



Institute For Theological Encounter *With Science and Technology*

Volume 47 - # 1

Winter 2016 Bulletin

Delete Contact

Watching on TV the many expressions of honor for Justice Antonin Scalia, especially the funeral with the outstanding homily by his son Fr. Paul Scalia, brings into sharp focus the reality that we never know for sure what will be the duration of our lives.

In the old days of postal mail, we kept in touch with old friends across the miles via an occasional letter, but today our connections are often via Email. Thanks to that electronic capability, it's possible to have a friend for 20+ years without ever actually meeting in person. Friendships can be sustained with more than just a Christmas card after someone moves away.

When I lived around Washington DC, among my friends was an older gentleman who was a real leader in pro-life efforts locally. He was on the governing board of an organization that established homes for expectant mothers. Also, on whatever Saturdays I was able to show up to pray the Rosary at a local abortion clinic, he was always there, never missing a week. I moved away in 2000 but continued to stay in contact with him via Email – sometimes serious, sometimes jovial; just friendship. Then in spring 2015 the Emails stopped and I learned from someone else that he suffered a stroke. Only months later did I get further word that it was a very severe and crippling stroke. Early in 2016 news arrived that he had died, at about the age of 90. I missed the funeral because nobody thought to notify his list of Email correspondents.

A funeral is an occasion that brings closure to the survivors. At a military funeral, the sound of “Taps” being played expresses that closure very well. But how do you achieve closure for an Email friend? The day eventually comes when, in perusing your “contacts” list, you come across the names of those who have died. The sense of loss becomes very intense when it's time to press the “delete contact” button. And in the hazy background is the realization that someday, correspondents will press the “delete contact” button for me, too.

At such times, the memory of Justice Scalia's funeral is very helpful, because it really was a celebration of the Resurrection to New Life. The ancient Christian slogan “Life is changed, not taken away” stands out. A huge number of TV viewers (some for the first time) got to appreciate the faith we have in God's promise that life is more than space and time can hold.

In autumn 2016, ITEST's annual conference will deal with End of Life issues, focusing on “How has technology moved the boundary lines?” The word “inevitable” is easy enough to accept, but “soon” is an entirely different matter. With so many medical advances in recent times, when is something “futile”? The term “hospice care” barely existed a few decades ago. The late Dr. Ed Pellegrino's talk at the 2008 ITEST conference on “Secular vs. Catholic Medical Ethics” serves as a jumping-off point for this conference. The spring issue of the ITEST Bulletin will provide more information about the conference.

Thomas P. Sheehan
Director, ITEST

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Announcements



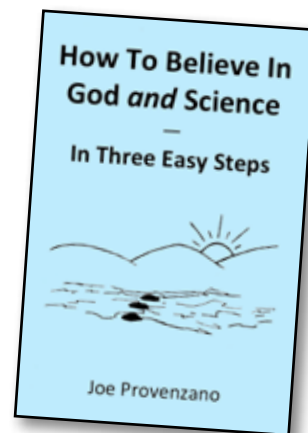
October, 2015 Conference Proceedings

We mailed a three set CD (audio, not video) production of the October, 2015 conference “Economic Justice in the 21st Century...” to all ITEST members who had renewed for 2015 and 2016. We’ve decided that audio CDs of the ITEST conferences, instead of bound, soft covered books would be more accessible to members these days. Listening to a conference while you are driving to work or to a meeting, or in the comfort of your home provides an added dimension to the presentations and discussions. If by some chance you did not receive an audio CD set in the mail, please let us know by phone or e-mail.

Second Renewal Notice on the Way

For those who missed renewing membership for 2016, do not despair; our Director, Tom Sheahen will be contacting you soon. We depend on your dues and donations so that we can keep ITEST operating in often difficult economic

times. Only ten percent of our yearly budget comes from membership dues; the other 90 percent comes from foundation awards and donations from members and other donors. We subscribe to an on-line grant directory, *Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities (FADICA)*, *The Catholic Funding Guide*. For a yearly subscription of \$125.00 we have access to many granting institutions specifically geared toward Catholic activities.



Free E-Book Offer

How to Believe in God in Three Easy Steps

Dr. Joseph Provenzano, long-time ITEST member, offers this book free of charge to ITEST members. You may download the book at <https://smashwords.com>. Cancel the box that invites you to enter a User Name and Password, then go to Search and simply type in the title of the book and the author for access. We would appreciate your comments and reflections on the book. You may contact Dr. Provenzano at joeapro@proandsons.com for further information.

ITEST Members Summer Showcase Call for Papers

We invite any ITEST members who have written articles, essays, reflections or book reviews within the past year to submit them for future publication in the ITEST Bulletin. We would accept already published articles, if we can secure permission to reprint. Or, you may have an unpublished article relating to some aspects of science/technology or theology; please submit that for publication. Tentatively, we plan to publish these in our Spring or Summer issue of the Bulletin.



Institute For Theological Encounter with Science and Technology
Cardinal Rigali Center • 20 Archbishop May Drive • WG-403 • St. Louis, Missouri 63119 • USA
314.792.7220 • www.ITEST-faithscience.org • E-mail: mariannepost@archstl.org

ITEST Bulletin - S. Marianne Postiglione, RSM, Editor
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Economic Justice in 21st Century: Myth or Reality

By Don G. Boland LLB, PhD © 2015

(We reprint this essay, presented at the October, 2015 ITEST conference on Economic Justice in the 21st Century, in this issue of the Bulletin to provide members with the philosophical “piece” of the conference. Dr. Boland’s presentation met with technical difficulties during the transmission via Web-Ex from Australia. Therefore, since there is no audio available of his lecture we have published it in print.)

To address this question will require a quick review of what we generally intend by justice, and then a discussion of what is meant by economic justice and where it stands today in the context of social life and economic science.

On Justice Let us then outline what we understand by justice. It may help to locate exactly where justice is to be found. To do this we need to distinguish law (*lex*), justice (*iustitia*) and right (*ius*). St. Thomas explains that the principles of the moral order according to which our free acts in relation to others are to be governed are found in justice in the will (*voluntate*), law in the reason (*intellectu*), and right in “things” (*rebus*). By “things” here St. Thomas does not mean anything existing as a separate substance but real relations, of equality, between human beings in regard to themselves, their bodies and their external pos-

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sessions. It is important to recognize that both law and justice have a solid grounding in the way things are. Justice, which is defined as the disposition (habit) in the will to render to each one’s due (what is really one’s right), is based on reality.

We need to make a distinction, however, between general justice and particular justice. The distinctions are in Aristotle, but St. Thomas elaborates on them as follows: in every whole we can consider three relations; that of the parts to the whole; that of the whole to the parts; and that of one part to another part. General justice is named by reason of the relation of the individual members of a community to the whole community; distributive justice is based on the relation of the whole community (through its principal organ, the government), to the individual members of that community; commutative justice consists in the relation of the individuals to one another within the community.

Particular justice, however, which is divided into distributive and commutative justice, is what we are primarily

concerned with here.

Economic Justice In order to arrive at an understanding of what we mean by economic justice we will need to bring in a consideration of the kinds of goods with which justice is concerned. The objects of justice extend to the whole range of goods. Plato classified them into internal goods, of the soul and of the body, and external goods. Popularly expressed, we can put them under wisdom (education), health and wealth.

Economic justice is concerned clearly only with goods that come within the category of external goods or wealth.¹ We are concerned then with goods that are of the lowest order, if most necessary for our welfare. By economic goods we mean external useful material goods, and other goods only in so far as they have some relation to such useful goods, e.g. when we pay doctors for their “health

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services”. “Economic goods”, then, are what people generally mean by wealth.

Taken by itself, however, “economic” refers to our use of things as means and signifies the adequacy of means to end. It has two opposed notions; the use of superfluous means, or being wasteful, and the use of insufficient means, or suffering a condition of “scarcity” of means, and thus being unable to achieve the end. The modern reference to economic goods, meaning to refer to the fruits of the earth and human labor as scarce goods, is not only a serious misconception (using a term for its opposite – “economic” does not mean insufficient or scarce) but also a slight upon nature and its author. As we argue elsewhere, this misreading of the meaning of “economic” undermines fundamentally the whole of modern economic science.²

Distributive Justice Let us however deal first with the position of distributive justice. St. Thomas (II-II, q. 61. a.

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3 co.) describes the range of matters that come within the scope of both particular justices, declaring that the same things are within the objects of both distributive and commutative justice.³ Economic goods, therefore, clearly

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come within the object of distributive justice. However, in modern times, so far as “economic goods”, or wealth, is concerned, distributive justice has simply dropped out of the picture. The mainstream science of Economics ignores it altogether. Yet, distributive justice is an important part of particular justice. As is clear, the rights of individual members of the community in distributive justice are owed respect by the whole community, through the instrumentality of the State or Government. However, the rights of individuals in distributive justice we must say are virtually forgotten and, correspondingly, they are not seen to impose a duty on the State. Indeed, distribution of economic goods is rather seen as a right (prerogative) belonging to the State itself to do as it sees fit not just with the common goods within the community (lands, natural resources etc.) but also with the property of individuals.⁴

Economic justice, then, so far as it relates to distributive justice, is one area of justice that in modern times has come to be regarded as not real. But it is very real. Its violation at any time is a social injustice of the most fundamental kind, and a most serious one at that for the peaceful conduct of economic affairs in any society. In our times, injustice in the distribution of wealth has spread beyond national borders and reached such extreme proportions as to affect the very existence of millions of human beings. The reason why distributive injustice has been a non-issue, however, is not hard to discern. Since the obligation first lies on those in government to correct any disproportion in the property rights of the citizens, even gross maldistribution of wealth and capital will be entrenched in a bad constitution, including one that is formally or nominally democratic, but effectively an oligarchical one. A certain indication that a political system is effectively oligarchical is the extremity of the gap between the few exceedingly rich and the many oppressively poor.

Commutative Justice When we come to commutative justice, however, the question as to what is meant by economic justice is not so simply answered. For, the restriction of goods to the useful and material does not bring out

the precise area of justice we need to deal with. We need to bring into the discussion a distinction that is made by St. Thomas, but relevant only to commutative justice; it is the distinction St. Thomas makes between involuntary and voluntary commutations.⁵ Involuntary commutations refer to such things as robbery and theft. These plainly relate to “economic goods”, so defined, yet no one is saying that justice in this regard is not real.

Voluntary commutations refer to transactions involving some agreement, as in buying and selling, loans and employment.

Voluntary commutations refer to transactions involving some agreement, as in buying and selling, loans and employment. The idea that there can be injustice in such voluntary transactions is something that the modern mind has been unable to take in. There is also an intrinsic difficulty with the notion of voluntary itself. The moral distinction St. Thomas makes is rather subtle and some moral theologians and Catholic economists seem to have failed to appreciate it, taken in, as we shall see, by the use of the notion of freedom in an equivocal way.

The problem of the reality of economic justice in the area of commutative justice arises then only in the case of what St. Thomas classed as voluntary commutations. That, indeed, is the main focus of mainstream liberal economic science, which concerns itself principally with the exchange system or market in goods, loans and labour.

On Economic Science We can confine our attentions, therefore, to this order of economic affairs and say something about how the idea that economic justice is not real could have come about. It could only have come about if economic activity in this order of social interaction were considered not to be concerned with justice.

In fact, I believe this is the state of mind of persons who think that economic justice is not real. They think that economic affairs in regard to transactions that are voluntary belong to an area of human social relations where there is no justice, not in the sense that there is injustice, but in the other sense that there is no reason to look for justice or morality of any kind. The transactions that are entered into are governed by arrangements that people enter into voluntarily because they naturally see it to their advantage to do so. This order of interchange of economic goods is then seen as natural, like the operation of natural bodily

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functions, such as the circulation of the blood.

This, indeed, is how the object of the modern science of Economics came to be viewed from its beginnings. The new science drew its inspiration from physics or the study of a natural order. In fact, this is the significance of the name Physiocracy (“Nature-rule”) adopted by the French politico-economic school to which Adam Smith was attracted on his visit to France. More deep, however, was the influence of the work of Isaac Newton who so clearly impressed Smith’s compatriot David Hume. The principle of self-interest came to occupy a place in the new science of Political Economy equivalent to Newton’s universal law of gravitation in the new mathematical physics.

At first, the physiological image of natural functioning was evidently the one more immediately in mind. Quesnay, the leader of the physiocrats, was not, like Turgot, a politician in the French Government, but the medical doctor to the king, Louis XV. Recall, too, Adam Smith’s allusion to the disruptive actions of politicians in regard to the economy as “the ignorant prescriptions of its doctors”.

This focus on a natural order, however, was immediately influenced by the Newtonian vision of science and scientific method. In Aristotelian terms, the image subtly shifted from a practical science, or art, more strictly an art co-operative with nature, like medicine, where human intervention may be needed to assist nature, to a purely theoretical science, such as physics or astronomy, where human intervention was out of place. For, as Adam Smith’s comment suggests, interference in the economy by government proceeds in the main from ignorance of what he conceived as a natural order (ruled by “an invisible hand”).⁶

In the history of modern economics the image of a natural physical order has persisted, but it has oscillated between that pertaining to a purely theoretical science (totally self-regulating), favoured by pure liberalism (as in Liberal Capitalism), and that pertaining to an art co-operative with nature, favoured by moderate liberalism (as in Keynesianism).

The second image tends to look upon the economy according to the original medical analogy. In fact, it is the more true to the actual working of modern economies. Yet, in it the art, owing to human intellectual pride, tends to “take over” the principal role, and no longer is co-operative with nature, but dictatorial. Then we tend towards having a system of radical socialism. However, this, like pure

liberalism, never comes into full effect. For, before this, the patient dies, not able to do without a doctor altogether, but neither with one who does not respect the primacy of natural restorative powers. Marxian communism is a kind of radical socialism in practice. But, because of the influence of Hegel, it draws into its theory a host of philosophical contradictions that go beyond Economics.⁷

Right Notion Politics, or government, can be compared for some purposes with an art co-operative with nature. Hence, the medical analogy that occurred to the Physiocrats, which was taken up by Adam Smith and the early school of Political Economy was a good analogy in that it countered the tendency in government to ignore the naturalness of the order it was dealing with.⁸ Yet, the analogy could be flawed, and immediately was, in being taken to the other extreme; that of excluding altogether human political “art” to assist nature where necessary.

*Like the art of the doctor, the political
“art” must respect human nature,*

Like the art of the doctor, the political “art” must respect human nature, but it must respect it fully according to its specific difference, rationality (which involves the freedom of the citizens). This need for respect of the full nature of humanity is what takes politico-economic science and art into another and higher order of science and art than physics and medicine. The relevant science is not a natural physical science, like physics or physiology, but it is a natural moral science, of which political and economic science are the social aspects; the relevant practical discipline is not an art most strictly taken, but prudence. Political prudence is what is primarily required of politicians and governments, if they, and all citizens, must also possess subordinate technical knowledge and arts.

This primary requirement of human governance extends to all levels of social activity and communication including the production and exchange of useful goods. The parties that need to be co-ordinated are (barring a state of slavery) free agents, and the only necessity to which they can be made subject, whilst preserving their freedom, are moral laws and virtues, in this case, justice. Hence, no amount of promotion of productivity or “economic growth” will be of much avail if economic justice is not first put in place. The best economic policy advice is that given in

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the Scriptures: “Seek first the Kingdom of God and his Justice and all these things will be added unto you”.

Our argument, then, is that the turn of modern economic science away from a practical moral/political approach to a purely theoretical approach, via a midway viewing of the study of the social economy after the fashion of medicine, i.e. as an art co-operative with a natural order that needs to be fully respected, is the major intellectual reason why justice is not seen as relevant to the consideration of exchange of goods.

Two kinds of necessity We need to bring out why what are called voluntary commutations by St. Thomas still involve questions of justice. This depends upon being able to show that there is a form of necessity involved in engaging in exchange. There is an important distinction that goes back to Aristotle between two kinds of necessity that may be exercised upon us. Physical constraint is one and we are subject to that in common with the other animals. The other is called hypothetical necessity,⁹ or necessity from end. It relates to the necessity in the means required if one wants to achieve a certain end or good. It can only be felt by a rational animal who can know the end.

It is called “moral necessity”. But that is a wide use of “moral”. It simply means necessity of means in relation to end, which applies beyond morals: if one wants to be healthy (say free from the ill effects of diabetes) it is necessary to take a certain medicine. Nothing and nobody is forcing you to do so. Not even the doctor can constrain you to do so; he can only appeal to your reason – if you don’t you will shortly die.

Let us apply this to the case of exchange. Suppose a scientist had developed a particular drug that would cure a certain disease and let us suppose that the disease is in fact otherwise incurable and fatal. He is willing to provide the drug to others but on his own terms. He says to a person in need of it: ‘I will give you the drug but I want “a pound of your flesh” in payment (a particular organ in fact). I am interested in experimenting on this kind of organ.’ We might not like his attitude, but he is acting in full accord with the principles of modern economic science. On the modern test of economic freedom of exchange, as excluding only cases of physical constraint (and deliberate deceit), the scientist is acting quite within his rights. He is not forcing the person to give up his organ. If that person hands it over he will have done it quite voluntarily.

This may seem rather fanciful. So let us suppose something closer to home. Realizing the value of the drug, the scientist sells it to a drug company (these days he is probably working for the drug company). The company then puts it on the market at a price so high that no individual can afford it and it has to be subsidised by the whole community (the government). The price would seem to be out of all proportion to a fair reward to one individual worker scientist for his work. But, that equivalence is not even considered relevant. The value in the market is solely to be determined by the “demand”.¹⁰

However, the main point we wish to get across is that voluntariness is not opposed to necessity or lack of freedom in certain circumstances that include the situation of exchange of goods. In fact, the buyer of the drug is under the most extreme necessity; for them it is a matter of life and death. Indeed, the case brings in the moral principle based on the universal destination of goods, which means that the person in such need acquires a right to the drug as against even its owner. To withhold the drug in these circumstances is *prima facie* to be responsible for the individual’s death if that comes about because of lack of the life-saving drug.

That is a case where absolute necessity is involved. But there are lesser degrees of necessity where what is needed is not just to live, but, as Aristotle puts the reason for human society, to live well. The system of exchange of goods is the natural social means whereby individuals within a community can enjoy a civilized standard of living and this belongs to all members of the community by right; it is meant to be available to all, and can be if justice is observed in the exchange system.¹¹

Since, subject to the case of absolute necessity discussed

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above, we all have an equal right in this regard, there is need for equality between what we offer to others and what we receive from others. That is achieved through equality of value, or commutative justice, in the price of the goods. If that equality is not observed the necessity imposed on us all to obtain what we need through the social exchange system or market is being exploited. All this is explained in article 1 in question 77 of II-II

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of the *Summa Theologiae*. Very few, however, seem to appreciate the full significance of what St. Thomas says.

Summary However, we are not concerned here to go into the details of modern economic theory. Enough, we hope, has been said to make it clear what we mean by economic justice and why it has been put in question in modern times.

We have made some necessary distinctions in order for us to understand the issues but we have identified the basic problem with the naturalistic turn taken in the modern approach to the study of human and social behaviour. This has had perhaps its greatest impact upon the study of socio-economic affairs in the creation of the new modern science of Economics. However, it has affected the thinking not only of economists but also of politicians; it has even entered into the thinking of the law, in that of the judges and the lawyers; indeed it is a fundamental part of the state of mind of the educated community generally.

We could go into the reasons why this supposedly “neutral” view of science in regard to social economic affairs serves very well the interests of the very select few in each modern nation, but now extending across the globe, who benefit from the basic property arrangements and professedly “free” market operations that are in fact in place. However, that will have to wait for another time.

Remedy We do not have time either to go into the details of how distributive justice and commutative justice might be restored at the level of economic justice. Though it is a matter of political prudence, and therefore a slow and painful process back to economic health, there are two glaring distortions at the level of fundamental principle, one in relation to commutative justice and the other in relation to distributive justice, that if left unaddressed must bring about the nemesis, of proportions hitherto not experienced, that follows injustice. (We are speaking in natural terms here, not supernatural).

The first is the existence in the modern market of a level of unnatural exchange that threatens to destroy the very institution of the market that, in its natural and rational working, is a vital social means for all to obtain a sufficiency of the external goods upon which our enjoyment of the higher goods of civilization depend. In the present global financial crisis there is an urgent need to rectify this distortion and this cannot be done without us becoming aware of the treatise on commutative justice

in regard to exchange of St. Thomas and in particular this distinction (*Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 77, a. 4 c): “As the Philosopher says in *I Politics*, exchange of things [in the market] is twofold. One indeed is quasi-natural and necessary ... [the second kind of exchange], considered according to itself, has a certain turpitude, in so far as it does not import, in its very reason, a worthy or necessary end.”

The second distortion is the enormity of the disparity, now of global dimensions, between the few rich and the many poor that transcends any considerations of distributive justice that are concerned with the ordinary rights of property within a particular society. The duty to rectify this most profound level of economic injustice stands more urgent and serious than any other. As put most recently by Pope Francis (Address at Expo Fair,

Working for a just distribution of the fruits of the earth and human labor is not mere philanthropy. It is a moral obligation.

Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. 9 July 2015): “Working for a just distribution of the fruits of the earth and human labor is not mere philanthropy. It is a moral obligation. For Christians, the responsibility is even greater: it is a commandment. It is about giving to the poor and to peoples what is theirs by right. The universal destination of goods is not a figure of speech found in the Church’s social teaching. It is a reality prior to private property.”

(Endnotes)

- 1 A further distinction between fine and useful goods is relevant but the issues it raises are rather peripheral to the considerations of economic justice (owing to the natural monopoly element goods of fine art involve) and should be left out of the main treatment of economic justice.
- 2 Scarcity is related to the measure of wealth in exchange; it is not our condition in regard to wealth in a social context. Social exchange of the products of our work is the very means of providing all with a sufficiency of wealth. Money is a conventional measure not of use value, but of exchange value, of which common need is, as Aristotle noted, the natural basis. So, relative scarcity can be seen as attached to products in exchange. But, this is basically for the purposes of evaluating one person’s production, or contribution to the exchange, as against another. It does not signify any absolute condition of scarcity or insufficiency of wealth in any community, unless one identifies scarcity with the need to work for one’s living. Moreover, the connection of ineluctable scarcity with economic goods is

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prompted by a radical individualist political philosophy (ideology). It is too large a subject to go into here.

- 3 “I reply that, as said above, justice is about certain exterior operations, as distribution and exchange, which, indeed, are to do with the use of certain operations; [it is] about things, or about persons or even about works; about things, indeed, when one either takes or restores to another what belongs to him; about persons, however, as when anyone injures a man in his person, by maiming or insulting him, or even when one shows reverence; about works, however, as when one justly exacts from or renders some work to another. Therefore, if we accept as the matter of each justice those things of which operations are the use, the same is the matter of distributive and commutative justice; for a thing can be distributed from a common [fund] to individuals, and be exchanged between one and another; and there is also a certain distribution of laborious works, and recompense.” (cf. II-II, q. 61. a. 3 co. - own translation).
- 4 So complete is this loss of the sense of distributive justice as based in natural rights in individuals vis- a-vis the State that even major figures of the Enlightenment, and champions of liberal individualism, such as Montesquieu (*L’Esprit des Lois*, Book XXVI, Ch. XV) and Voltaire (*Dict. Phil.* Vol. ii, p. 432), held that property is a creation of the State (cf. G. O’Brien, “An Essay on the Economic Effects of the Reformation”, IHS Press 2003, ch.3). This latent totalitarian concept now underlies the arguments for many new “human” rights.

- 5 The Latin *commutatio* has a broader sense than the English *commutation*. In Latin it has the sense of any interchange or interaction between two individuals. In English it is used only in special senses, such as relating to travel, or to a judicial sentence by way of reduction.
- 6 This idea of letting the economic system look after itself is present in de Gournay’s dictum: *Laissez faire; laissez passer*.
- 7 For a treatment of Marxist Economics in this regard refer to the author’s “Marx’s Small Mistake”. Contact the author for a copy of the article at donaldboland926@gmail.com.
- 8 As was the fault with the mercantilist system that Smith so trenchantly criticized.
- 9 A misleading description for the modern mind: it is meant only to distinguish this kind of real necessity from physical constraint.
- 10 Some will try to justify it by pointing out that the company may have had to spend a lot of time and expense in “developing” the drug. But this is to appeal to justice; the very thing that is excluded by modern economic theory of price.
- 11 Generalizing the point, the social exchange system or market is the necessary means for individuals to obtain in common the benefit of association in regard to all those goods we designate as wealth. That is to say, the material and useful goods that we all reasonably need to live well, according to the standards of the particular community in which we live, have to be acquired with the co-operation of others through a system of exchange called the market.

Death with Dignity, A Dangerous Pretense

By Lawrence P. Grayson

Editor of Maryland Knights of Columbus Pro-Life News. Article cited with permission, February, 2016.

(While this essay mentions Maryland-specific legislation, the points it makes apply equally in all states, many of which must deal with similar legislation this year[eds])

Every life has value and is worthy of continuing, regardless of how old, infirmed, ill, or limited in future duration. Yet, today, an increasing number of states are empowering physicians to assist terminally-ill people in committing suicide, so they can “die with dignity.” The movement, cloaked in an appealing euphemism, is indifferent to the sacredness of human life. All people have equal dignity simply by being human. An individual’s self-image may change as one ages, loses physical or mental ability, or suffers, but the person’s worth and inherent dignity are not altered. Life is a gift of our Creator. No person or government is entitled to take it away; no individual has the license to throw it away.

Assisted suicide is an affront to the Almighty, and denies society of the contributions the deceased could have

made. Benjamin Franklin signed the Declaration of Independence at age 70, at a time when life expectancy in America was 38. Doris Haddock, an 89-year old known as Granny D, walked from Los Angeles to Washington, DC in 1999 to raise awareness about campaign finance reform. Grandma Moses (Anna Mary Robertson Moses) began painting at the age of 76 when arthritis would not allow her to hold an embroidery needle; she became a nationally-acclaimed artist producing over 1,000 paintings in the next 25 years. Stephen Hawking was diagnosed with ALS (“Lou Gehrig Disease”) at the age of 21 and given 2-3 years to live; now 74 and completely crippled, he is a preeminent theoretical physicist and cosmologist. Ludwig van Beethoven, one of the world’s greatest musicians, lost his hearing at 26 and composed some of

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his finest works over the next 30 years. Helen Keller was born blind and deaf, yet graduated college and became an author, lecturer and political activist. The world would have been poorer had these people been euthanized at the onset of their infirmities.

Last year, Maryland's General Assembly considered, but did not pass, the *Death with Dignity Act*. The bill would have allowed doctors to legally prescribe a lethal dose of medicine at the request of a patient who had been deemed mentally competent and received a terminal diagnosis of six months or less to live. The bill, with a less contentious title, the *End of Life Options Act*, is expected to be reintroduced in the current session.

The proposed legislation has significant flaws. First, as in the case of Stephen Hawking, the medical community cannot predict with assurance or accuracy when a patient might die. Hawking's situation is not unique. There are many cases in which patients declared terminally ill have lived well beyond a physician's projected life span. Many have even recovered from years-long comas.

Second, there is the question of the person being competent to make a life-or-death decision. When an individual receives a terminal diagnosis, the person often becomes fearful or distressed, especially if one's condition will be an emotional or costly burden on others in the family. The patient may be rational, but feel pressured to die because of loneliness, depression, or family members who want to proceed with their lives.

Third, there is the societal concern for medical cost containment. The Obamacare legislation establishes an Independent Payment Advisory Board that is empowered to ration care within Medicare if the program exceeds a target growth rate. Will the stress to restrain costs influence medical personnel to encourage patients to choose assisted suicide? England has had experience with a similar cost-cutting approach. In the late 1990s, the country's National Health Service established the Liverpool Care Pathway, a program to provide the elderly and terminally ill with palliative care while discontinuing long-term curative treatment. Stipends were provided to participating hospitals that met targets for the number of persons placed in the program. The endeavor was phased out in 2013 because it called into question the objectivity of the hospitals' medical decisions, which hastened the death of some seriously-ill patients.

Further, there is an ethical dilemma created for a doctor when assisted suicide becomes a medical option. A physician should be devoted to healing and improving the patient's quality of life, not promoting death. The American Medical Association, in its Code of Medical Ethics, states, "Physician-assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role as healer." The medical community even opposes a physician's involvement in capital punishment. The American Board of Anesthesiologists voted in 2010 to revoke the certification of any member who participates in executing a prisoner by lethal injection. The physician should not become an executioner.

While the Maryland assisted-suicide bill may appear to be compassionate and narrowly focused, it is the beginning of a "slippery slope." If enacted, it undoubtedly will lead over time to additional reasons for sanctioning procured death. In the Netherlands, where euthanasia has been legal since 2002, the number of persons euthanized nearly tripled in the period 2006 to 2014; assisted suicide for persons with psychiatric illnesses or dementia are sharply on the rise; and many of the reasons given for choosing to be euthanized are old age, loneliness and bereavement, none of which qualify as a terminal illness.

Now, there is a movement in the Netherlands to legalize euthanasia for young children. In order to meet an increased demand, a network of traveling euthanizers has been created.

When the quality of life is considered more important than life itself, when efficiency and cost containment become criteria for medical decisions, when euthanasia becomes a therapeutic option for physicians, a culture of death rules -- life is no longer considered an unalienable right endowed by the Creator. God-fearing people have an inexorable responsibility to protect life from conception to natural death.

In Maryland, the Knights of Columbus, in solidarity with priests and bishops, working in parishes and communities, in collaboration with groups that have similar beliefs, must combat the procurement of death and the devaluing of life at all stages. The bill to legalize physician-assisted suicide must be defeated. It will be difficult, but with a united effort, prayer, faith and the help of God, it can be done.

Belief is Hard, But Nothing Makes Sense without God

By Cullen Herout

*This post appeared first on **Catholic Stand**, January 20, 2016. (printed with permission.)*

Whenever my brother comes to town to visit, we have a traditional meal that we enjoy together. It takes place at a local Chinese buffet, and typically the conversations can become deep and meaningful. These conversations might be about the state of the family, our quest for virtue, or various things that might be going on in our lives. Inevitably, I will plead at least once for him to move back to the Midwest to be near the rest of our family.

This past Christmas was no different. As we were devouring our crab rangoon and beef with broccoli, we got to talking about faith, which is something we have both wrestled with over the years. As usual, the conversation took many twists and turns. We talked about the reasons for belief, and the reasons for lack thereof. Eventually, when it came down to it, we both found ourselves echoing C.S. Lewis' thought in *Mere Christianity*: "Ever since men were able to think, they have been wondering what this universe really is and how it came to be there".

I've been thinking about this question for decades now. It's challenging, and it has led me to a personal, "lowercase t" truth:

Belief is difficult. Faith does not come easily.

My brother and I are envious of those who effortlessly place belief in God and seem to have no trouble with faith in the Divine. Belief may have come easily or, perhaps they had a moment of clarity somewhere along the line. Perhaps it is even an illusion, and though they appear to have no struggles in this area, when doors are closed they do. I have no idea about the faith lives of the majority of individuals who profess belief. But I do know for me, it's difficult.

Peace and Comfort

As a mental health professional, I am always seeing things through the eyes of psychology. When it comes to belief in the Divine, I am ever-cognizant of Karl Marx's [take on religion](#): It is the opium of the people. It exists to help mankind feel better about itself and its existence in a senseless and meaningless world. It has been, and can be, tempting to latch onto this idea.

While I ponder the implications of this notion, I keep coming back to the same basic truth: his conclusion

is wrong. His conclusion has to be wrong because his premise is wrong. Marx contends that since religion offers people a sense of peace and comfort, it must have been designed by those same people. He believes it is a sign of weakness embraced by those looking for meaning in a cruel world.

But the truth is that the fact that religion brings a sense of peace and comfort doesn't necessarily lead to the conclusion that it is a psychological phenomenon with no basis in reality. It could bring "the people" comfort and peace precisely because it is true. In other words, nothing about the fact that religion brings people peace and comfort disproves the truth contained within it.

In fact, it is precisely because of truth that we can ascertain the existence of the Divine.

Objective Moral Order

One area where we see truth is the area of objective morality. The very existence of an objective moral order points to the existence of a Supreme God.

This was demonstrated recently when a prominent atheist blogger converted to Catholicism. Writing for the atheist portal on the blog Patheos, Leah Libresco [says](#), "I believed that the Moral Law wasn't just a Platonic truth, abstract and distant. It turns out I actually believed it was some kind of person, as well as Truth". She has reasoned that because she has intuited an objective moral order to the universe, this objective moral order must have been created by an objective Creator. Further, her experience trying to explain objective morality without God led her to that very conclusion.

If we are being intellectually honest, she is one hundred percent correct. What we consider to be good or bad would be arbitrary and meaningless without an objective moral order, which cannot exist without God. At most, the standards of good and bad could be called socially acceptable (or unacceptable) norms of behavior.

Some would say that we can measure the morality of behavior based on the common good for a society. What is good for society will determine what is morally sound or unsound. But this explanation will always be lacking

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because what is good for society can change day to day, and what is good one day may not be good the next day. Further, what is good for one part of the population may not be good for another part, or vice versa. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to determine a standard of morality that worked in all places at all times. With this reasoning, there would still be no such thing as an objective moral order.

But human nature tells us there are things which are inherently evil, such as murder, stealing, rape, genocide, and sex slavery. None of these things meet the universal standard for decent behavior, and this points to the existence of an objective moral order. We could claim that child sex slavery is only bad because we have deemed it bad as a society or because it doesn't serve the "common good", but we know this is nonsense. We might claim that the taking of innocent life is only evil because we have deemed it so as a society, but no doubt we would immediately object if that life were our own. By objecting, we have appealed to a basic, universal standard of behavior, a law which all mankind knows instinctively.

Law of Human Nature

C.S. Lewis gives a nod to this point in his well-known book *Mere Christianity*. He calls objective moral order the Law of Human Nature, and he calls it such because:

"people thought that everyone knew it by nature and did not need to be taught it. They did not mean, of course, that you might not find an odd individual here and there who did not know it, just as you find a few people who are colorblind or have no ear for a tune. But...they thought that the human idea of decent behavior was obvious to everyone".

Lewis later on ultimately leads us back to our conclusion as he acknowledges that the Law of Human Nature is evidence for the existence of God. Indeed, the Law of Human Nature would make no sense at all without the existence of a transcendent God who created it. Lewis himself later reasons further that this God must, in fact, be the Christian God.

It is hard to fathom a world in which the Divine does not exist. I have previously speculated what a world with no truth might look like, and the situation basically remains the same imagining a world without God. God is Truth, after all. We certainly cannot have one without the other.

Furthermore, we can know there is a God because without

God, nothing makes sense. Literally nothing about this world has any meaning whatsoever without God. Not only could there be no objective moral order, existence itself would be completely and totally empty and devoid of meaning or purpose.

The Bible study I quite recently rejoined is currently reading the book *Theology and Sanity* by Frank Sheed. He summarizes this entire dilemma quite nicely, as he notes:

"Therefore without God everything is literally inexplicable, not only in the sense that man cannot find the explanation, but also in the sense that there is none. Therefore, again, apart from the knowledge of God, man really is doomed to live in a meaningless universe, and he can but grow weary of the effort to live a meaningful life in a context that has no meaning. Not knowing God, he does not know what he is; equally he does not know what he is here for; where he is supposed to be going, [or] how to get there."

It's hard to imagine anyone putting it any more succinctly than that. It harkens back to Lewis' quote regarding our place in the universe. Sheed's conclusion, and Lewis' as well, is that we were put in this world in order to find our way to a different world, a world where we could share in eternal life with Our Creator. They both acknowledge the meaninglessness of life without God and the complete and utter despair that can oftentimes accompany such a belief.

Opium of the People

Sheed's and Lewis' conclusion certainly is the most logical. Far from being "the opium of the people", as Marx purports, religion helps to guide us and orient us toward our Creator and our final goal.

Conversely, without God, we are doomed to live a life of dissonance and contradiction with no guiding principle to hold everything together. I have often found this to be particularly true for myself. I have speculated that if someone were somehow able to completely disprove the existence of God, my life would fall apart. As it is, however, it's completely impossible to disprove the existence of God. So, therefore, I have nothing to worry about.

How good it is to think about such things.

As we continued to devour egg rolls and sesame chicken,

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my brother and I pondered in bewilderment those who never take the time to think about life's bigger questions. Or perhaps they are so taken by science and answering the question of "what" that they never proceed on to the equally, if not more important question of "why".

After all, science can take us only so far. It is inherently lacking when trying to figure out reasons for things like existence and rationality. Lewis says, "But why anything comes to be at all, and whether there is anything behind the things science observes – something of a different kind – this is not a scientific question". He understood that as important as it was and is, science is insufficient for explaining the existential "why" questions that haunt us as we go about our lives.

Armed with these reminders, my faith life grows. I still don't have all the answers. I often wonder about the limits of human knowledge and understanding, or as my brother put it, "how can we know what we don't know"? I don't have a great answer to that question, but I figure it's better to stick with what we do know.

Which is, without God, literally nothing makes sense.

Cullen Herout is a pro-life, pro-family writer. He has a passion for writing about life issues, marriage, fatherhood, and creating a culture of life. Follow him on his Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cullenheroutwriter

Misericordiae Vultus – The Face of Mercy

Letter of Pope Francis on the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

(Not everyone has had the opportunity to read the entire document "Misericordiae Vultus" published in April, 2015; therefore, the editors have decided to highlight certain paragraphs of the document to whet your appetite for further study. We have retained the numbering of the paragraphs and footnotes from the complete version to make it easier to refer to the omitted paragraphs.)

4. I have chosen the date of 8 December because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church. In fact, I will open the Holy Door on the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father's love in the world.

5. The Jubilee year will close with the liturgical Solemnity of Christ the King on 20 November 2016. On that day, as we seal the Holy Door, we shall be filled, above all, with a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving to the Most Holy Trinity for having granted us an extraordinary time of grace. We will entrust the life of the Church, all human-

ity, and the entire cosmos to the Lordship of Christ, asking him to pour out his mercy upon us like the morning dew, so that everyone may work together to build a brighter future. How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God! May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst!

6. "It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way".[5] Saint Thomas Aquinas' words show that God's mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence. For this reason the liturgy, in one of its most ancient collects, has us pray: "O God, who reveal your power above all in your mercy and forgiveness ..."[6] Throughout the history of humanity, God will always be the One who is present, close, provident, holy, and merciful.

7. "For his mercy endures forever." This is the refrain that repeats after each verse in Psalm 136 as it narrates the history of God's revelation. By virtue of mercy, all the events

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of the Old Testament are replete with profound salvific import. Mercy renders God's history with Israel a history of salvation. To repeat continually "for his mercy endures forever," as the psalm does, seems to break through the dimensions of space and time, inserting everything into the eternal mystery of love. It is as if to say that not only in history, but for all eternity man will always be under the merciful gaze of the Father. It is no accident that the people of Israel wanted to include this psalm – the "Great Hallel," as it is called – in its most important liturgical feast days.

Before his Passion, Jesus prayed with this psalm of mercy. Matthew attests to this in his Gospel when he says that, "when they had sung a hymn" (26:30), Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. While he was instituting the Eucharist as an everlasting memorial of himself and his paschal sacrifice, he symbolically placed this supreme act of revelation in the light of his mercy. Within the very same context of mercy, Jesus entered upon his passion and death, conscious of the great mystery of love that he would consummate on the Cross. Knowing that Jesus himself prayed this psalm makes it even more important for us as Christians, challenging us to take up the refrain in our daily lives by praying these words of praise: "for his mercy endures forever."

In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy.

9. In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. We know these parables well, three in particular: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father with two sons (cf. Lk 15:1-32). In these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon.

10. Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking

in mercy. The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love. The Church "has an endless desire to show mercy".[8] Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy. The temptation, on the one hand, to focus exclusively on justice made us forget that this is only the first, albeit necessary and indispensable step. But the Church needs to go beyond and strive for a higher and more important goal. On the other hand, sad to say, we must admit that the practice of mercy is waning in the wider culture. In some cases the word seems to have dropped out of use. However, without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruit-

The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more.

less and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert. The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.

11. Let us not forget the great teaching offered by Saint John Paul II in his second Encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, which at the time came unexpectedly, its theme catching many by surprise. There are two passages in particular to which I would like to draw attention. First, Saint John Paul II highlighted the fact that we had forgotten the theme of mercy in today's cultural milieu: "The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of 'mercy' seem to cause uneasiness in man, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history, has become the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it (cf. Gen 1:28). This dominion over the earth, sometimes understood in a one-sided and superficial way, seems to have no room for mercy... And this is why, in the situation of the Church and the world today, many individuals and groups guided by a lively sense of faith are turning, I would say almost spontaneously, to the mercy of God".[9]

12. The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person.

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The Spouse of Christ must pattern her behavior after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception.

The Spouse of Christ must pattern her behavior after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception. In the present day, as the Church is charged with the task of the new evangelization, the theme of mercy needs to be proposed again and again with new enthusiasm and renewed pastoral action. It is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father.

The Church's first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes,

...in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.

communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.

(14. *Last paragraph*) Merciful like the Father, therefore, is the "motto" of this Holy Year. In mercy, we find proof of how God loves us. He gives his entire self, always, freely, asking nothing in return. He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him. What a beautiful thing that the Church begins her daily prayer with the words, "O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me" (Ps 70:2)! The assistance we ask for is already the first step of God's mercy toward us. He comes to assist us in our weakness. And his help consists in helping us accept his presence and closeness to us. Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others.

15. In this Holy Year, we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates. How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry

is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich! During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. Let us not fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!

It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter

And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy.

more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.

We cannot escape the Lord's words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt 25:31-45). Moreover, we will be asked if we have helped others to escape the doubt that causes them to fall into despair and which is often a source of loneliness; if we have helped to overcome the ignorance in which millions of people

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live, especially children deprived of the necessary means to free them from the bonds of poverty; if we have been close to the lonely and afflicted; if we have forgiven those who have offended us and have rejected all forms of anger and hate that lead to violence; if we have had the kind of patience God shows, who is so patient with us; and if we have commended our brothers and sisters to the Lord in prayer. In each of these “little ones,” Christ himself is

Christ's flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled...

present. His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled... to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us. Let us not forget the words of Saint John of the Cross: “as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love”.[12]

22. A Jubilee also entails the granting of indulgences. This practice will acquire an even more important meaning in the Holy Year of Mercy. God's forgiveness knows

In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God makes even more evident his love and its power to destroy all human sin.

no bounds. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God makes even more evident his love and its power to destroy all human sin. Reconciliation with God is made possible through the paschal mystery and the mediation of the Church. Thus God is always ready to forgive, and he never tires of forgiving in ways that are continually new and surprising. Nevertheless, all of us know well the experience of sin. We know that we are called to perfection (cf. Mt 5:48), yet we feel the heavy burden of sin. Though we feel the transforming power of grace, we also feel the effects of sin typical of our fallen state. Despite being forgiven, the conflicting consequences of our sins remain. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God forgives our sins, which he truly blots out; and yet sin leaves a negative effect on the way we think and act. But the mercy of God is stronger even than this. It becomes indulgence on the part of the Father who, through the Bride of Christ, his Church, reaches the pardoned sinner and frees him from every residue left by the consequences of sin, enabling him to act with charity, to grow in love rather than to fall

back into sin.

The Church lives within the communion of the saints. In the Eucharist, this communion, which is a gift from God, becomes a spiritual union binding us to the saints and blessed ones whose number is beyond counting (cf. Rev 7:4). Their holiness comes to the aid of our weakness in a way that enables the Church, with her maternal prayers and her way of life, to fortify the weakness of some with the strength of others. Hence, to live the indulgence of the Holy Year means to approach the Father's mercy with the certainty that his forgiveness extends to the entire life of the believer. To gain an indulgence is to experience the holiness of the Church, who bestows upon all the fruits of Christ's redemption, so that God's love and forgiveness may extend everywhere. Let us live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us in his merciful “indulgence.”

24. My thoughts now turn to the Mother of Mercy. May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God's

No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary.

tenderness. No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary. Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh. The Mother of the Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of His love.

Chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, Mary, from the outset, was prepared by the love of God to be the Ark of the Covenant between God and man. She treasured divine mercy in her heart in perfect harmony with her Son Jesus. Her hymn of praise, sung at the threshold of the home of Elizabeth, was dedicated to the mercy of God which extends from “generation to generation” (Lk 1:50). We too were included in those prophetic words of the Virgin Mary. This will be a source of comfort and strength to us as we cross the threshold of the Holy Year to experience the fruits of divine mercy.

At the foot of the Cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. This supreme expression of mercy towards those who crucified him show us the point to which the

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Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception.

mercy of God can reach. Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception. Let us address her in the words of the Salve Regina, a prayer ever ancient and ever new, so that she may never tire of turning her merciful eyes upon us, and make us worthy to contemplate the face of mercy, her Son Jesus.

In this Jubilee Year, may the Church echo the word of God that resounds strong and clear as a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid, and love. May she never tire of extending mercy, and be ever patient in offering compassion and comfort. May the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end: “Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old” (Ps 25:6).

FRANCISCUS

Endnotes

[5] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 30. a. 4

[6] XXVI Sunday in Ordinary Time. This Collect already appears in the eighth century among the euchological texts of the Gelasian Sacramentary (1198).

[8] Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24.

[9] No. 2.

[12] Words of Light and Love, 57.

(The editors agree **that the following quote of Father Brungs, SJ**, works well as a further reflection on the Pope’s letter on *The Year of Mercy*. How better to carry out the mandate of Mercy to all than to have that Mercy impelled not by a generalized love “for all” but a very specific “in person” encounter. That is also what the Pope calls for today.)

This is what we’re about—that is what we all need to do in our lives in the Church. We should—everyone of us—*preach with love that aspect of Christ that we of all people have grasped the best*. There probably is some aspect of God in Christ that we have caught more clearly than anyone else. Otherwise, why are we here? We should be exemplars of that aspect of virtue in Christ to the whole Church as best we can in our circumstances. In this way we can show our love for Christ and in Christ to each other in the Church. We can, above all, fulfill the words of the Apostle John in his epistles: “Love one another as I have loved you.” In other words, let us love each other, not in some “Spiritual” fuzzy way—the ‘good will to all’ sort of way—but let us love each other in a particular, specific way. Let the body enter into that love. That is what we are called to be and to do. Truly, we can love in no other way; generalized love is not Christian love. (*Written in Our Flesh: Eyes toward Jerusalem, ITEST Faith/Science Press, 2008, (Ed.) Postiglione, RSM, p. 22.*)

(Pope Francis follows a long tradition of proclaiming Mercy in the Church by adding his thoughts to those of the Saints below.)(eds.)

St. Josemaria Escriva:

“How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy.”

St Faustina,

Divine Mercy in my Soul (378): “And even if the sins of soul are as dark as night, when the sinner turns to My mercy he gives Me the greatest praise and is the glory of My Passion.”

Saint Vincent de Paul

“Extend your mercy towards others, so that there can be no one in need whom you meet without helping. For what hope is there for us if God should withdraw His Mercy from us?”

Thomas a Kempis

Imitation of Christ: “In what can I hope, then, or in whom ought I trust, save only in the great mercy of God and the hope of heavenly grace?”