so that when he who invited you comes, he will say to you: 'Friend, move higher'" from the position of humility to the position of honor, which will never be deserted. Ecclesiastes (10:4): "If a spirit having power ascends above you, do not be sent away from your place." "Spirit" is place here for anger, as it is said "spirit [or "breath"] in the nose" (Wis 15:15). Then, however, is the greatest error, when "the fool," that is sensuality of concupiscence, "is placed in sublime dignity," as the king of the soul, "and the rich," that is conscience and reason, "sit below," and so the whole order in the reign of the soul is confounded. Against which Isaiah said (32:1): "Behold the king reigns in justice, and the princes lead in judgement," and again (32:8) "The prince will think those things which are principally worthy, and will himself stand above the

dukes.” Thus consideration of proper status calls back order from confusion.

Solicitude for fulfilling one’s office also calls it back. For if anyone should desert his office and hurry to fulfill someone else’s office, the greatest disorder will follow in the ministry of the Lord, for he does not have the knowledge for fulfilling the other’s office or lacks the power to fulfill it. An office is, as Cicero says, “a fitting action of a person according to the enactment of the country and prince” (*De Officiis* l.1 c.41 n. 148). Our “prince” is God, “enactment of the country,” the mandates and profession of the vow or even a spiritual injunction made about this or that. About this the Apostle Paul says, “Each has his proper gift from God, one this, and another that” (1 Cor 7:7). Hence he also says in his letter to the Romans (12:4-5): “As we have many members in one body, yet all the members do not have one act,” that is, one office, “thus we many are one body in Christ.” If therefore the eye took up the office of the foot, both would be disordered and neglected, and if the stomach usurped the office of the heart, the worst disorder and death would result. So also it is in the offices of the Church, which must remain distinct in their order. The distinction of the household of David shows this; seeing the order of ministries in the household of Solomon, the Queen of the South “did not have anymore spirit” (3 Kings [1 Kings] 10:4-5). This order guards in the heart and orders the whole army of heaven in their hierarchies and orders, while each angel remaining in his own office yields to the others by furnishing his own proper action. John said that he saw this order descend from heaven in Apoc (21:2): “I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, descending from heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” In this order we also will stand rising up again in the Judgment; the Apostle Paul says: “We will all rise up again, each in his order” (see 1 Cor 15:51, 15:23).

Attention to the due goal also restores order, and that most especially; for if we do not attend to the goal, because of which we are and must do everything that we do, it is useless for us to have

reason, in which we were created, which was not given to us for the sake of anything except so that we would know towards what we must tend through our actions and works. Hence it is, that when the Lord said “Blessed are they who suffer persecution,” He added “for the sake of justice...” (Mt 5:10) lest we be exposed as robbers [suffering] for the sake of our demerits. Whence 1 Peter 2:20 says, “What grace is it if you endure blows while sinning? But if you do good and endure suffering, this is grace before God.” Therefore Peter, when he said, “Behold we have left everything,” added “and we have followed You” (Mt 19:27), because, as St. Jerome says (*In Matt.* 1.3.19), to leave all things is not of great merit before God, for even Socrates did this, but in this, to follow the Lord so that it is done for His sake alone, this has grace before God. Therefore even in the first creation of the world God did not rest in anyone of His works, but in Himself he sanctified the Sabbath, so that it might be understood that the intention of our mind should rest nowhere except in Him going on to Him; for this is keeping the Sabbath. Hence the Lord decreed (Exod 20:8) that we sanctify the Sabbath continually by intending the goal, in which all our mobility and operation finds rest. All nature teaches us this; clearly every natural thing has some place as a goal, in which it rests from all movement and does not rest except in that place. For wherever fire is placed, it will not stand still from movement unless it arrives on high. Similarly, on the contrary, earth will not cease to descend, unless it crosses to the very bottom. And similarly the heart of man has a goal, which it attends in its work, so that in that goal it may thoroughly rest from its works, even as God rests; and this is what Augustine said in *Confessions* I.1: “You, Lord, rouse man to delight in praising You, for You have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless, until it rests in You.”

Translated by Daniel Traceski, O.P.

Br. Daniel Traceski entered the Order of Preachers in 2015. Before joining the Order, he studied Philosophy at Ave Maria University.

THE LIVES OF THE BRETHREN

A LIFE: MEASURED, PACKED, SHAKEN, AND OVER- FLOWING

ON FR. THOMAS HEATH, O.P.

Barnabas McHenry, O.P.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This article concerns the life of Fr. Tom Heath, O.P. (1920-2005), who was a son of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph from his first profession in 1944 until his tragic death in 2005. The uniqueness of his life makes it noteworthy. The value it has, however, is magnified because, on a more fundamental level, it is the life to which each Christian is called: a life yielded over to the power of God's transformative grace.

To tell this story properly would not have been possible without the aid of many brother friars who had the honor of knowing the man himself. Chief among these is Fr. Kevin Kraft, O.P., who generously shared the fruit of his own research and love of Fr. Tom. My gratitude is also toward my brethren who spoke with me about their relationships with Fr. Tom, including Frs. Benedict Croell, O.P., Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P., Joe Guido, O.P., Peter Batts, O.P., Frank Sutman, O.P., John Corbett, O.P., and Dominic Mutuku, O.P.. Finally, special thanks to Br. Aquinas Beale, O.P., whose idea this project initially was, and who encouraged me to see it through to completion.

INTRODUCTION

Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you. –Luke 6:38

...I wanted to linger on it, to be saturated with the work of this brother who had painted on those walls five hundred years ago. The serenity, the purity of intention, the sheer goodness, innocence, and above all, the joy, overwhelmed me, [how Fra Angelico] living in a period of turmoil, could create his little islands of beauty and truth for others, if he could accomplish that and still remain a faithful, even holy Dominican, then perhaps there was some hope for me...

–Fr. Tom Heath, O.P. recalling in his travel journal a visit on June 4, 1958 to San Marco, a Dominican residence in Florence, Italy which in the 15th century was home to the famous painter and Dominican, Fra Angelico.

In the summer of 1958, Fr. Tom Heath, O.P. was searching for some hope. Just sixteen months before, his life and ministry had a clear direction. Ordained a priest in 1950, he had just concluded six years as a beloved professor at Trinity College, a women's school next to the Dominican House of Studies where he lived in Washington, D.C. In 1956, he had earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the Catholic University of America. With that degree, he set sail in January 1957 with a few fellow friars on a missionary venture to Beirut, Lebanon, their purpose being to found a university. The mission, however, seemed doomed to fail from the beginning. There was a lack of coordination in the mission, as well as horrific acts of terrorism that brought the young priest face to face with evil. At the end of May 1958, Fr. Tom and the other friars closed down the mission after just over a year. He described his feelings at the time as a mix of disappointment, bitterness, and heartbreak.

In light, then, of the turmoil that was going on in Fr. Tom's religious life, his experience at San Marco described above was a moment of extraordinary grace. Moreover, it seems fitting to call this event a strengthening of the heart, given what the Lord would be calling him to in the remainder of his priestly ministry. For in Fr. Thomas Richard Heath, we meet a friar who would be called to teach the laity, to teach religious theology in the midst of the Second Vatican Council, to form his province's novices during the upheavals of the 1970s, to go to Africa at age sixty, to become a parish priest for the first time at age sixty-six in apartheid South Africa, to become the first superior of the newly formed mission in Kenya at age seventy-one, to suffer the effects of a stroke in his



A young Fr. Tom (L) with his sisters Leslie (R) and Mary (a Maryknoll Missionary Sister), and one of his brothers, Fr. Walter Heath, O.P.

last years, and to ultimately die at age eighty-four as a result of an assault he sustained in a robbery.

The truly remarkable thing, however, is that the words he uses to describe the atmosphere inside the Florentine convent—serene, pure, good, innocent, joyful—are all words that would come to be used to describe him by those who knew this holy man. It is as if he himself—being formed by the Word he studied, contemplated, loved, and preached—became a light, a “little island of beauty and truth” for all those who encountered him during his Dominican life.

A friar of our Province, Fr. Kevin Kraft, has put together a book-length biography of Fr. Tom’s life. For the purposes of this essay, however, we shall endeavor to chart a more modest course. Let us seek to understand this man better through the five adjectives he used to describe his experience at San Marco. In so doing, we can begin to sketch contours of a life lived in the zealous pursuit of sanctity, stoked by the flames of faith, hope, and charity.

SERENITY

Upon returning to the United States in 1958 after his time in Lebanon, Fr. Tom accepted a position teaching theology at St. Mary’s College in Notre Dame, Indiana. These were happy years, years in which teaching and chaplaincy gave Fr. Tom a renewed mission after his disappointing missionary experience. Fr. Tom wrote that he drew inspiration in these years from this reflection Pope St. John XXIII offers in the concluding pages of his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: “Every believer in this world of ours must be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven amidst his fellow men. And he will be this all the more perfectly the more closely he lives in communion with God in the intimacy of his own soul.” Fr. Tom found great wisdom in these lines, commenting on them in his own book, *In the Face of Anguish*, which he published in 1966. He wrote, “After outlining so many great projects for the Christian, he came full circle back to the source of all strength and power,

man's own personal communion with God. Without that there simply cannot be Christian courage or Christian action" (182).

As befits a son of St. Dominic, Fr. Heath did not content himself merely with the study of the Pope's words. He contemplated them, and then he tried to pass on the fruits of his contemplation to his students. Perhaps from his own experience of personal turmoil a few years before, he knew that fostering such a relationship with God could benefit his students as they tried to navigate the anxieties of their college years. Their uncertainty was compounded by the social upheavals taking place in the 1960s. For them, Fr. Tom's serene disposition was a calming and stabilizing presence. One former student recounted her chaplain and professor's impact particularly on female college students in an alumni magazine article published upon his death. It is striking how fondly he is remembered, even four decades later: "As a beloved chaplain at St. Mary's during the 1960s, Father Heath touched many of us with his unpretentious, down-to-earth manner and his compassionate and caring way. It was a time of much change in the Church and in the world. Father Heath helped provide a steady and common sense approach to young women for whom the foundation on which they had planned to build their lives seemed shaken and vulnerable."

In 1965, Fr. Tom moved on from St. Mary's to teach his brethren at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C. These were trying times. In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, there were differences of opinion in the seminary about whether the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas should still be taught as the foundation of priestly education. During these years, Fr. Tom heard complaints from some seminarians about the uselessness of lectures, antiquated thinking stifling their studies, and a host of other concerns.

Through it all, Fr. Tom persevered in teaching the Angelic Doctor, even contributing two volumes (35 & 51) in a sixty-one volume set of St. Thomas's most famous and important work, the *Summa Theologiae*, edited by fellow Dominican Fr. Thomas Gilby.

A journal entry from November 8, 1968 gives an insight into his indefatigable serenity amidst a chaotic period: “A delicious moment a while ago. Late afternoon, dusk, a cool, almost cold draft of air in the room from an open window, lights of cars streaming by on Michigan Avenue: the CU [Catholic University] chimes playing *Ave Regina Caelorum*. I was cast back into the Middle Ages: St. Thomas and Paris, and the cathedrals, and the goodness of men, and love and joy, and peace. A small look on heaven.”

PURITY

While Fr. Tom was convinced of the necessity and fruitfulness of teaching the perennial truths of the faith in the classroom, he also was profoundly moved by the spirit of many Christians who at that time had newly devoted themselves to causes of justice and peace. Reading his description of this period of his life, one catches a glimpse of a man seeking to follow Christ in a new way: through direct interaction with the poor and marginalized. In his heart, he felt a pull to know those in the black community in Washington in a more intimate, Christ-like way. Finding that the House of Studies was too institutional of a place for this sort of encounter, he and several other friars began considering moving to a house a few blocks away, where they would operate a legal aid office as well as a meeting and prayer space for the people of the neighborhood. They spent the last months of 1966 discerning the feasibility of such a project, even traveling to New York City to seek the counsel of Dorothy Day, the social activist and founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, whose cause for canonization is now open. She gave them her enthusiastic endorsement.

In February 1967, Fr. Tom and another priest moved into 123 11th Street, which became known as the “123 House”. By June, there were five friars in residence. “All of us,” Fr. Tom writes in reflection years later, “in one way or another felt that we had finally been able to concretize a commitment—the gospel’s commitment—to the poor, that our love for our black brothers and sisters was not

just talk but had something visible and tangible behind it.” He had sought after and found a way to answer the call to go out and meet the poor and disenfranchised in his community.

All the while that Fr. Tom lived at the 123 House, he still kept teaching at the House of Studies. After about a year and a half, the frenetic pace of his life had taken a toll. It was common for him to rise at dawn and not go to bed until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. Exhausted by the daily labor, his life in the dual apostolates of social activism and teaching had left little space in his schedule for prayer, fraternity with other friars, and preparing his lectures. The time had come once again to purify his Dominican life, to prune the branch in order to save the tree. He writes, “I...came to the decision to leave 123, to return to the House of Studies, to teach better, to preach frequently in the white suburbs on the issues that I now knew more about and could speak on with a new authority. I knew I would look less relevant, less authentic, but that actually I would be doing what I could do.”

Fr. Tom was the only priest of those who lived at 123 to return to the conventual life at the House of Studies. He was also the only one who did not leave the Order in the turbulent years that followed. It is a testament to the purity of his life that he was able to discern what was truly at the heart—what was the essence—of his consecrated life. Very soon, he would be asked to share that knowledge with his younger brethren in a new role.

GOODNESS

In 1974, Fr. Tom took over as Novice Master, moving to the Novitiate in Dover, Massachusetts. He had been interviewed by the Provincial Council for the same position in 1972. In a reflection years later, he recalls that on the flight to the interview, he had come up with a few reasons why he would not be a good choice. Among these were his age (he was fifty-two at the time), his impracticality, and his lack of popularity with the student brothers in Washington. The Council decided at that time on another friar

for the post, but Fr. Tom was asked to accept the position when it once again became vacant two years later.

Friars who were assigned to Dover in those years speak of the goodness of the man: what he admittedly lacked as a practical administrator, he made up for in his gentleness and concern for the brothers as individuals. More than one characterized him as a mystic of sorts: he saw things on a different plane than what was objectively perceptible. Fr. Tom once wrote that his happiest moments were when he was privileged to be a witness to moments of grace in the life of a young friar: “A novice would say something quite innocently, not realizing it was revealing the depths of goodness in his soul, or another who had been thinking about leaving and praying about it would come in and tell me he had realized that his whole happiness lay in preaching the gospel.”

One friar remembers an occasion when Fr. Tom, knowing he loved poetry, delivered him a hand-written poem composed on a yellow sheet torn off of a legal pad about confession. The first line betrays the gentleness and pastoral heart of its author: “My heart is pierced by gentle things, / caught in cruel circumstances.” In another place, Fr. Tom’s own description of his joy as Novice Master conveys the warmth and goodness with which he lived:

What I liked to do most was talk to them, not as a group, but individually, about our life, about good Dominicans I knew, good books I had read by or about Dominicans, or just any good books, novels, poetry, biographies. And I would listen to them talk about their families, their spiritual journeys, so to speak, what they were currently reading, their hopes. I would encourage them to write, to pray, or forgive, or to understand other novices whose views they could never share. Many times after such interviews I would stand at the window looking out at the trees in the distance, smoking my pipe, realizing that no one could ever be happier.

INNOCENCE

Part of the attractiveness of Fr. Tom's life is its innocence: he was a trusting, obedient son of the Order and of the Lord's mysterious will. In 1972, he had questioned his suitability for the role of Novice Master because he was fifty-two years old. Now in 1979, with Fr. Tom nearing his sixtieth birthday, his Provincial asked if he would be willing to go to Lesotho, a small country in the middle of apartheid South Africa, to be a mentor in the novitiate community there that was looking for help.

At first he hesitated. Upon the completion of his duties as Novice Master, he had hoped to return to teaching in Washington, where his biological brother Mark (one of two other Heath brothers in the Order) was living. There was also, one would imagine, some trepidation due to his past failure as a missionary in Lebanon. After some thought, however, he abandoned himself with joy to God's will. Of this decision, he writes, "I really wanted to come to Africa. The excitement that began in my heart then... was simply wonderful. I was a young priest again, going on the missions. Everything that was latent in my romantic and missionary heart was set on fire."

In 1986, after six years spent teaching the novices in Lesotho as well as children at a local high school, Fr. Tom was asked once again to consent to a new apostolate. At age sixty-six, he was, for the first time in his priesthood, asked to be a parish priest. In this new ministry, Fr. Tom was a shepherd to both black and white South Africans, attempting to unite them in an awareness of what they really were: the one Body of Christ. His holy meekness and innocence is almost palpable in this reflection from a parishioner: "He loved quoting poetry but tended to dissolve into tears halfway. He was a gentle shepherd... It was this gift of celebrating every experience God sent him as if it were of the utmost importance at that moment that made this very humble and poverty-loving priest a great one."

As Fr. Tom entered into his eighth decade of life, one could reasonably assume that dramatic changes were over for this elderly priest. He had settled into his role as pastor and was content and happy there. But there was one final move remaining. After having spent over a decade in South Africa, Fr. Tom's Provincial asked him to go to assist his brethren in the founding of a new mission in East Africa. It was to be on Kenyan soil that the final scene of this wonderful life was to be acted out.

Joy

Fr. Tom arrived in Nairobi, Kenya in April 1991. A month later, he was elected as the first Vicar Provincial of the new mission. He led the Vicariate through its first year, raising funds and securing housing for the foundation. This administrative work was grueling for him, however, and in June 1992 he decided to step down in order to return to teaching at the national diocesan seminary. He also formed a friendship with a community of Franciscan sisters nearby, for whom he would celebrate Mass several times a week. One sister recalls that he made it a point to be present each year on "clothing day", when the new novices would receive their habit and their religious name. From that day forward, he would remember each of their names, a sign of his love and concern for them.

These final years were in many ways the crown of a life formed and transformed by the Order and the Word of God. Friars present with him in Kenya recall that his joy and fulfillment was evident, even as his body and memory began to deteriorate. In a 1998 newsletter, he told family and friends that he didn't have plenty of "pep" anymore, but he had "enough to keep teaching and preaching almost every day, and reading a lot for new courses, and loving life." One friar assigned with him at the novitiate in Kisumu recalls how in the evenings Fr. Tom would be in his room, either studying or praying under a single light bulb that hung from the ceiling. His door was always ajar, so as to be available to the other friars who might want to seek his counsel or go to confession. His

self-deprecating humor and generosity was a model for the friar novices with whom he lived. He was also beloved in the town, where both Christians and Muslims alike knew him as “the joyful priest.”

Fr. Tom came to love Kenya in a way different from all his other postings. In a 1998 correspondence with his superior, Fr. Tom showed his joy and happiness in the mission through his request to someday be buried in Africa. He writes, “On the subject of where I want to be buried, my desire is to die and be buried here in Kenya, in Kisumu, on our property across the road from the novitiate, what Kieran [another priest in the mission] calls the Orange Grove.” Several years later, Fr. Tom’s desire would be realized, albeit through tragedy. On the evening of January 4, 2005, the novitiate house was invaded by a band of robbers. Several men held the friars at bay with AK-47s and machetes, while others went around looking for valuables to take. In the midst of the looting, Fr. Tom was cut on the arm by the blade of a weapon and was subjected to severe blows to his elderly body. In the days that followed, the eighty-four-year-old developed pneumonia and suffered internal bleeding in his abdomen as a result of the injuries he had sustained.

Several days later, on the evening of January 13, the Lord called Fr. Tom to his eternal rest. The Vicar Provincial at the time wrote this moving commemoration of his fallen brother to the members of the Province on the day after his death. It is a testament to a life lived out in joy:

Tom really surprised us, for one last time. This morning we celebrated MP [Morning Prayer] and Eucharist, missing his voice in the third psalm, ‘Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth, serve the Lord with gladness,’ which he always belted out with relish. How we will miss him! Tom has been a pillar of the Vicariate from the very beginning... Comparisons are odious, but there is no doubt that Tom was the most beloved of all the Brothers in the Vicariate. Young Brothers

rallied around him and felt comfortable with him, while the Elders found in him the wisest of counselors.

POSTSCRIPT

On January 17, 2005, a Mass of Christian burial was celebrated for the repose of the soul of Fr. Tom. An enormous gathering of friars, sisters, Christians, and Muslims came to pay their respects to the life of this holy man, a man whose life came to resemble those masterpieces made by his elder brother Fra Angelico. Christ himself had crafted a masterpiece out of this poor friar's existence, a life that manifested the serenity, purity of intention, sheer goodness, innocence, and, above all, the joy of knowing the Lord and doing his will.

Fr. Tom is buried where he had wished to be, in the garden across the road from the novitiate in Kisumu. His grave is beside a lemon tree, which he had planted on the day the novitiate was dedicated. Some months after his death, Fr. Tom's name was included in the "Martyrology of the Contemporary Church," published by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples as a testament to those who have given their lives as part of their witness to the faith. In 2009, a friar of our Province who lived in Kenya at the end of Fr. Tom's life, Fr. Andrew Hofer, wrote a poem, "For a martyr of the contemporary Church", dedicated to the memory of Fr. Tom:

Lala salama.

"Rest in peace," in Swahili's song
still echoes in my ears.

This lullaby, like the lemon tree,
hovers over the missionary's grave.
Sisters sing to their dead beloved—
priest, poet, teacher, friend—
as if rocking a child to sleep.

Brothers shovel over earth's wound
with faith in the Seed, the one Seed,
that bears much fruit.

In face of anguish, he held the Ancient of Days
as the Virgin's child.

The old was made young in joyful mystery—
charity's effect.

The new Simeon witnessed the marvel.

His feet then walked in peace
towards a foreign land he glimpsed
where martyrs beat drums, virgins dance,
and dreams unfold like rose petals
for the Master's endless glory.

Lala salama.



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ORIGINAL WRITINGS

THE WAGES OF SIN

John Thomas Fisher, O.P.

Eli raised his hoe.

...whack...whack...whack...

“Damned snake.”

...whack...whack...whack...

“Damned if I never’ve seen a snake in here.”

...whack...whack...whack...

Miriam wasn’t about to help outside anymore. She had seen a snake a few weeks ago and wouldn’t go near the garden until it was good and dead. Eli hadn’t seen the snake, and couldn’t care less if he did, since he knew that Miriam just didn’t want to do any extra work that made her sweat too bad. Miriam told herself that she didn’t care what Eli thought anymore. She was determined solely to peel the carrots, snap the peas, clean the house, do the laundry, sew, or anything else that didn’t require her leaving the porch.

For the past twelve summers, the two had enjoyed staying at their grandparents’ house. While they were there, they would help keep the house and yard in order. They used to work together every day on their chores, but now that Miriam refused to work

in the garden, Eli seemed to have double the work. Today he was hoeing weeds in a far section of the property.

Eli was twenty-three now, which made his sister about twenty, if he remembered right. She was sitting outside in one of the rocking chairs next to her grandmother. The two sat and rocked while mending pants, threading the patches calmly and methodically like their own sort of meditation. They kept their hands busy with the pants and their mouths busy with small talk centering around the vegetables' progress, Preacher Wilson's sermon on the Sunday previous, or the other ladies in town. Miriam adored these moments with her grandmother, who looked as if she had jumped ahead a decade in time since the last year. While they were reviewing the town's most recent gossip, Eli dragged himself to the porch to grab some lemonade before returning to the weeds. Working out in the sun always made him look like he had just jumped out of a boiling lake.

"Papa's gonna hafta git some new fertilizer if he wants anything to grow over there. They got all sorts of new dirt you can spread around the yard nowadays. I'm not about to try and convinc'im, but y'all might as well."

The wrinkled skin on the side of his grandmother's face turned upward for a few seconds as she lifted the pitcher with the same worn-down hands that had reared his father. These ten acres hadn't seen anything *new* in four decades; the obvious impracticality of Eli's suggestion didn't really warrant a response.

"You're doing a fine job, honey. Just find that snake so Miriam can go out and help you finish up quicker."

Miriam watched with a sprouting tinge of guilt as her brother walked back up the hill through the yard and into the plot of land that was waiting to become a garden again. He had barely acknowledged her presence in the past week, and she

wished beyond all else that her brother had a helper out there in the sun so that he wouldn't be so angry at her. She reset her mind as she grabbed another pair of pants lying beside her and resumed threading. She smiled as she noticed within herself the safe feeling that the porch gave. The only concern of her's now was that the sun was starting to make its way toward the front of the house. The overhang was becoming less useful as the line of provided shade crawled closer to her feet. She looked at her clean toes and thanked God that her grandmother accommodated her request to work exclusively around the house.

Now that she thought of it, Miriam never was the type of girl to head outside too much anyway. When they were younger, Eli found occasional success in convincing her to play outside in the woods. Miriam would ride her bike behind her brother along trails littered with tree stumps, pricker bushes, and fallen branches that confirmed her suspicions of a dangerous world. Once they grew up a little and he found his own friends that would catch frogs, swim in the leech-filled lake, throw mud, and whatever else it was that boys did, he quickly learned to occupy himself with anything that let him be outside and consequently away from her.

Miriam had kept to herself for the past few years, and found as much pleasure in books and in her own head as Eli did in physical activity. She could sit in her room for hours so long as she wasn't told to get up and help with something. It seemed that her past teachers, peers, or even her own family could overlook her existence. Miriam's face was as forgettable as her opinions, and her choice in clothing made the girls from *Little House on the Prairie* look like the runway models in New York. She kept two friends from town who were just as quiet as she: Ruth and Ava-Mae. Though it had taken the entirety of her childhood to learn how to trust them, they shared everything with each other. The trio had fortunately slipped through high school unnoticed by most,

and now about town they did the same. They met on Wednesday mornings at a beauty parlor frequented by women three times their age to share whatever was on their mind. Miriam kept a part time job as church custodian, a position usually reserved for the congregation's widows. She said she wouldn't mind being married soon, but she knew that if she were to continue as she was now for the rest of her life, she would be no worse off when the time came for her to slip into her deathbed.

The only truly significant moment of Miriam's life had occurred when she arrived at the beginning of the summer. While reaching to pick a hornworm off the tomato plants one morning, she spotted the yellow tip of a cottonmouth's tail. A single involuntary motion within her launched her body back and onto the ground. She landed on her backside and screamed as the snake coiled in on itself and slowly opened its mouth. It remained silent as its jaw hung open in perfect tension, its black eyes maintaining a fixed stare at her. Miriam scrambled backward until she was out of the plants and found the strength to stand up and run to the porch. She was finally able to speak by nightfall. Two months later, she could still feel the creature's stare, as if the eyes themselves had pierced her and the wound had yet to heal. The snake seemed to have observed her thoughts, and such a violation of her reserve could neither be forgotten nor forgiven overnight. If only Eli could understand her experience, he would be more sympathetic toward her resolve never to re-enter the garden where she had first become so exposed.

Eli was everything that Miriam was not. Growing up, he tried to break her attachment to her insecurities but washed his hands when he saw his efforts producing no fruit. He instead relished his newfound independence by joining the football and wrestling teams, working in construction on the side, and paying for his first truck in cash. The fact that his hands were already so cracked

verified him for others as the worker that he knew he was. Though he didn't feel guilty about anything in his life, he knew that one day (far, far into the future) he would have to hand over his energy and health to pay back for all the beer and pleasure he consumed over the weekends. He had graduated high school by the skin of his teeth and began working construction full-time, only taking the summers off to continue helping his grandparents, as any loyal kin ought to do. He never stole, lied, coveted, or killed. Whatever work he did on the Sabbath was made up for by Miriam's rest for the remainder of the week, so despite the occasional quirk, Eli knew that he was a very good man.

He was a natural workhorse, preferring anything that could stimulate his ever-shifting interests and be of service to someone else. His construction job gave him enough stability in life, and the immediacy of progress afforded by the work satisfied his twitchy heart. At the end of each day he could see how the land's resources had been used against itself to erect a home atop once-undisturbed ground. Incarnations of his own hands, the works testified, to him, his capabilities.

This daily routine was invigorating enough, yet a search for the exotic always lurked in the back of his head. He saw himself as a young man of integrity but could admit (if pushed on it hard enough) that there might be a breach in his mind that made him enthusiastic about things his peers found downright odd. While his friends and coworkers let most of it go, it once took a month for him to be convinced that no one cared to share a "pet rat" and that getting a tattoo on his forehead would be a bad idea after all. But it was rare that he let his interests run away from him like that. Labor gave Eli all the source of mental stillness he needed; there was nothing like a job to make him focus.

Row after row, the hoe struck the dirt, snapping the weeds with a pleasing *whack!* that made for a rhythmic working tune. His body became one with the tool after only a few swings. He was certain that he wouldn't find a snake regardless of his sister's neurotic episode. Such was the case with her. She was afraid to do

anything that challenged her comfort. She never liked to trouble herself with sweat or toil. This snake was more of an excuse *for* her than a threat *to* her.

After another hour of being out in the sun, Eli staggered back to the house to get some water. His grandmother had gone inside to get supper started and his sister was still sitting on the porch fixing a button on one of their grandfather's Sunday suits. He turned on the spigot knob and waited for the sputtering brown water from the hosepipe to turn into a clear, steady stream before lowering himself. He took slow gulps and lifted his head every few seconds for a breath, returning to the hose for a little longer each time. Miriam got up and walked over to the side railing. She hung halfway over and stared down at the back of his neck.

"I'm sorry I can't help you out there, Eli." She said in the sweetest voice she could don.

"Mmhmmm, codvvvvben ifyahwinto," the hose replied.

"I said, 'I'm sorry I can't help you.'"

Eli lifted his head and stared straight into the wooden panels of the house. "I heard ya. I said you could if you wanted to."

"No sir, you know I'm too scared bout that snake. I wish I wasn't, but I just can't picture myself out there. It's a horrible feelin'. *Horrible*. The thing bout near killed me."

Eli turned off the spigot and looked over at the sewing supplies next to her rocking chair. He refused to acknowledge his sister's reference to the snake. "Seems like you got yerself somethin' to keep you occupied at least."

“Well, yes. Papa’s got a lot of clothes that can’t be said to be too presentable, particularly for church. Grandma’s gotten so used to it that she hasn’t paid it much mind.”

He paused for a second to look at the yard, then back at the porch, and said to the pile of clothes, “You know he’s not gonna be wearin’em much longer, if at all. The man’s got three shirts and three pants. Two’s for workin’, one’s for town. Nothin’s changed bout that since last year or the year before or the year before that. Yer wastin’ yer time.”

“No, sir! I’ve been plenty of help... But, you know what? The best thing about the past couple weeks is just bein’ up here with Grandma. We’ve talked and talked and laughed and laughed. It’s like havin’ an old friend. You should try workin’ next to Papa out there in the yard. Y’all hardly said anything to each other since you been here. ‘N fact, you’ve hardly said a word to anybody.” The disapproval that she let enter her voice made her immediately kick herself. She had conjured up this rebuke for days in her head, but demanded of herself that she give it as sweetly as possible.

Eli kept his eyes on the porch steps, “Don’t you go correctin’ me, now. I been too busy. There’s lots to do. I can’t just be yappin’ away bout nothin’ and actin’ like I’m on some vacation. These folks’re gettin’ old and we gotta help more than we used to. You’re playin’em for fools if you think they’re real happy bout you sittin’ on yer rear end all day watchin’ me work knowin’ good and well that you can help just as good if you tried a little!”

“Eli! Don’t be ugly. I’m doin’ all I can. You been so caught up in work that you’re gonna get to the pearly gates with nothin’ to show but some clipped weeds and dirt on your hands. You’re gonna lose all the memories you could’ve had if you don’t take a break and show your face once in a while.” She had rehearsed that line as well, but everything was spilling out faster, louder, and sharper than she imagined it would. This was the most they had

talked to each other in three months, and it surprised her that she could be so forward all of a sudden. It was as if his presence alone made the frustration she felt at herself for not being with him shift focus to his retort, and then to his whole self.

“Another thing, you! You hadn’t once asked me how I’m *doin’* since I saw that snake. You never once told me you’d go out and find it. You haven’t once asked me to describe it! You don’t really care if I’m out there with you or not. You WANNA be out there workin’ by yourself! You don’t respect your *kin*! You’re a worshipper of *work*! It’s *idolatry*! IDOLATERS SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM, ELI!!”

Eli’s face was now altogether red, but it was impossible to tell at this point from exactly what. He looked down and exhaled all the air that was in him, as if he were trying to blow all the dirt off his boots. After another deep breath, he lifted his finger and directed his eyes straight into hers. “Now. You do what you do best an’ shut yer mouth! I’m yer big brother. Don’t... you... TALK... to me... like... that!”

He stopped himself before he could unleash a string of accusations at his sister, accusations he had built up in the quiet of his heart over the past month. She was lazy, self-absorbed, ungenerous, petty, conceited. He could go on, but he thought it best not to think on these things for too long. He considered it better at the moment to do what was right and step out from under the wrath of an angry woman. He let his gaze rest on the sun and judged there to be another hour and a half of good light to work with.

“I’m doin’ good here,” he mumbled.

And with that, he walked back up the hill.

Before he set to hoeing again, Eli stood facing the woods, wondering what might be hiding behind the treeline. Without his consent, his thoughts ran away from him.

So what if there's a snake in here?

What if she got bit?

So what?

What if he himself were ever bitten by a snake? Maybe those cottonmouths weren't as bad as they had been told growing up. Maybe, maybe so, though. Perhaps you'd just feel the venom stream into the blood around the bite, your heart rate would speed up, you'd lay down and then feel like you were going to sleep.

Done.

Maybe that's not what it's like at all. Who cares. The worst thing that happens at the end is dying, and that's not all bad. Dying's something that everyone has to go through at one point or another, but it can't really make that big a difference if it happens at twenty years old or eighty. People come and go so often that in the grand scheme of things, sixty years doesn't make too big a difference. People always treat life as if every second is the most defining moment in history. Miriam thinks those clothes are such a big deal. Not many things in life are too frustrating, but exaggerating the little things is surely one of them. Death is the end like birth is the beginning, and it's that simple. When will people just accept the facts of life and get over it?! Hell, everybody's gonna die, and God knows I ain't about to die worryin' about it.

Eli looked up as a line of clouds started to march across the sky, bringing with them a considerable breeze that promised a storm at some point in the evening.

He had never thought sincerely about his own death. He knew it would happen, but he had never really confronted the reality in such brutal terms until now. What would he wear in the casket? *His* casket? Who would come to the funeral? Would the preacher have anything to say? What's it like not to exist? Not to breathe anymore? Not to see, hear, touch, feel, or be able to get out and do anything? He pictured himself dead. His eyes would be sunken in, face wan and gray, fingers intertwined over a Bible laid across his belly. He then thought that maybe he wouldn't die after all! Absurd as it sounds, there could be another way. Maybe they would finally discover a cure for death. Maybe he could—

"Eli! Where are you, son?" His grandfather called from somewhere unseen, interrupting his brief existential crisis.

"Over here, Papa! You need somethin'?"

"Nah, son. Just heard you stop and I's just makin' sure you didn't collapse or nothin'. Come on in the house if you get to feelin' sick!"

After a quick *Yessir!* Eli went back to his weeds, silently cursing Miriam. Were she out here, he would have been finished already.

When he looked down, he saw it.

It was stretched out full length, nearly blending in with the shade of the overgrown weeds. The cottonmouth disclosed its age with a perfectly formed triangular head and dark brown stripes. The creek was down the hill, which made it odd that it could be found

so far from the water. Then again, who was he to question a snake? His sister's rival was almost too stunning to kill. The thick body laid perfectly still in the summer heat with its cold blood running up and down underneath four feet of scales. He could easily take up his hoe right now, sever its head, and hand it over on a platter to persuade Miriam to do some work after all.

Although, were Eli to kill this creature, he would have to admit that Miriam was right. Unsure over whether he could concede to this, he leaned his hands and chin against the hoe and stared down at the back of its head.

He was in awe. He got the sense as he looked at the snake facing the opposite direction, too dignified to concern himself with Eli's presence, that an old friend was resurrected. He longed to touch it, hold it, possess it. He imagined being able to marvel at its beauty whenever it pleased him. The mere thought of it filled his heart with pride. He would be held in such esteem handling "dangerous" animals so close. Of course, no one would know that the snake wouldn't be dangerous *to him*. Eli could tell that the snake had no mind to harm him. It looked so peaceful lying there that he could tell the two could easily become an inseparable pair if only he took a moment to reach out inch by inch.

He shook his head and quickly considered how absurd this was. Were he simply to kill the beast now, it'd be one less worry around the house. He was a grown man now, and a man can admit when he's wrong. Because he was more mature than Miriam, he could fess up that the garden still had a snake but that he had killed it so now all was well. Yes, she would say *I told you so*, but he would say *I took care of it*, a phrase that pleased him just fine.

He looked back down, eyeing Majesty itself.

What a foolish way to think about a snake, he thought to himself.

And yet...

Eli raised his hoe.

...whack...whack...whack...

“Damned snake.”

...whack...whack...whack...

“Damned if I never’ve seen a snake in here.”

...whack...whack...whack...

Br. John Thomas Fisher entered the Order of Preachers in 2013. Before joining the Order, he studied Philosophy and French at the University of South Carolina.

FRIARS' BOOKSHELF

LOST AND FOUND

Michael O'Brien. *The Fool of New York City*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 2016.

Editor's Note: This review discloses significant plot details.

The ability to capture the heart of a reader is a mark of an artist—one who understands the human mind and psyche. Michael O'Brien's most recent novel, *The Fool of New York City*, seizes his reader in just this way as he tells the story of a young man seemingly broken by his suffering. The drama of Paul Maximilian Davies—a man in his early twenties who has suffered from amnesia as the result of a yet unknown event—is one that puts us face-to-face with the despair of not knowing oneself. Through the course of the story, as he comes to learn of his identity, Max's return to himself is essentially paired with his suffering. Max learns that to come to know who he is means that he must face himself, the real Paul Maximilian Davies, no matter the cost.

The story of Max's struggle plays out in four parts, delineated by occasions of self-discovery. We are first introduced to a young homeless man without a name, confused by the world around him. Waking up in an abandoned house in New York City, he questions his existence: "Are there other hints out there? Will they tell you your name and your purpose? Will they explain why you are here? You are pressing your face to the glass, waiting for

the answers to these questions” (10-11). And in response to this quasi-prayer, a giant man named Billy finds Max and rescues him. The rest of the story follows on the development of this relationship and the reciprocal nurturing that they provide for each other.

Billy believes that, in order to determine Max’s true identity, the two of them should follow whatever bits of memory Max has left. The second part of the novel begins when Max believes that he is the painter Francisco de Goya, after having visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Max continues to have jumbled memories of his past, which leads the pair to the Canadian border and eventually to Vermont. There, in rural New England, they find the ruins of an old family home and brewery where Billy discovers Max’s wallet and identification.

Learning his real name, we are drawn with Max into his past, to the core of his suffering. After finding his old apartment, Max remembers the tragic events of his life: the death of his parents and younger brother on September 11, 2001, and his separation from the woman he loved, Françoise. After losing Françoise, while in a spiraling depression, Max left New York City to go to his grandparents’ home in Vermont where he fell through the ice on the pond, causing his amnesia.

The final part of the novel details Max’s coming to terms with his past. Though he struggles with re-encountering these painful realities, with the friendship of Billy he slowly heals. Through the pain he is able to live with himself, to come to know himself, and to begin to grow into the man he has always longed to be.

O’Brien’s gift is that he is not only able to elicit sympathy from his readers, but empathy as well. We are drawn to the characters of his novel, not just to read about their pain and joy, but to actually identify, in our own ways, with them. Over the course of the narrative O’Brien pricks those places in our own hearts that we fear, those places that we prefer to leave alone. Yet his story does not leave us here. He beautifully and subtly works redemption into the story with such finesse that it almost goes unnoticed.

During Max's venture into his past, he remembers a note that his grandfather wrote for him several years after the death of his family. Worrying about his grandson's future he muses about those who must endure incredible grief and their grasp for comfort: "For some, this takes shape in the mind as dreams of ambition fulfilled, earthly securities seized at all costs and held at all costs. For the best of men, it is a yearning forward to a better self. In most, if not all, there reign the soundless alarums of fear. By love do we cast out fear. By love do we become who we are" (170). The casting off of fear through love is a motif that runs consistently throughout the novel, most especially in the relationship between Billy and Max.

It is only in this relationship with another that Max finds himself. Reminiscent of the words of the Second Vatican Council, "[Christ] fully reveals man to man himself" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22), Max realizes this in his despair: "Goodness has no explanation. You cannot trust it. But you have nowhere else to go" (19). Over and again, he steps deeper back into reality along with someone else. O'Brien describes how Max stands "side by side," either with Billy (249, 251), or Françoise (196), or Katie (268), a girl with whom he falls in love at the end of the novel.

The connection of self-discovery and friendship, though, is not limited to the purely natural. For O'Brien, and for his characters, friendship is something that transcends earthly limits and carries us to Christ. There is a delicate, but robust sense of man's instrumental participation in the salvation of others. At their first meeting, because Max is suffering from hypothermia, Billy helps him into dry, warm clothes. In this moment, Billy becomes an *alter Christus*: "The giant again kneels and removes your wet sandals and socks. Your feet are blue. He dries your feet with a towel. He brings socks that he pulls over your feet" (20). Billy's departure at the end of the novel evokes a sort of ascension—though he is no longer with Max in person, he does not abandon him, leaving signs of his presence in Max's life.

O'Brien ends the novel on Christmas. While at Church with Katie and her family on Christmas Eve, Max reflects on being with Christ, something new, but not out of place: "As if this, *here*, was the humble center of the universe, and I had reached it at last. No one, not even a person like me, was excluded. Though I did not yet fully know it, I was home" (277-78). The next morning, outside his door, he finds a stuffed merganser that he and Billy had restored when they first met.

The Fool of New York City does something unique—it captures the powerful and often unspoken reality of the salvific nature of love, not in some abstract way, but through the tangible friendship of Billy and Max. O'Brien draws on something all human beings need: the love of another without which we begin to lose our identity. Friendship with others, and ultimately friendship with Christ, is the principle of humanization; without it we become objects, the playthings of our loneliness. O'Brien takes us on Max's journey as if it was our own, inviting us to heed the words of Max's grandfather: "By love do we cast out fear. By love do we become who we are."

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A HIDDEN SWORD FOR HIDDEN SOLDIERS

Donald Calloway, MIC. *Champions of the Rosary: The History and Heroes of a Spiritual Weapon*. Stockbridge, MA: Marian Press, 2016.

A Marian priest and alumnus of the Dominican House of Studies is writing to spread zeal for contemplation and apostolic activity through the Rosary. In the introduction to his latest book, *Champions of the Rosary: The History and Heroes of a Spiritual Weapon*, Father Donald Calloway tells us that the Rosary prompted his initial conversion to the Catholic Faith. He explains that the Rosary is the overlooked “weapon” of heavenly design forged to confront and reverse the unbelief, hedonism, and spiritual callousness of our time (21-24). This book is at once a history, a collection of remarkable testimonies, and a guide to the Rosary—what some reviewers have called a “*summa* of the Rosary.” In undertaking this project, Calloway follows upon the life work of Bl. Alan de la Roche (1428-1475) and St. Louis Marie de Montfort (1673-1716), outstanding men who revived an “ancient” prayer which was already part of Dominican preaching (65-69, 104-105). Endorsements for the work have not been sparse; this includes praise from some twenty-nine notable Dominicans including the Master of the Order and several bishops. *Champions of the Rosary* will help bolster one’s appreciation for this fundamental Catholic prayer and promises to encourage clerics and laity in their own capacities to “go and preach” Mary’s Rosary.

Calloway’s first two sections, history and saintly testimony, receive the most attention overall. The historical account works to enlighten the obscure past of this devotion in light of more recent criticism (see below). The hagiographical section then brings to the forefront a litany of personal witnesses (twenty-six “champions of the Rosary” from St. Dominic to the newly-canonized St. Teresa of Calcutta). Let two examples—one historical and one anecdotal—

suffice for what is particularly lively and invigorating about Parts One and Two of Calloway's presentation.

First, Fr. Calloway endeavors to exonerate the "pious tradition" of the Rosary's heavenly and Dominican origins. Laity and priests alike had proudly passed down the story for ages: the Blessed Virgin Mary came to St. Dominic in a vision with the instructions "go and preach my Psalter," referring to the Rosary. She then gave him the "sword" needed to vanquish the Incarnation-denying heresy of Albigensianism. Calloway subsequently traces out some strands of skepticism arising from theological polemics in the Church as well as the modern advent of historical-critical research. Citing consistent papal teaching honoring the "pious tradition," Calloway describes how some scholars nevertheless began to question the historicity of this tradition. Even with a paucity of evidence precisely establishing as fact St. Dominic's receiving of the Rosary, Calloway points to findings that bolster the plausibility of the centuries-old tale. (One surviving historical piece, the poem *Rosarius*, pre-dates Bl. Alan de la Roche—who some consider the originator of the pious tradition—by 100 years. Like Bl. Alan's own message, it assigns St. Dominic with preaching based on the *Ave Maria* and meditation on the Christian mysteries.) Examining artifacts, gathering studies, and tracing the consistency of the "pious legend," Calloway is able to call into doubt the hypotheses of such skeptics which lack their own positive proof against the tradition.

Second, Calloway pulls together impressive stories of divine help obtained through the praying of the Rosary up through recent times. One marvelous example is that of Bl. Bartolo Longo (1841-1926). Raised in a devout family, Longo became involved in the nationalist movement in southern Italy and renounced his Catholic faith. At the same time he became fascinated with the occult, even being ordained a satanic priest. Such a lifestyle led him not to freedom, but into deep depression and anxiety. At the recommendation of a friend, he consulted a Dominican priest, who helped Longo to turn away from the occult and find light and

deep peace in returning to Christ. Still battling feelings of immense guilt for the damage he had caused as a satanist, one thing gave Bartolo the hope to stay alive: as a Third Order Dominican he began to promote the holy Rosary. His faith bore fruit, and soon he was building hospitals, orphanages, and schools as a Catholic civic reformer. He and his wife witnessed miracles and saw the creation of the famous Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii Shrine. Bl. Bartolo's story of dramatic change is one of many "Rosary victories" recorded in Calloway's book.

Inasmuch as *Champions of the Rosary* conveys a wide-sweeping account engaging history and testimony, it should stimulate individuals or groups of the faithful who wish to re-discover the great Catholic devotional prayer. The historical background presented helps one to understand the driving force behind the Rosary's development. Furthermore, personal accounts of devotees enhance appreciation for such a wonderful instrument. One critical caveat: Calloway's style conveys his particular piety and he is unapologetic about his conclusions. His presentation lacks some of the detachment and neutrality desirable in historical research. The deeper theological importance of the Rosary sometimes can feel lost amidst Calloway's efforts to choose sides in various historical debates.

The third and final section of *Champions of the Rosary* contains practical helps on how to cultivate devotion to the Rosary on both personal and communal levels. It includes scripture-based meditations for the mysteries of the Rosary, sacred art, and information on indulgences and associations dedicated to this spiritual treasure. Although most of the basic tools needed to take up this practice are seminally present, Calloway does not try to explain the dynamics of meditative prayer. This might have proved helpful to those desiring to make deep use of this prayer.

Perhaps no theological all-in-one (a "*summa*") worthy of the name can ever be completed. Yet Fr. Calloway has produced a valuable *vade mecum* for those who would walk and lead others down a well-trodden road. It should inspire Dominicans

to “return to the fonts” of their holy Founder’s preaching. It will help all Christians to immerse their lives in the Gospel. There, rooted in the key mysteries of Jesus’ salvation, the Rosary can be in Calloway’s words the “sword” of Gospel victory and a “rose” of personal holiness.

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THE CUP RUNNETH OVER

Gisela H. Kreglinger, *The Spirituality of Wine*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016.

“Wine should be reserved for contemplatives,” claims Gisela Kreglinger (97). A well-crafted wine is subtle, complex, and ought to command one’s attention. It takes the patience and discipline of a contemplative to truly appreciate its richness, she explains. Yet fine wines and contemplative prayer can be mystifying to the uninitiated. Does this make Kreglinger a kind of spiritual wine snob? To the contrary, her hope with *The Spirituality of Wine* is that readers—especially those with little familiarity with Christian theology—might be introduced to some central elements of Christian spirituality through a deepened appreciation of wine. Her aim in this book is to use the attractiveness of one to uncover the beauty and power of the other.

The author herself grew up with a unique opportunity to appreciate both subjects of this study. Kreglinger, a Lutheran, was raised on a small vineyard in Bavaria, which her family has owned and operated since the seventeenth century. In the preface she describes the childhood work she and her siblings did at the winery, and recounts the experience that first helped her grasp the connection between her faith and her family’s livelihood. At her confirmation service at the local church, as she received from the chalice for the first time, she was surprised to discover that this wine was in fact a product of the family vineyard. Rather than something new and foreign to her, it “smelled and tasted like home” (xiii). This experience revealed to Kreglinger the spiritual delight that gave greater purpose to her family’s labor of love. When Kreglinger turns to the history of Christianity, one is made to realize her experience is by no means unique. Benedictine nuns first developed viticulture in Kreglinger’s home region around the year 600 AD—precisely for the sake of the wine’s liturgical use.

European monasteries were responsible for significant advances in wine production throughout the medieval and early-modern periods. And the half-million acres of vineyards found today in California? We have eighteenth-century Spanish Franciscans to thank for those, as they cultivated the first vineyards. As soon as these friars established their missions in California's fertile valleys, they began to craft wines to use for the celebration of the Mass (61).

The crucial role of religious orders in the history of wine-making is not the motivation for Kreglinger's claim about wine being the purview of contemplatives, however. She instead seeks to use wine and wine-drinking to communicate a vision of the Christian life, one organized around gratitude, joy, fellowship, and an appreciation of God's creation. She writes:

If wine is indeed a special gift from God, then it should be enjoyed prayerfully. Drinking wine at its best is like prayer. We respond to God by enjoying his gifts and allowing wine to instill within us a sense of wonder, not just for the wine but even more for the generous giver of such a lavish gift. Wine calls us to worship. (97)

Throughout the book, Kreglinger provides much material to contemplate. Yet *The Spirituality of Wine* moves at a much swifter pace than the author wishes her readers to proceed through a glass of wine. This creates some tension between the book's purpose and one's reading experience. The first hundred pages, for example, cover tens of thousands of years of history. In Part I, labelled "Sustenance," Kreglinger begins with a chapter that catalogues references to wine and vineyards in the Scriptures. This compilation is itself quite a feat, considering that in the Bible there are more references to the vine—and its fermented product, wine—than to any other plant. She then considers the role of wine in the history of the Church and in the liturgy, respectively. An impressive amount of historical data is brought together in these chapters, along with a number of delightful quotations (a new

favorite of mine belongs to St. John Chrysostom: “If the devil merely sees you returning from the master’s banquet, he flees faster than any wind... If you show him a tongue stained with the precious blood, he will not be able to make a stand” [80]). But because of Kreglinger’s desire to draw together a rich array of materials, no one Scriptural passage or historical episode can be savored for long. What the book offers is a tasting, where a full jeroboam is in order (King Jeroboam I, from 1 Kings and from whom the massive jeroboam bottle receives its name, goes without mention in the book—a rare omission).

The broad historical overview also means that gaps emerge. In her discussion of Church history, the author attempts to characterize the early and medieval Church as ambivalent to the senses—the same senses with which we experience the many delights of God’s creation, among them the fruit of the vine. She associates this ambivalence with the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition in particular, characterizing Aristotle’s anthropology as exhibiting a “deep suspicion of the five senses with respect to the pursuit of knowledge” (106). To the contrary, no ancient philosopher appreciated the work that the senses do more than Aristotle. And, in a simile Kreglinger would sincerely appreciate, St. Thomas describes how philosophy is like the water which is transformed into the wine of theology (*Super Boethium de Trinitate*, article 3).

The pace of the book does slow in the second half, as the focus shifts to Kreglinger’s reflections upon a number of subjects related to wine culture, such as the role of the vintner as a quasi-theologian, evidence for the health benefits of wine, and the problem of overindulgence and addiction. These chapters are organized under the heading of “Sustainability.” In their common emphasis on themes such as craftsmanship over industrial processing, as well as social unity over isolated self-indulgence and waste, one recognizes spiritual insights reminiscent of those found in Pope Francis’ recent encyclical, *Laudato Si’*. This is not Kreglinger’s stated intention, but it is interesting to notice how she uses wine to

explore matters related to human ecology that are similar to those treated by the Holy Father. At the same time, Part II reinforces that this book is indeed concerned with the development of a spirituality of wine—something distinct from a consideration of wine as an image or trope for the Christian spiritual life. This difference in emphasis distinguishes *The Spirituality of Wine* from a title like Paul Murray's *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality: A Drink Called Happiness* (2006), where the goods of the earth are never considered as their own end, but always as a means by which the reader's attention is directed to the divine. Because of her lifelong passion for wine, and her broader social and economic concerns, Kreglinger's approach is different.

Overall, *The Spirituality of Wine* is a unique vintage. It serves as a testament to God's supreme goodness, and it inspires reflection on the ways in which one's appreciation of creation draws one closer to the Creator. For indeed, as the Psalmist proclaims, wine gladdens the heart (Ps 104:15), especially when it moves the heart and mind to contemplate the Giver.

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SAMURAI CHRISTIANITY REVISITED

William J. Farge, S.J., *A Christian Samurai: The Trials of Baba Bunko*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016.

Jesuit Father William Farge presents a book that challenges the dominant secular narrative among scholars of Japanese history regarding the presence of Christianity in early modern Japan. Though essentially an academic book, *A Christian Samurai* is geared even to the most uninformed reader such that anyone could put down the book and feel as though he were well-versed in Japanese history and culture.

Farge's aim is to force his colleagues (with evidence too striking to ignore) to re-examine the present consensus that Christianity had disappeared from Japan by 1650 and that it had no lasting effect on Japanese culture. The evidence he presents is the fruit of careful and highly analytical research into the writings of an 18th century political satirist named Baba Bunko who—at a time when Christianity is supposed to have been eradicated—criticized the ruling elite for failing to meet absolute moral standards. He was executed for his writings in 1759. The standards that Bunko demands bear no relation to any moral system practiced in Japan at that time or previously; the only explanation is that Bunko was influenced by Christian doctrine, with which he demonstrates intimate familiarity.

Farge begins with a brief but thorough treatment of the history of Christianity in Japan and the circumstances in which it was suppressed. He describes three major characteristics of Japanese society which were in force from 1603 until 1868, during the reign of the shoguns of the Tokugawa dynasty. First, the country was divided by a strict social hierarchy ruled by the *samurai* class of military nobility, headed by the shogun and his *bakufu* (Japanese for “government”) who governed from Edo (present-day Tokyo). Second was the strict policy of isolationism begun by the shogun in 1633, which barred both entrance and exit into the country.

Third, as a result of this policy, there was an intense persecution of Catholicism—due to fear of foreign invasion and influence—such that after 1650 Christianity was, supposedly, eradicated.

Farge indicts the contemporary academy for failing to explore evidence of Christians being in Japan between 1650 and 1868 because “it would not be consistent with the thesis of missionary failure and the subsequent demise of Christianity in Japan that has been constructed” (5). He admits that the sources are scarce; but this is no reason for ignoring those that do exist. Demonstrating his deep knowledge of manuscripts from the period, he discusses many examples from the intervening centuries which suggest that Christianity was anything but eradicated. The most striking of these was the discovery by Fr. Petitjean—the French missionary serving the newly allowed western merchant community—of 50,000 Christians in 1865 “whose descendants had been in hiding for over 200 years” (5).

The importance of showing that Baba Bunko’s writings contain great respect for and familiarity with Christianity, Farge argues, is that he was “the only writer to be executed by the bakufu during the Tokugawa period specifically for his writings” (7). Farge provides detailed literary analysis and engagement with current scholarship in literature and philosophy to make the convincing argument that Bunko was a Christian and therefore Christianity could not have been completely eradicated.

Bunko was “the only person in the middle of the 18th century to give written evidence of having understood certain elements of Christianity, such as the Eucharist, that would have been unfamiliar to anyone who was not a Christian” (12). This understanding is evident in various examples throughout Bunko’s writing. In his essay “A Collection of Useless Grumbings,” for instance, he “first advances the opinion that Buddhist and Shinto prayer are ‘exceedingly pointless,’ but Christian prayer, on the other hand, has the characteristics of ‘good prayer’” (38). These characteristics are faith, devotion, and a good text to pray (39). Bunko also “referred to the flag of the Shimabara [Catholic]

rebellion as ‘the principal image of the Christian Lord of Heaven,’ which ‘should replace the imperial and shogunal crests.’ The banner, which he describes as ‘the body of a person,’ was actually a representation of the host and chalice of the Catholic Eucharist” (217). This reference, Farge asserts, is evidence of a “clear Catholic understanding of” and appreciation for the doctrine of the Eucharist (217).

Baba Bunko gives further evidence of Christian inclinations in his particular understanding of morality. In his essay “Contemporary Edo: An Album of One Hundred Monsters,” Bunko derides the elite for immoral behavior, denouncing such people as “monsters.” He relates various cases of bribery of high governmental officials [e.g., Hotta Masasuke (115)], the sexual promiscuity of Buddhist monks [e.g., Donkai Shuten (188)], and even the weakness and dishonesty of the reigning shogun. Bunko accuses this ruler, Shogun Tokugawa Ieshige, of neglecting his people in favor of “an inordinate amount of drinking and sexual practices” and then covering it up with the excuse of a false illness (108). Farge, remarking on Bunko’s stylistic ability, describes how “Bunko relates the poor state of the shogun’s health in highly formal language, using classical grammatical constructions. The contrast between the beautiful language and the base demeaning content makes the piece quite satirical” (108).

Bunko’s constant criticism of “the immorality of the samurai and members of the elite governing class of the Tokugawa bakufu”—and therefore a criticism of the Confucian morality to which everyone at the time subscribed—is an indication that Bunko himself subscribed to a completely different morality (15). He shows that Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shinto were failed systems because those who were supposed to be its enlightened and virtuous classes were actually hypocritical and depraved.

Bunko, further, showed a particular concern for oppressed peasants and exploited “courtesans” which was unprecedented for the time and culture. He clamors for justice for the 500,000 peasants of Gujo who—because of their resistance to the oppressive taxes of

their local samurai lord Kanamori Yorikane—were arrested and banished to the mountains some fifty miles from their village; most starved to death *en route* during the “particularly severe winter of 1755” (63).

Bunko’s final break from the ethics of Confucianism lies in his demonstration of concern for the poor and in his advocacy for the “just treatment of the eta, the outcast class. He would declare that the government has the responsibility to aid the poor, feed the hungry, and treat the ill” (128), and he praised a high governmental official named Matsudaira Takechika who advocated for such policies (113). Farge notes that “these are all themes derived from Christianity and are not found in Japanese discourse of the middle eighteenth century or earlier” (128). Where, he asks, could Bunko have learned these values if not from Christianity?

For all his denunciation of its officials, however, the government “had not seemed particularly interested in Bunko or his writings up to the time he was apprehended” (77). For nearly five years he was allowed to go about his business like the many other political satirists of the day. Farge produces the text of Bunko’s conviction to explain this sudden change. In 1759 the bakufu high court declared that Bunko’s guilt lay in “spreading views that are strange and unconventional (*isetsu nado*)” for which the penalty prescribed was exile (81). “However,” the court continues, “since he has long been critical of the shogunate and has no respect for officials, he is to be imprisoned and executed” (81). Farge comments that the crimes of criticizing the government and disrespecting officials were not capital offenses, and even if Bunko’s case had been an exception, “he would have been the only person in Edo to suffer death for such a reason” (84). Thus it is unlikely that these were the crimes for which he was condemned; but the spreading of views that were “*isetsu nado*” is another matter entirely. This can be the only justification for the death sentence, which seems to have been purposely left vague and undefined. Farge cites a present-day Japanese scholar who points out that “the term ‘*isetsu nado*’ was sometimes applied to the crime of being

a Christian” which *was* a capital offense (82). In order to avoid a public execution for an accusation of practicing Christianity—because the government was embarrassed that its one hundred and thirty years of persecutions were ineffective—the authorities would, instead, have issued the “vague charge of holding ‘strange and unconventional’ views” (83).

Baba Bunko’s moral principles applied to all people, no matter their social position, and in all circumstances; but, because his writings “reflect a moral perspective that modern scholars have assumed was nonexistent in the works of Tokugawa period writers,” the possibility is now raised that he could well have been a Christian (238). In illuminating this possibility, Fr. Farge issues a challenge to historians of Japan to “reevaluate the entire period” so as to determine whether they have created a “Tokugawa history that ignores some important historical and literary artifacts” which do not fit easily into the standard narrative (238). The question now is: will they take up his challenge?

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EVOLVING WITH THE CHURCH

Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, O.P., James Brent, O.P., Thomas Davenport, O.P., and John Baptist Ku, O.P. *Thomistic Evolution: A Catholic Approach to Understanding Evolution in the Light of Faith*. Washington: Cluny Media, 2016.

Early on in *Thomistic Evolution*, the authors make it clear that this book, even as it considers the question of evolution, is primarily an opportunity to preach the Gospel:

The good news that we will illustrate through and with these chapters on evolution and the Christian Faith is that one and the same God who created us with reason also gifted us with faith. (2)

Thomistic Evolution, which originally began online as thomistic evolution.org, marks the collective effort of four sons of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph: Nicanor Pier Giorgio Austriaco, O.P., a molecular biologist; James Brent, O.P., a philosopher; Thomas Davenport, O.P., a physicist; and John Baptist Ku, O.P., a systematic theologian. Drawing upon his area of expertise, each friar explores questions concerning whether and how the scientific theory of evolution is to be understood in relation to the Catholic faith. In the end, their efforts yield a strong and alluring result: how evolution fits into God's plan. Good news indeed!

But it takes some time to get to this good news. *Thomistic Evolution* addresses the theory of evolution only in the last third of the book. The authors attempt first to build a strong foundation by addressing more fundamental matters: the nature of faith and reason and how they work together; the concept of causality; philosophical and theological accounts of God, creation, providence, free will, and chance; the problem of evil; and principles for biblical exegesis. The book's wide-ranging scope lets it function as a self-contained introductory text. Readers do

not have to reference outside sources to understand what is under discussion and what is at stake.

The book strikes the right balance between accessibility and sophistication. It is straightforward enough to be understood by almost anyone, but it is also clear in showing that the Catholic faith has robust answers to questions concerning the theory of evolution. Austriaco does an excellent job of clarifying what the current, post-Darwinian theory of evolution proposes and how it has corrected many earlier errors that put Darwinism in conflict with Catholicism. One such example is Austriaco's explication of how a polygenic theory of human evolution can fit in with the Biblical account of the Fall. Polygenism is defined by Austriaco as "the theological theory that human beings are descended from several original first couples" (215). Initially, "Pope Pius XII ruled out polygenism because he could not imagine how an account of several original first couples could be reconciled with the Church's teaching on original sin" (215). At that time, the widely accepted scientific model of human evolution was the Multi-Regional model, which claims that humans evolved independently in different parts of the world. Were this true, there is no way to account for how original sin could have been transmitted across these various regions. The advance in evolutionary biology, however, has led scientists to prefer an Out-of-Africa model over the Multi-Regional model. The Out-of-Africa model claims that all humans originally evolved in one location in Africa and from there spread to the rest of the world. Thus all the earliest human beings would have lived near each other, so it is possible to explain how original sin could have been transmitted to everyone then living "in the same way that Eve led Adam to sin" (240). This example illustrates how if there is an apparent contradiction between faith and science, as in the case of the Multi-Regional model, faith can act as a guide to help science look in the right direction for the truth. This is a striking example of how reason and faith work together to point to the truth.

In another chapter, Austriaco argues for the fittingness of evolution. It can be seen as part of God's plan to share some part

of His causality with creatures. This chapter is a beautiful example of what Brent describes elsewhere as the harmony of faith and reason. The two work together to help us understand the wonders of God's creation and, even more wonderfully, of God himself. Not only does evolution fit with the Catholic worldview, but the process of evolution glorifies God. Thus to accept, understand, and teach evolution can itself be a way of communicating the Gospel.

Thomistic Evolution offers more than a Catholic response to the theory of evolution. It also serves as an excellent basis for examining the many questions posed by science in general to the Catholic faith. In fact, the format of the book lends itself far better to group study than to individual study and could easily form the backbone of a course at a parish or campus ministry to help the faithful understand the relationship between faith and reason. Each short chapter provides sufficient material for a weekly meeting; or the pace could be increased and connections among chapters could be looked at each week.

Chapters 13-18 by Ku are an excellent example of how properly to examine Scripture, and the book would be valuable even if these were the only chapters in it. Ku's discussion of the four literal and three spiritual senses of scripture helps to demonstrate the difficulties of reading Scripture, yet also provides a clear guide for how to begin. Ku also provides help for the reader to see how differing interpretations of any passage can be acceptable, despite *prima facie* contradictions. I would highly recommend these chapters to anyone who appeals to the Bible as supporting evidence in a debate.

Davenort presents an excellent picture of creation consistent with both theology and physics. He discusses how a metaphysical account of creation allows for the possibility that any of the current physical theories of the beginning of the universe could be true while still recognizing that God is creator. He takes note that this account allows for a theory of evolution and has no difficulties harmonizing with such a theory.

While *Thomistic Evolution* should prove very helpful for any Catholic who is curious about the compatibility of faith and

reason, I would caution against sharing the book with an atheist friend in the hopes of expecting an on-the-spot conversion. It is not the book's intention to make the kinds of appeals that non-believers would find compelling on their own merits. However, the book can be an excellent resource when used as part of a conversation with non-believers. Each of the chapters was initially intended to be used as a single-page bulletin insert, and so, while some of the chapters do not have the space to lay out comprehensive arguments in support of their positions, they do suggest various lines of reasoning to explore. My caution is simply that these arguments might be unsatisfying to some readers if taken on their own. But they could be employed fruitfully in extended discussions. One such example is Chapter 12, "Divine Providence and the Mystery of Evil." Considering that, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "[t]here is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil" (CCC 309), it should not be surprising if, after reading this brief chapter, questions remain. For example, underlying much of the discussion in the chapter is the distinction between God's active and permissive will. This can be a hard distinction to understand—namely how God, being good, can permit evil. As such, it would behoove the Christian participant in this conversation to explore the topic more fully beforehand, in order to anticipate questions from an atheist interlocutor.

Given this caveat, I highly recommend the book for believers who want to see a good case made that, whatever challenges opponents of the Catholic faith might issue, reason and faith are not set against one another in a perpetual war. They are mutually reinforcing. Both are necessary, as the authors show, for man to come to the fullest understanding of God and His creation we can have this side of heaven.

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CLOISTER CHRONICLE

The 800th Jubilee Year of the Order of Preachers concluded on January 21. The friars of the House of Studies commemorated the close of the year with the celebration of Solemn Vespers, preaching, an extended procession, and a celebratory meal.

Our Brothers Isaac Augustine Morales, Antoninus Maria Samy, and Norbert Keliher professed solemn vows in the hands of the Prior Provincial, Father Kenneth R. Letoile, at the Mass of Solemn Profession on February 4 in the Chapel of the Dominican House of Studies.

Bishop Manuel A. Cruz, Auxiliary Bishop of Newark, ordained to the diaconate our Brothers Pier Giorgio Dengler, Leo Joseph Camurati, Timothy Danaher, Aquinas Beale, Mannes Matous, Henry Stephan, Peter Joseph Gautsch, and Isaac Augustine Morales on March 11 in the Crypt Church of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

On April 7 & 8, the Thomistic Institute sponsored a conference at the House of Studies in honor of Archbishop J. Augustine Di Noia, O.P., Adjunct Secretary for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, featuring lectures from Bruce Marshall, Michael Root, and James J. Buckley, and a panel featuring Gary Culpepper, Chad Pecknold, and Frederick Bauerschmidt. Archbishop Di Noia himself delivered the conference's keynote address on April 8.

The Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception invited the Honorable Samuel Anthony Alito, Jr., Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, to be its speaker at the Commencement ceremonies on May 12, during this its 75th anniversary year as a Pontifical Faculty. The Pontifical Faculty also invited the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop

Christophe Pierre, to be the celebrant for Solemn Vespers at that occasion.

Archbishop Di Noia was the ordaining prelate at St. Dominic Church, Washington, D.C., on May 20 for our brothers approved to be ordained priests: Bonaventure Chapman, Thomas Davenport, Joachim Kenney, Jacob Bertrand Janczyk, Luke Hoyt, Alan Piper, and Edmund Mary McCullough.

The Hillbilly Thomists—a folk band comprised of Dominican friars, both student brothers and priests—have begun work on an album that is slated to be released in the fall semester. The album will feature classic songs from American folk, bluegrass, and spiritual traditions.