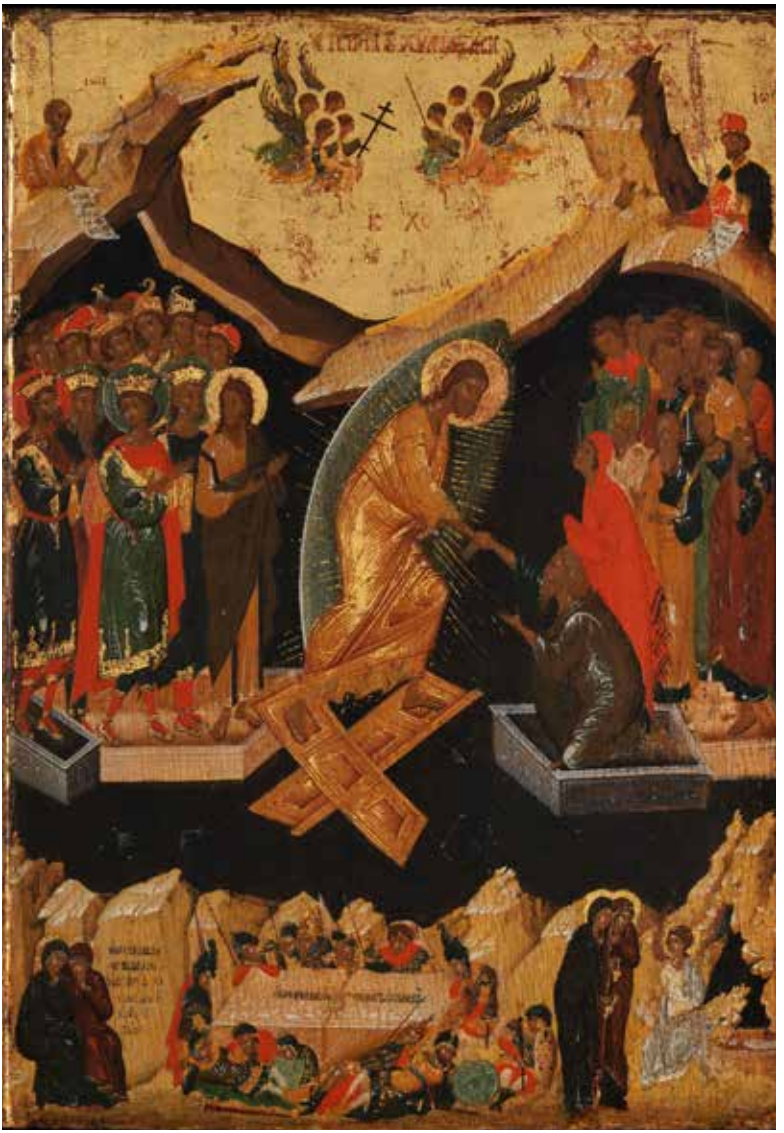
THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE

MARCH/APRIL 2026 VOLUME XXII • NO. 5



THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE

VOLUME XXII • NO. 5

Publisher & Editor:

The Reverend
Peter M. J. Stravinskas

(ISSN 1553-0221)

Copyright © 2026. The Catholic Response is published bi-monthly by the Priestly Society of the Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman. Editorial Offices: 601 Buhler Court, Pine Beach, New Jersey 08741. Publishing/Subscription Office: P.O. Box 10, New Hope, KY 40052. Subscription rates in U.S. and Possessions: one year, $30.00; two years, $55; three years, $70. Outside the U.S.: one year, $35; two years, $65; three years, $85. For bulk rates, call our new number 732-903-5213. Periodicals postage PAID at New Haven, Kentucky and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to *The Catholic Response,* P.O. Box 10, New Hope, KY 40052

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Duc in Altum
REVEREND PETER M.J. STRAVINSKAS 1

"Something strange is happening… "
REVEREND NICHOLAS L. GREGORIS, S.T.D., ED.D. 7

Piece by Piece
LEILA WARAH 13

Holy Friendships
MOST REVEREND. MICHAEL F. OLSON, S.T.D. 19

Either/Or at Our Lady of Perpetual Fortitude
GILBERT COLON 22

Pope Leo XIV on the Mystery of Holy Saturday 31

The Church and Darwin
CASEY CHALK 33

Questions and Answers 44

Short Reviews by the Editor 59

Duc in Altum

To start off, a commercial: Returns for our Duc in Altum *Campaign have been anemic. If you have not yet made your contribution, please take this moment to do so. We need every reader to be an active donor.*

This coming May 8 will mark the first anniversary of the election of Pope Leo XIV as Sovereign Pontiff. With that in mind, I thought it might be worthwhile to offer a "theology of the papacy" for our TCR Family.

In one of my conversations with a Fundamentalist some years ago, on the topic of "Catholic idolatry," the minister ended his tirade by sealing it all with the line: "Well, you Catholics even worship chairs!" Apparently, the poor man had come across the feast of the Chair of St. Peter on February 22 on a Catholic calendar and supposed that it involved some kind of "adoration" of a relic. Well, let's clear the air at the outset and note that the observance is not concerned with furniture; it is, however, intimately concerned with the very heart of Catholic life.

In ancient times, the chair was the sign of authority to teach authoritatively. Hence, in Matthew's Gospel we are reminded by Our Lord that "the scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you" (23:2). Unfortunately, Jesus has to go on to admonish His disciples not to follow the example of these official teachers within the Judaism of His day. It was this symbolism connected to the chair, *cathedra* in both Greek and Latin, which caught on in the Early Church, so much so that the bishop's church in which was found his magisterial chair gave the name to the entire edifice – cathedral. The February 22 celebration is even more specific, in that it is grounded in the teaching authority of the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, and invites us to reflect on the Petrine office in the Church today. It is fair to say that the ministry of Peter's successor is intended to be, first and foremost, a work of preserving unity and yet, ironically enough, the only issue on which all non-Catholic Christians agree is precisely their rejection of the Pope, with many of them arguing that Peter never held any venerable position within the Church of the apostolic age and thus, no would-be successor can lay claim to any special role in the Church since. If we examine the place of Peter in the New Testament, however, we find significant evidence which directly contradicts that assertion. Perhaps a bit of a refresher course in this regard?

In all likelihood, the most frequently quoted passage regarding Petrine supremacy in the New Testament is the text found in Matthew 16. In it, Jesus renames Simon (Peter) and entrusts to him the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Why this honor? Because Peter has just proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah, a revelation which comes, as Our Lord tells him, from none other than His heavenly Father.

Saint Peter by Paolo Emilio Besenzi, c. 17th century

And so, it is upon Peter himself that Jesus will build His Church. Some counter that the keys given to Peter merely "provide access," as do keys in the physical sense. This simplistic view, however, overlooks two important points: Peter was given the keys of the kingdom singularly and was entrusted with them in conjunction with the powers of binding and loosing. In rabbinic terms (which is the only correct way to interpret so Jewish a Gospel as Matthew's), the ability to bind and loose is equated with the authority to decide what is allowed and forbidden by Law. Binding and loosing also have an alternate meaning, denoting the authority to include persons in the community or to exclude or excommunicate them. Thus, Peter was being granted a distinctive role by Christ related to the teaching and life of the community.

This passage of Scripture, so controverted for centuries and proudly emblazoned in the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, is not the only place in the Sacred Scriptures which shows Peter in a different light from the rest of the apostles. In fact, several other pericopes might be even more convincing. The sum total of such passages is so overwhelming that one wonders how any can fail to see the case clearly. Several years ago, an ecumenical team of scholars researched this question and came to some truly impressive conclusions about this man; their findings can be read in the work entitled, *Peter in the New Testament*, which I would most heartily recommend.

But two additional passages about this most frequently cited New Testament figure require special analysis and attention.

In Luke, Jesus tells Peter that Satan has asked for the disciples, that he may sift them all like wheat (cf. 22:31). Jesus comments, however, that He has prayed that Peter's faith may

never fail. It is noteworthy that Jesus prays for Peter alone and commissions him to care for the other disciples: "… and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (22:32). Luke says that Jesus accords Peter a place among, yet apart from and above, the other apostles.

If Luke can be said to introduce the unique position occupied by Peter among the apostles, then this introduction is refined and clarified in the Gospel of John. In the last chapter of that work, the Risen Christ asks Peter three times if he loves Him. Peter responds affirmatively in each instance and is given three injunctions by Christ: "Feed my lambs;" "Tend my sheep;" "Feed my sheep" (21:15-17). These commands provide a clear analogy between the roles of Christ and Peter with respect to the Church. John tells us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd caring for His flock (cf. 10:11-16). We also know from Luke's Gospel that Christ's followers are the flock cared for by the Good Shepherd (12:32). Thus, by instructing Peter to tend and feed His sheep, Christ was designating Peter as the shepherd of His flock on earth.

It is also critical to notice that Peter is asked to proclaim his love for the Lord three times, clearly (and painfully) harking back to Peter's triple denial of Christ before His crucifixion. Peter is given the opportunity to rehabilitate himself, does so to Jesus' satisfaction, and is subsequently charged to tend Christ's flock and to nurture His people.

For those so fond of pointing out the sinfulness of ecclesiastical leaders, past and present, it is good to underscore the fact that this mission to Peter is given to him in the very context of Christ's reminding him that he has sinned!

Having demonstrated the special role of Peter in the New Testament, one must now move a step further – on to the question of papal infallibility. The charism of infallibility is that gift whereby the Holy Spirit preserves the Church in the truth of the apostolic Faith. The Fathers of the First Vatican Council saw infallibility as the means by which "the whole flock of Christ might be kept away from the poison of error and be nourished by the food of heavenly doctrine." To speak of "papal infallibility," then, is to identify only one aspect of infallibility, which is a gift to the whole Church, for the sake of the whole Church. As the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council summarized it, relying on the formulation of Vatican I, the charism of infallibility comes into play when the Pope, as head of the College of Bishops, or the entire body of bishops (in union with the Pope) speaks the faith of the Church. And so, the Pope is infallible when teaching on matters of faith and morals

and authoritatively speaking *ex cathedra* (from the chair of Peter), as the vicar of Christ on earth. Nor is this doctrine a medieval or modern accretion. St. Irenaeus, the martyr-bishop of Lyons writing in 202 A.D., serves as an ancient witness to this truth: "For with this Church (Rome), all other churches must bring themselves into line, on account of its superior authority."

The doctrine of infallibility, then, is derived from the principle of apostolic succession and from the fact that Jesus Christ promised His presence to His apostles when He sent them forth to teach all the nations (cf. Mt 28:20). The Pope and the bishops in union with him are the heirs to the first teaching commission of the Lord and, on that very score, also heirs to the promise of divine assistance. The Church has always taken her Lord at His word when He says that the Holy Spirit "will guide you into all truth" (Jn 16:13), believing that the Holy Spirit will work through fallible men to ensure that the members of the Body of Christ are taught the infallible truth of Christ.

The doctrine behind all this is, I would suggest, the only reason to be a Catholic. One is not a Catholic today to witness beautiful liturgy; that is in regrettably short supply. One is not a Catholic today to hear inspiring and insightful homilies; they are all too often in even shorter supply. One is not a Catholic today to be uplifted by splendid art and glorious music; Motel Six churches and "Glory and Praise" tunes are the common diet these days. One is a Catholic today for one reason and one reason alone: The indefatigable belief that objective and absolute truth exists and is communicable – and that that truth is guarded and shared by the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, most especially through the man who occupies the Chair of Peter.

Not a few people within the Church and without want Catholicism on their own terms, but Christ has ordained otherwise. He founded His Church to be "the pillar and bulwark of the truth," as First Timothy puts it (3:15), and He has placed Peter within that Church as the mouthpiece of that truth. In some circles, that is a rather neuralgic point, but it is the one claim by which Catholicism rises or falls.

Exactly a week before Pope Benedict XVI was born, Monsignor Ronald Knox preached a sermon on this same topic to a British congregation. Reading it today proves true the French adage: *"Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose."* In describing attitudes among would-be Catholics of his generation, the venerable convert-priest highlighted those who wanted all the comfort and security of Catholicism, all the while eschewing its very *raison d'être*. He says:

"They know that a Pope is necessary to their system. They see their own Church torn with rivalries and dissension. They know that such rivalries and dissensions must be in a Church which replaces the principle of authority by the principle of compromise. They see it riddled with heresies and they know there is no safeguard against the occurrence of such heresies unless the gift of infallibility [is] centred in one man."

He goes on to say that yet others maintain that the papacy is but an embarrassing left-over from a bygone era: "What you see is not the real Pope, but a ghost of the Pope – he who reigns at the Vatican [is] no true prince of Christendom but a phantom of a historical institution, an anachronism, a pathetic survival of the power of the papacy – dead, dying, or, at any rate, just going to die." Knox responds starkly: "If the papacy be dead, then the Catholic Church is dead, and if the Catholic Church be dead, Christ has failed. Close down the churches. Shut up the Bible. Let us have no grinning death mask… to mock at our despair." He rounds out his considerations with this flourish: "But Peter is still there. All the fury of Herod has spent itself in vain. Peter's prison on Easter even, like his Master's on Easter morning, stands empty. We have a Pope."

What are some practical implications we can or should draw from today's celebration?

Does the election of a particular man to the papacy signal the decision of the Holy Spirit? Not at all. The cardinals in conclave – and indeed the whole Church – prays that the cardinal-electors will be guided by the Holy Spirit, but there is no guarantee that they will necessarily follow that guidance (as can be seen from not a few popes in history whose election we would be loathe to place at the door of the Holy Spirit!) – as Pope Benedict himself observed some years before his own election!

That said, the Petrine office provides us with the assurance of the truth. Even the most unworthy occupants of the Chair of Peter have never taught heresy. While their personal lives may have been less than stellar, their teaching charism was never compromised.

Which leads to the next point: While Catholics are duty-bound to render filial submission to the teaching authority of the Pope, they are not required to agree with every other decision he makes. Faithful Catholic living does not call for a mindless "papalotry" or mimicry. We do something because it is the right thing to do, not because the Pope does it (or the reverse). And if the Pope performs an action we find problematic, our first obligation is to attempt to understand the rationale for that action, always giving

him the "edge" in such areas (as we would our own fathers). If, however, careful study and reflection leads a person (and perhaps many persons) to conclude that his decision lacked prudence or a reflection of the fullness of theological precision, we have another obligation – to pray that he will correct such behavior and that those in a position to influence his judgment will do so.

Monsignor Knox ends his lovely sermon with these thoughts: "So [Peter] knocks still, while souls that profess to hold him in all reverence shut their ears and invent comfortable theories; because they cannot or will not come out to seek him in the darkness and the storm. He knocks patiently, for the fisherman has learnt patience. He knocks gently, for his shepherd heart knows that bullying will do no good. But don't mistake his errand. He has keys on his shoulder. It is the doorkeeper who knocks."

Today, dear friends and readers, we honor Peter – the shepherd, the holder of the keys, the occupant of the chair of true doctrine. In particular, we commit ourselves to pray that the present occupant of that chair will feel himself buoyed by the prayers of the faithful, so that he always responds with courage and fidelity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, remembering that the Lord's promise to Peter the Apostle is renewed daily to him as Peter's successor: *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram, ædificabo ecclesiam meam.* Finally, let us make our own the very explicit Collect for the Chair of Peter: "Grant, we pray, almighty God, that no tempests may disturb us, for you have set us fast on the rock of the Apostle Peter's confession of faith."

If you do these things, you will *duc in altum.*

Father Peter M. J. Stravinskas
Editor and Publisher

Our cover shows. Four Icons from a Pair of Doors (Panels), possibly part of a Polyptych: John the Theologian and Prochoros, the Baptism (Epiphany), Harrowing of Hell (Anastasis), and Saint Nicholas from the early 15th century

"Something strange is happening…"

by The Reverend Nicholas L. Gregoris, S.T.D., Ed.D.

The Reverend Nicholas L. Gregoris was a member of Priestly Society of Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman, held theological degrees from the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Pontifical Faculty Marianum, both in Rome, as well as a doctorate in Catholic school administration from Pontifex University. He was the managing editor of The Catholic Response*. Father Nicholas died in August of 2025; please pray for the repose of his soul.*

Editor's Note: This homily was preached for the Easter Vigil of 2016 at the Carmel of Traverse City, Michigan.

"Something strange is happening – there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and hell trembles with fear."

This anonymous, ancient homily, read on Holy Saturday in the Liturgy of the Hours, recounts how Christ encountered Adam and Eve in Sheol, the place of repose for the just who preceded Our Lord's coming and awaited His Resurrection. Jesus searches for Adam and Eve as a Good Shepherd searches for his lost sheep. He carries His Cross, "the weapon that had won Him victory." Jesus, as many venerable Greek and Russian icons depict, is described by our anonymous author as taking Adam by the hand and raising him up. Then the Lord exhorts Adam:

> Awake, o sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light [....] I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise, work of my hands, you who were created in my image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated [....] The bridal chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The Kingdom of Heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity.

Dear Sisters and friends in Christ, tonight, in this most Solemn Vigil, what St. Augustine of Hippo called "The Mother of All Vigils," it is not the Dead and Buried Christ who encounters us in Sheol – a place of shadows – but rather the Risen Lord Jesus, who welcomes us into the light and warmth emanating from the newly blessed fire and the brightly burning paschal candle. He takes each one of us by the hand, who are the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, and raises us up, leading us out of the darkness of sin and the shadows of death into the joy and peace radiating from His empty tomb. Time and again, during the solemn singing of the Easter Proclamation, known as the *Exsultet*, we heard about the themes of night and day, darkness and light. One of the most moving passages reads: "The sanctifying power of this night dispels wickedness, washes faults away, restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners, drives out hatred, fosters concord, and brings down the mighty."

In the *Exsultet,* we heard not, "This *was* the night!" but rather, "This *is* the night!" when the great salvific actions of God in the Old Covenant – the Exodus and the Passover – have been fulfilled. Each year, at the Jewish Passover meal, known as the *seder*, the youngest male child asks his father an important question: "Why is this night different from every other night?" The *Exsultet* provides the definitive answer: "O truly blessed night, worthy alone to know the time and hour when Christ rose from the underworld. This is the night of which it is written: The night shall be as bright as day, dazzling is the night for me and full of gladness [....] O truly blessed night, when things of heaven are wed to those of earth, and divine to the human."

The Scripture readings that the Church provides for the Easter Vigil recall some of the most significant events and teachings in salvation history, all of which culminate in tonight's celebration of the Lord's Paschal Mystery. In the light of the Resurrection, all the books of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, make perfect sense. We understand why God created us in His image and likeness and why, after the Fall of Adam and Eve, He willed in His infinite love and mercy to stay close to us through covenants ratified with our forebears in faith – the patriarchs and prophets, most especially, Abraham and Moses.

Jesus is the New Adam. Furthermore, He Himself said: "Before Abraham was, I AM."

The Evangelist John, in his Prologue, teaches us: "The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." John continues: "No one has ever seen God. It is

God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made Him known."

Resurrection by Dieric Bouts, c. between 1450 and 1460

Dear Sisters and friends in Christ, when was Jesus, God's Only-Begotten Son, first made known to us personally? At the baptismal font, which is the womb of Holy Mother Church. There began our personal exodus out of slavery to sin and death to the life of grace leading us to eternal life in the Promised Land of Heaven. Tonight, we pray for all those catechumens who, reborn by water and the Holy Spirit, have now joined our ranks as children of God, indeed saints of God, heirs with Christ to the Heavenly Kingdom.

Our salvation, long ago lost through the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, has been restored to us through Jesus' obedience in the Garden of Gethsemane and then sealed in the Garden of the Resurrection. As Jesus came forth from the virginal womb of Mary, so too did He rise again, having been buried in a newly hewn tomb in which no one had ever been laid. It is this Jesus who desires a personal encounter with each of us every day of our lives.

During Advent, we awaited His coming at Christmas when He, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, encountered us in the guise of a newborn child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. During Lent, He encountered us in a special way in our prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Now, on this Day of Days which is Easter, the Lord Jesus encounters us in Word and Sacrament. In the beginning, God spoke His all-powerful Word and thus created the entire universe, speaking into being the first man and woman. In each Mass, God speaks that same Word, and so the Incarnate

Word, Crucified and Risen from the Dead, becomes truly present on our altars. Whenever we receive Holy Communion, we must remember that it is the Risen Christ whom we receive – not the Dead or Buried Christ.

While the Empty Tomb is the most significant sign of the Resurrection as an historical event, it is the Eucharistic Sacrifice and Banquet that is the greatest proof of the Resurrection in the here and now. In order to receive Our Lord worthily in Holy Communion; to fulfill our Easter Duty; and to deepen our personal relationship with the Living Lord Jesus Christ, we renounce Satan, his empty works and promises. We renounce sin so as to live in the freedom of the children of God. In a word, we renew our Baptismal Promises and profess the Apostles' Creed, not only with our lips but with our lives.

How can you friends of our nuns do this concretely in the Easter Season? In what practical ways can we Christians offer our thankful praises to the Paschal Victim for, as St. Augustine reminds us, "We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song"?

(1) Support the pro-life movement, defending the inalienable right to life from conception to natural death and making sure to cast your vote in the upcoming presidential election for a solidly pro-life candidate.

(2) Live chastely, knowing that your bodies were bought at the price of Our Lord's Most Precious Blood and that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead as the first of many brethren, the first-fruits of the resurrection of the body on the Last Day.

(3) Have a priest bless your home with the newly blessed Easter water and then use holy water each day to bless yourselves and your children as a reminder of your Baptism.

(4) Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet entrusted by Our Lord to St. Faustina Kowalska, especially each day during this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

(5) Make a pilgrimage to a special church or shrine to light votive candles for the sick and dying that the Lord may take them by the hand, heal them, and raise them up.

(6) Pray the glorious mysteries of the Rosary and ask Our Lady, the New Eve, to intercede on behalf of non-Christians and fallen-away Catholics that they might find their way out of darkness into the light of the fullness of truth in the bosom of Mother Church: one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

(8) Take more seriously the Third Commandment to keep holy the Lord's Day, for every Sunday, the first day of the week on which

Our Lord rose from the dead, is a "Little Easter," by attending Mass devoutly; spending quality time with your family; and refraining from unnecessary work.

(9) Go to Confession at least once a month, so that when the priest absolves you, in your mind's eye, you may contemplate the Risen Lord's five sacred wounds which, as Julian of Norwich acclaimed, are not scars of defeat but tokens of victory.

(10) When you receive the Risen Lord's Body and Blood in Holy Communion, pray for a special intention, for the eternal salvation of a particular person, whether still among the living or among those who sleep in the peace of Christ.

Permit me to conclude with a brief meditation taken from an Easter homily by yet one more anonymous ancient author:

> Here, then, is the grace conferred by these Heavenly Mysteries, the gift which Easter brings, the most longed-for feast of the year; here are the beginnings of creatures newly formed: children born from the life-giving font of Holy Church, born anew with the simplicity of little ones, and crying out with the evidence of a clean conscience.
>
> Chaste fathers and inviolate mothers accompany this new family, countless in number, born to new life through faith. As they emerge from the grace-giving womb of the font, a blaze of candles burns brightly beneath the tree of faith.
>
> The Easter festival brings the grace of holiness from Heaven to men. Through the repeated celebration of the Sacred Mysteries they receive the spiritual nourishment of the sacraments. Fostered at the very heart of Holy Church, the fellowship of one community worships the one God, adoring the triple name of His essential holiness, and together with the prophet sings the psalm which belongs to this yearly festival: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad."
>
> And what day is this day? It is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the author of light, who brings the sunrise and the beginning of life, saying of Himself: "I am the light of day; whoever walks in daylight does not stumble." That is to say, whoever follows Christ in all things will come by this path to the throne of eternal light. Such was the prayer Christ made to the Father while He was still on earth: "Father, I desire that where I am they also may be, those who have come to believe in me; and that as you are in me and I in you, so they may abide in us."

ST. GREGORY FOUNDATION FOR LATIN LITURGY

exists to promote the use of Latin in the Sacred Liturgy according to the vision of the Second Vatican Council and in the rites of the post-conciliar reform

_____ Enclosed is $10 for the Year 2026 membership dues.

_____ Please send the congregational response booklet; $5 each.

_____ Please send the altar missal supplement; standard size. $20; chapel size, $15.

_____ Please send the brochure of Questions and Answers on the Latin Liturgy for $3, plus two 78-cent stamps.

_____ Please send me an MP3 file to download of the celebrant Mass chants in Latin at $7 each. [Introduction to the basics of chanting the Mass for priests. Be sure to fill in your email address below.]

_____ Please send me an MP3 file to download of the Mass at $7 each. [Introduction to the basics of reciting the Latin Mass for priests. Be sure to fill in your email address below.]

_____ Please send _____ copy(ies) of Latin Resource Materials for $2 each. [Includes bibliography of materials related to Latin grammar, music, etc. Be sure to enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope.]

The St. Gregory Foundation for Latin Liturgy and Ignatius Press have collaborated to produce a Latin supplement to the English-language Roman Missal. It is available in two sizes (standard altar edition and a smaller, "chapel" edition). This 45-page supplement contains the entire Ordinary of the Mass in Latin (with chants), and a generous selection of Prefaces. It is designed to be inserted at the back of the Altar Missal by means of adhesive strips, and comes with tabs to mark the Eucharistic Prayers and other key sections of the Mass.

_____ Please send _____ Standard size, $20 ea.; _____ chapel size, $15 ea.

_____ Enclosed please find a special gift in the amount of $_____

_____ To help defray expenses from the Seminarians' Latin Institute for 2026.

_____ Toward gift memberships; names and addresses are e closed on a separate sheet.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Email: _____

Please return to: The Saint Gregory Foundation
601 Buhler Court, Pine Beach, NJ 08741

Piece by Piece

Palestinians brace for more restrictions, land confiscations under Israel's new settlement expansion plan

Leila Warah

Leila Warah is an independent multimedia journalist in Palestine.

Editor's Note: This very important article was originally published in ONE, the magazine of the Catholic Neareast Welfare Association and is reprinted here with their kind permission.

In Abu Nuwar, five miles east of Jerusalem, the voices of children playing outside spill into the small kindergarten classroom of 40-year-old teacher Jihan Frehat. Just beyond the schoolyard, the red roofs of Ma'ale Adumim extend farther across the hilltop each year.

Ma'ale Adumim, with a population of 38,000, is an Israeli settlement built on expropriated Palestinian land. It is one of four settlements, including a nearby military base deemed illegal under international law, that encircle the Palestinian hamlet in the West Bank.

Born and raised in the 900-member Bedouin community of Abu Nuwar, Ms. Frehat runs through the daily pressures: Israeli military raids, home demolitions, settler incursions, blocked farmland and road closures that touch every aspect of life.

Ms. Frehat, who taught previously in private West Bank schools and with the Norwegian Refugee Council, co-founded the kindergarten in 2011; it currently serves 23 children. The kindergarten is under an Israeli demolition order, as is the middle school next door, which serves about 75 students. The latter was already demolished by Israeli forces five times. Each time, residents have rebuilt with help from local and international organizations.

"The ones who suffer most are our kids," says Ms. Frehat. "When we were their age, we didn't think about displacement or annexation. Today, they do."

In contrast, Ma'ale Adumim looms over Abu Nuwar with "all the advantages of a city," including a diverse education system, transit, health care, cultural and sports centers, parks and a lake, according to the website of Nefesh B'Nefesh, which partners with the Israeli government to recruit new residents for the settlement.

Panorama of Ma'ale Adumim Yiftachsam

"Look at how much the settlements have grown, look at their schools and universities," says Ms. Frehat, gesturing toward the expansive gated community.

"Now, look at us. Maybe they will close our schools, this is the policy of making us illiterate," she says. "All I want is a safe, secure, peaceful future for my children. I still have hope."

The skyline heralds Israel's E1 settlement expansion plan to connect Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem with a continuous settlement bloc in what Israel calls the E1 corridor, short for East 1. The plan had advanced and stalled under international pressure since 2005, but it was approved for rollout by the Israeli government in August 2025.

A month later, Israel's government approved a $900-million plan to build 7,600 new housing units in Ma'ale Adumim; settlement monitors estimate roughly 3,400 of those units will be built inside the settlement corridor.

Situated in the Israeli-occupied West Bank – representing 60 percent of the territory, also known as Area C, under the terms of the 1995 Oslo II Accord – the 4.6-square-mile corridor includes about 7,000 Palestinian residents across 22 Bedouin communities, including Abu Nuwar. These communities are at risk of forcible transfer to clear space for settlement expansion.

Ms. Frehat recalls the 1990s, when settlements were in an early stage, far from the chokehold she describes now.

"We're living on the edge now," she says. "At any moment I could receive a demolition order and be forced from my home. Honestly, we know nothing but fear. We fear annexation and our unknown future."

"The questions that we ask are: What will happen to us? Where do we go?"

"It is our duty to stay steadfast on our land and to hold onto it until our last breath."

Advancing the settlement plan would have broad implications across Palestinian territory and further "Israel's unlawful policy of annexing, de facto, the Palestinian territory and prevent the viability and contiguity of a Palestinian state, violating the Palestinian people's right to self-determination," says the International Commission of Jurists.

In Bethlehem, the Rev. Mitri Raheb, Lutheran pastor, theologian and founder of Dar al-Kalima University, says the E1 expansion plan would "fully" sever the West Bank's north from its south, "erasing the territorial continuity."

The Israeli government's plans intend to "make sure that no Palestinian state will ever be created," he says.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich indicated as much in a statement in mid-August, saying the plan was "a significant step that practically erases the two-state delusion and consolidates the Jewish people's hold on the heart of the land of Israel."

On the borders of Jabal al-Baba, or Pope's Hill, a few miles from Abu Nuwar, Palestinians are familiar with Israel's policy of forced displacement.

Palestinian communities inside the E1 corridor face the risk of forced displacement, driven by state-backed settler violence, military action and planning policies. Settler violence has increased since the start of Israel's war on Gaza in October 2023, along with military raids, checkpoints and job losses in Palestinian cities and towns across the West Bank.

"Every time we rebuild, they come with new decisions," says Atallah Mazaar'a, the spokesman for the hilltop community.

Mr. Mazaar'a is located within the Bedouin community residing on the borders of the Vatican's Jabal Al-Baba Hill, a gift from the late King Hussein of Jordan to Pope Paul VI during his historic visit to Jordan and the Holy Land.

The pressure has been measurable: The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that, in August, Israeli authorities issued demolition orders for 20 structures in the community, housing 450 people.

Cumulatively since 2009, more than 500 Palestinian-owned structures in E1 communities have been demolished, displacing more than 900 people. The average monthly demolitions this year, from January to mid-October, was eight.

Meanwhile, settlement expansion has accelerated. As of August, more than 23,000 Israeli housing units had advanced, putting Israel on pace to approve over 50,000 by the end of the

year, more than the previous five years combined, according to the Israel Policy Forum.

Within the broader settlement network, there are some 370 settlements and outposts across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, housing more than 737,000 settlers. Many function as cities and are integrated into Israel's road network, allowing settlers to travel freely between Israel and the West Bank.

According to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, Israeli building policies are "aimed at preventing Palestinian development and dispossessing Palestinians of their land," as part of a broader political agenda to "maximize the use of West Bank resources for Israeli needs, while minimizing the land reserves available to Palestinians."

Mr. Mazaar'a frames the pressure as demographic engineering: "to change the demographics according to their aspirations … making settlers outnumber Palestinians in Jerusalem, extending all the way to the Dead Sea."

"We want to develop and build," Mr. Mazaar'a says. "Our existence as Bedouins is for nature, and complementary to it, through our livestock and the land we preserve. We are part of the Palestinian national fabric."

"For us, this land is our oxygen."

Mr. Mazaar'a says pushing back against the Israeli occupation used to be easier, but the Israeli military has grown significantly more brutal in the West Bank since Israel's war on Gaza began and peaceful protest has become increasingly dangerous.

"They used to break up protests with tear gas or sound bombs," Mr. Mazaar'a says. "Nowadays, they are willing to destroy and even kill."

Since October 2023, Israeli forces have killed 1,001 Palestinians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem – about one in five of them children – accounting for 43 percent of all Palestinians killed in the West Bank over the past two decades. As well, 7,500 military raids were recorded across the West Bank from January to October 2025, a 37 percent increase over the same period in 2024, according to OCHA.

Fearful for their lives, activists have stopped their activities, and many Palestinians believe their only remaining defense is to stay put and refuse removal, in some cases even declining the incentives of "huge amounts of money, pieces of land" elsewhere, Mr. Mazaar'a says.

Palestinians refuse to accept this "new Nakba," he adds, referring to the Israeli expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from the Negev in 1948.

"The occupation displaced me and my family in 1948. We still have our keys and the deeds to our land," he said. "I would never accept leaving unless it is to return to my land in Bir es-Seba," since renamed Beersheba.

Mr. Mazaar'a's position is grounded in his Muslim faith as much as in political principles.

"We are on holy land," he says. "It is our duty to stay steadfast on our land and to hold onto it until our last breath."

"At any moment I could receive a demolition order and be forced from my home."

The E1 expansion intends to reorganize the West Bank through a split road system that would reserve the main corridor for Israeli-plated vehicles, and shift Palestinian traffic to a peripheral bypass, increasing Israeli connectivity while further isolating Palestinian communities.

While The Times of Israel has reported that the Israeli prime minister has called the planned road a "strategic transportation corridor," connecting Jerusalem to Israeli settlements, human rights groups have dubbed it "the apartheid road." Palestinians are routed through underpasses and tunnels "like rats," Rev. Raheb says, as settler-only bypass roads link Israeli hilltop communities overhead. He says a gate would be installed on the new road "so that Israel can close it at any time," as with other separation roads in the area built on the same model.

He says the goal is to confine Palestinians to reservations – akin to those created for Indigenous communities in North America – while exclusive Israeli settlements expand around them, turning freedom of movement from a right into a privilege.

Rev. Raheb says the Israeli government is moving to annex more than 80 percent of the West Bank, confining Palestinians to about 18 percent of the territory, fragmented into densely populated, noncontiguous enclaves, such as Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron and Nablus, each ringed by dozens of Israeli automated gates.

Over time, severed Palestinian regions will develop different needs, even identities, similar to "what happened when Gaza was cut off," he says. Without territorial continuity, authorities can manage isolated pockets through local "chiefs," restrict access to

resources, and let those areas slowly dry out, further entrenching the separation and isolation underway.

Ancient Christian pilgrimage routes linking Jericho, Jerusalem and Bethlehem have been threaded between Israeli military checkpoints and the separation wall for decades. Palestinian passage often hinges on Israeli permits and arbitrary checkpoint openings and closures.

Life under Israeli occupation has caused many Palestinians to flee, including from the already dwindling Christian population. Since the start of Israel's war on Gaza, around 147 Christian families have left Bethlehem, says Rev. Raheb, who added that if current conditions persist, he expects more families will leave, and the churches risk emptying of their local congregations.

"Palestine is the cradle of Christianity," he says, "not a theme park."

The CNEWA Connection

Since 2002, the Israeli separation wall has isolated Palestinian West Bank communities and key religious sites, separated religious congregations from the communities they serve, and restricted freedom of movement for locals and pilgrims. The Israeli government's plans for the E1 corridor, approved in August, would worsen these conditions, says Joseph Hazboun, CNEWA's regional director for Palestine and Israel.

"The E1 project threatens to close the only remaining road connecting Eizariya to Jerusalem, leaving these religious communities and local residents uncertain about their future," he said. "Without this vital link, how will the Comboni Sisters, for instance, continue their mission of providing education and medical aid to Bedouin communities?"

He said this development also "raises serious concerns about the preservation of these sacred sites and the communities that sustain them."

To support CNEWA's work in the Holy Land, call 1-866-322-4441 (Canada) or 1-800-442-6392 (United States) or visit cnewa.org/donate.

Holy Friendships

By The Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, S.T.D.

The Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, S.T.D., M.A., was born on June 29, 1966, in Park Ridge, Illinois, to the marriage of Ronald and Janice Olson (nee. Fetzer). He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Fort Worth on June 3, 1994. On November 19, 2013, Pope Francis appointed him to be the Bishop of Fort Worth. He was ordained and installed as the fourth Bishop of Fort Worth on January 29, 2014.

Editor's Note: The following homily was preached on the Memorial of Saints Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen, on January 2, 2026, for the annual SEEK Conference, held this year in Grapevine, Texas

Scripture texts for the day: 1st John 2:22-28; Psalm 98:1-2-3ab, 3cd-4; John 1:19-28

So many of us have come here to SEEK in order to renew old friendships from last year and to establish new friendships among all of us who are gathered here this week. It is truly an opportunity for Christian friendship as we start a new year and as we continue our celebration of the liturgical season of Christmas. It is therefore providential that on this day the Church offers us the liturgical Memorial of Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory Nazianzen, because they were not only monks, not only bishops, not only doctors of the Church, but above all, they were truly close Christian friends since the time of their youth during which they studied together at what would be the equivalent of their college years.

Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Basil were able to remain friends and to grow in their friendship because they each were first friends with Jesus Christ. Remember that Jesus told His Apostles, and by extension Gregory and Basil, and each of us, "You are my friends if you do what I command you. I know longer call you slaves because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father." To be a friend of Jesus Christ, as Christ Himself taught us, is to do what He commands us to do: to love our neighbor, to forgive our enemies, to offer shelter to someone who has nowhere to lay his head. It is to clothe the naked, to comfort the sorrowing, and to give food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty. It is to visit the imprisoned and it is to care for those who are sick, all because we recognize our friend Jesus Christ in each of these people.

A Byzantine-style icon depicting the Three Holy Hierarchs: (left to right:) Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus. Artist unknown, c. 17th-18th century.

To be a friend of Christ is to listen to His teaching and to accept His sovereignty over our lives. It is to witness to Him through our words and actions that what He says is true. He is owed our fidelity and friendship because He has redeemed us from our sins through His humanity that is wed completely and perfectly with His true Divine nature. Thus, Jesus Christ is truly the face of justice and also the face of mercy for all of us who have been held captive and enslaved by our sins. There exists a throne in each of our souls and it is for Christ to reign from that place, but if we do not invite him into our hearts to reign and accept His terms for true friendship, that place will become a desert and something else will take Christ's rightful place. Christ will soon be mistreated by us as either a rival for our freedom or as a mascot for our own agenda.

At the heart of Christian friendship and of friendship with Christ is the Truth and one's willingness to be truthful and honest because Jesus Christ is *the* Truth, and it is impossible for Him to deceive or to be deceived. He reveals everything there is to know of God, His beauty, His complete goodness, His truthfulness, His perfect love, and His omnipotence. Christ spoke honestly and invites and enables us through His grace to speak as honestly as He does. As Saint Gregory Nazianzen wrote about his friendship with Saint Basil, "Our great pursuit, the great name we wanted, was to be called Christians. If it is not too boastful to say, we found in each other a standard and rule for discerning right from wrong."

In our First Reading, Saint John warns us very directly, "Who is the liar? Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ…I write these

things about those who would deceive you." The liar is the Evil One. It is the deceit of the Evil One that presents slavery as freedom, oppression as friendship, and cruelty as love. The liar subordinates Christ to our own selfish ends and convinces us into thinking that this is adequate for our relationship with Jesus.

To illustrate this point. The story of the lifelong friendship of Saint Basil and Saint Gregory Nazianzen also includes a third friend from their college years. The Emperor Julian the Apostate had been a close friend of theirs during those years and enjoyed studies with them and all of what is to be enjoyed by anyone at college. He too had been baptized and had believed what the Gospel holds to be true about Christ's full revelation.

Yet, years later, after he became emperor, Julian no longer found Christ to be useful for governing his life or the Empire. He rejected Christ and the true faith and attempted to start a new religion that removed Christ, the Son of God, from His rightful status and replaced Him with false gods and the primacy of pagan philosophy. He attempted to maintain the good works of Christian life and social outreach but with clear rejection of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. He rejected the name of Christian and disrespected Christians so much by referring to them derisively as Galileans.

In rejecting the divinity of Christ, Julian the Apostate, rejected his friendship with Basil and Gregory who would not go along with his delusion. Yet, they kept their true friendship with him by praying for his conversion and forgiving him for his attacks against them, and for leading others to persecute them for their fidelity to Christ and His authentic Gospel. Basil and Gregory endured much suffering together.

"Who is the liar? It is whoever rejects that Jesus is the Christ." The liar still tries to deceive us but if we stay close to Christ as our friend, we can reject this deception in favor of Christ who is all-forgiving, all-merciful, and all-just and who knows us and loves us. This week and this day is especially a gift from God to renew our friendships in Christ just as Basil and Gregory Nazianzen did throughout their lives. And to do that, Christ is first giving us the opportunity and gift of renewing our friendships with Him through Word and Sacrament, through prayer and service. It is a time for us to spend with Jesus Christ our faithful Friend and Sovereign. As we receive Him again in the Eucharist offered on this altar, we pray that His grace will keep us His friends and make straight His path to reign as King in the previously deserted areas of our souls.

Either/Or at Our Lady of Perpetual Fortitude

GILBERT COLON *has written for* Strand Mystery Magazine, Cinema Retro, Filmfax, Crimespree, Crime Factory, *and* Catholic World Report. *He can be reached at gcolon777@gmail.com.*

The latest installment of the *Knives Out* comedy-mystery franchise, *Wake Up Dead Man* (2025), has garnered qualified accolades from many quarters of Catholic media. Word on Fire (12/9/25) said it "takes sin and sacrament seriously" and "succeeds as both a detective story and a portrait of faith, because the director is willing to let Fr. Jud's story overshadow [detective] Blanc's." Much of Catholic coverage embraces the conversation without wholly endorsing the product, with several outlets quick to footnote that their positive reviews are not recommendations per se. For example, the OSV News review is ambivalent, and its classification is L.

In what is a classic locked-room mystery crossed with a close-cathedral mystery, a monsignor is murdered during the Good Friday liturgy. (In her 11/26/25 review, *New York Times* film critic Alissa Wilkinson offers a thought-provoking observation: "One might also argue that the original locked-room mystery story, retold every Easter, is the foundation of the Christian faith.") No one sees who did it, leaving all the worshippers as both witnesses and suspects. And as the film's title hints, this dead pastor with the cult persona is later believed by his fold to have risen from the dead, on Easter Sunday no less. Exit Monsignor Wicks, RIP; enter celebrity supersleuth Benoit Blanc, who is called in to solve this "perfectly impossible crime."

Despite *Word on Fire*'s reserved praise for *Wake Up Dead Man* for delivering "serious spiritual stakes as any Catholic could ask of a mainstream film," there are times when *Wake Up* feels like it has its knives out for the Church. For instance, there is a scene, however pivotal to the plot, that wallows far too long in desecration. All the priests cuss, though perhaps not as badly as any of writer-director Rian Johnson's other characters.

There are three characters at the center of this mystery. There is Monsignor Jefferson Wicks (Josh Brolin), pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Fortitude, and the newly assigned assistant pastor, Father Jud Duplenticy (Josh O'Connor). And of course, the star of

Johnson's *Knives Out* films – previous entries included *Knives Out* (2019) and *Glass Onion* (2022) – is Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig), an eccentric Southern gentleman and consulting detective in the tradition of Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, though modernized.

The dark heart of this mystery is Msgr. Wicks. Naturally, he is a baleful clergyman who rails against "feminist Marxist whores" and whose YouTube videos come with titles like "There's G-O-D in DOGE" and "Non-binary | Non-godly." Wicks berates churchgoers from the pulpit – an unwed mother, a same-sex couple, and a COVID mask-wearing "snowflake." There is little doubt that the diabolically drawn Wicks is meant to be a Donald Trump analogue, though Brolin (President Bush in Oliver Stone's *W*) denies this in his *Independent* interview ("Josh Brolin: 'I shouldn't have ended up where I ended up,'" 11/29/25). Wicks' slavish devotees at one point practically say of their monsignor that he could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody without losing their support.

Fr. Jud comes to Msgr. Wicks' diminishing upstate New York parish after being exiled there for punching an obnoxious deacon in the face. A former boxer who killed someone in the ring, Fr. Jud is no milquetoast Christian. Yet he is also openhearted, empathetic, and caring. He proves a fine foil to both the monsignor's hypocrisy and bellicosity and Benoit's skepticism, and becomes a person of interest (though not the only one) after coming to loggerheads with Wicks just before the murder.

The Good Friday murder leaves everyone under a cloud of suspicion, with Fr. Jud the prime suspect. But Benoit, despite his deep misgivings about the Church, immediately believes the priest to be genuinely guiltless. However when other parishioners start dying, Fr. Jud begins to doubt his own innocence, fearing he is suffering "redouts" from his old boxing days. Chief Scott (Mila Kunis) accuses him of "a record of 'fugue states,'" and Fr. Jud confesses episodes of missing time to Benoit.

The woman on the other end unexpectedly stops him and asks him to pray for her mother in hospice. This becomes his "road to Damascus" moment. He realizes that his vocation is not to be a sleuthhound like Benoit, but a priest first and foremost, called to serve. Thereafter he steps back from the investigation, despite the fact it could clear his name.

Some might interpret *Wake Up* as a critique of the "smaller, purer Church" envisioned by the very traditional Pope Benedict XVI. But *Wake Up*'s dysfunctional souls – played by an ensemble of top talent like Glenn Close, Jeremy Renner, Kerry Washington,

Andrew Scott, Thomas Haden Church, Jeffrey Wright, and others – are hardly the best building blocks for a normal church. Fr. Jud wants to open the church's doors wide to all. He confronts Msgr. Wicks about his shrinking parish, saying, "Every week now, it's just this hardened cyst of regulars, and it seems like you're intentionally keeping them angry and afraid." It is a cultish congregation with a pathological devotion to a clergyman who, just before his murder, prophesies that soon he is going to be resurrected from the dead.

As the *Knives Out* films are mystery farces, all the characters are broadly sketched, but since this is a more serious outing, that is less true of *Wake Up Dead Man* compared to its predecessors. *Catholic Review* ("'Knives Out' discovers the strange, attractive light of the Christian story," 1/2/26) says, "the Catholic characters are absurd" – like all Johnson's characters, to be fair – finally admitting that "satire and caricature [are] the bread and butter of the…franchise."

Even so, Msgr. Wicks is a caricature that ofttimes stretches plausibility (though the magnetic Brolin has often overcome his screenwriters, as he does here). He is crude, vitriolic, incendiary, manipulative, menacing, threatening, swaggering, among other things. The wicked Wicks is supposed to be a Catholic priest, but his devotees flock to his homilies as if he were a fire-and-brimstone Evangelical preacher with a cult of personality, something flowing from the filmmaker's background. As Johnson told *Entertainment Weekly* ("Rian Johnson reveals how a dinner with 6 Catholic priests shaped his new *Knives Out* movie, *Wake Up Dead Man*," 12/13/25), "I grew up Presbyterian, Protestant, evangelical – a youth group kid, basically … I was deeply personally Christian through my teenage years…and then later on in my twenties, I fell away from faith, and I'm no longer a Christian today."

Thankfully, Fr. Jud is not a caricature. This is in large part due to the involvement of Father Scott Bailey from the Archdiocese of Denver. *National Catholic Register* ("Meet the Real Priest Who Consulted on *Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery*," 12/19/25) reports that Johnson called him to consult on the film and provide feedback on the script. Fr. Bailey also had "substantial conversations with actor Josh O'Connor – who grew up Catholic – about Fr. Bailey's experience in priestly ministry." Fr. Bailey found O'Connor's Fr. Jud "a sincere guy" and said the depiction of "his shortcomings…and the struggles of his past and how that's affecting him today…all [is] very real." He believes Johnson "has an appreciation for the sincerity of those who are believers" and

"encouraged [Catholics] to consider giving [*Wake Up Dead Man*] a try," noting that "there's a lot of beautiful spiritual stuff in here, in spite of the stuff that's still objectionable." His one caveat is that this is not "*The Chosen* [or] a saint movie," but "a mainstream Hollywood film [for] mature audiences…written by a person who's not a Christian." *National Catholic Register* also notes that "Johnson expressed appreciation for Pope Leo XIV's recent address to filmmakers and actors at the Vatican, and has said that he hopes the Pontiff will watch his film."

Fortunately Johnson does not make Fr. Jud a progressive counterbalance to the monsignor's right-wing screeds. Though Fr. Jud is definitely "inclusive," we never see him "affirming," and there are no arguments over Church teaching on polarizing issues like sexual ethics or abortion politics. This silence and evasion raise more questions than they answer. It leaves us uncertain about Fr. Jud's commitment to orthodoxy, even though we are given no reason to doubt it.

Not that there are no religious debates in the film. It is just that the majority are reserved for Fr. Jud and Benoit. When Benoit first encounters Fr. Jud, their discussion of architecture and the faith it inspires recalls a conversation from the episode of the 1974 series *Father Brown* episode "The Hammer of God," based on the G.K. Chesterton story of the same name. Tyler Huckabee quotes Johnson in his *Sojourners* interview ("*Knives Out*'s Rian Johnson Says He Will Always Be a Youth Group Kid," 12/9/25): "[T]here is nothing cooler-looking than Catholicism. Growing up as a Protestant, there was always an exotic nature to the Catholic Church [and] most of the churches I actually grew up going to look like Pottery Barns … [Also] there's an element of gothic horror to [Catholic art]. And obviously, every other horror movie that comes out these days has, you know, blood pouring out of nuns' eyes. But then there's also beauty in it."

The detective surveys the church and says, "I feel the grandeur, the mystery, the intended emotional effect. It's like someone has shone a story at me that I do not believe. It's built upon the empty promise of a child's fairy tale filled with malevolence and misogyny and homophobia and its justified untold acts of violence and cruelty while all the while, and still, hiding its own shameful acts. So like an ornery mule kicking back, I want to pick it apart and pop its perfidious bubble of belief and get to a truth I can swallow without choking."

Here Benoit presumably speaks for Johnson. Of his own lapse from faith, Johnson says to Religion News Service ("Rian Johnson

on miracles, mystery and his own faith story in 'Wake Up Dead Man,'" 11/25/25), "I don't know if I classify myself as atheist. I would say I'm just nonreligious. I'm not a Christian anymore."

Fr. Jud does not take Benoit's bait. When Benoit dismisses his religion as "storytelling," Fr. Jud answers, "You're right. I guess the question is: do these stories convince us of a lie? Or do they resonate with something deep inside us that's profoundly true? That we can't express any other way… except storytelling." Even Benoit has to respond, "*Touché*, padre."

In *America* magazine ("Interview: 'Knives Out' director Rian Johnson on the Catholic inspiration for 'Wake Up Dead Man,'" 12/18/25), Johnson admits his debt to G. K. Chesterton: "I reread all of the Father Brown mysteries … The essential thing about Father Brown is that he's a great detective not because he understands the divine or the holy. He's a great detective for the same reason he's a great priest: because he understands the human and the sinful, and he has empathy for it. Chesterton is such a great writer, and beyond the Father Brown mysteries, I've read his essays, I delved back into some of his theological writing and some of his novels – he's one of my favorite authors. But the Father Brown mysteries specifically were a huge, huge influence on this movie." Joseph Bottum at *Books & Culture: A Christian Review* ("God and the Detectives," September/October 2011) says "long practice in the confessional has given [Fr. Brown] more insight into human nature than gritty worldliness has gained for criminals and policemen." Once Fr. Jud teams up with Benoit, Johnson even has Benoit say to the priest, "Go to town, Father Brown."

Unlike the Mass-going Poirot of Agatha Christie or G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown – Johnson's professed influences – the series sleuth Benoit Blanc is a self-proclaimed "proud heretic." He is a classic detective from that old whodunit school, only updated for the modern age in pandering fashion: unbelieving, hostile to traditional religion, homosexual (as revealed in *Glass Onion*), and so on. Herein lies the problem, best brought out by Bottum: "Perhaps that's why such older books are sometimes praised by the religious and attacked by the irreligious, for mystery writers nowadays seem to lack the innocence…to assume a God-haunted world in a piece of light fiction."

Benoit's backstory is that he was raised by a very religious mother he was never close to and now worships at the "altar of the rational." The same could be said of believing supersleuths like Poirot or Father Brown, and they did not attack or reject faith – nor did Sherlock Holmes, for that matter. In "The Adventure of the

Naval Treaty," Holmes says, "There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion … It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers [whose] smell and its color are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it."

Catholic Review describes Fr. Jud as "Pope Francis-esque." Johnson told Huckabee in *Sojourners* that he set out to "put all of the positive things that I want more in the world that were part of my experience with Christianity into a character." This undoubtedly explains the film's appeal to the Catholic press, its presentation of a priest who is both earnest and human in an attractive light.

America magazine ("'Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery' review: A whodunnit with a surprising message about priesthood," 12/12/25) sees Fr. Jud as representative of "the field hospital church of Pope Francis" and notes that the film "leaves us with an important question: What sort of church do we want, led by what kind of shepherds?" After Fr. Jud K.O.s the deacon and faces a diocesan disciplinary tribunal, one priest says, "We need fighters today, but to fight the world, not ourselves. A priest is a shepherd; the world is a wolf." Fr. Jud counters, "I don't believe that, Father, respectfully. You start fighting wolves, and before you know it, everyone you don't understand is a wolf… Christ came to heal the world, not fight it."

But Jesus Himself warns against "wolves in sheep's clothing," and the spiritually abusive bully Wicks is a wolf in shepherd's vestments whom Fr. Jud fiercely stands up to. Nowhere is it suggested that this malign monsignor was never going to be won over by Fr. Jud's "hugs, not fists" attempts at conflict resolution, despite the young priest's best efforts. So is Fr. Jud not at war with the wolf Wicks, especially if he is a stand-in for Trump? In a confrontational moment, Fr. Jud tells the monsignor point-blank: "You're poisoning this church. And I'll do whatever it takes to save it. To cut you out like a cancer."

National Catholic Reporter contrasts Fr. Jud and Wicks: "If Bing Crosby's sentimental films were about how the church can be an effective force for good by uniting youthful idealism with traditional values, *Wake Up Dead Man* gives us two opposing Catholic visions of how to engage with the world. Wicks is hostile to modernity, proclaiming 'The world wants to destroy us!' Jud believes in the mercy and redemptive love of God."

But must it be either-or? Could there not be a pastor who is

both shepherd and warrior, like King David? (Fr. Jud even compares his new parish assignment to "David facing off Goliath.") Not with literal swords and sheep, but a leader who is genuinely pastoral while also reminding the faithful of the uncomfortable parts of Catholicism and standing up to a culture that rejects Church teaching on contentious issues. A shepherd, like David, who fights for his flock against wolves, bears, and lions (1 Sam. 17:34-36) and upholds God's Word.

Wake Up Dead Man insinuates that Wicks' abusiveness is tied to his right-wing politics and traditionalism. While Wicks has surely overpoliticized his message – he is the ultraconservative counterpoint to the liberal Social Gospel – why must an ideal priest with pastoral gifts like Fr. Jud not be old-school? Again, we do not see Fr. Jud contradict magisterial pronouncements on divisive issues like right-to-life and same-sex marriage, but he is tellingly quiet on those topics. Johnson might have known that if he made Fr. Jud simply an Episcopalian in Catholic vesture, many committed, orthodox Catholics would tune out from the conversation he is trying to spark. The dodge, however, is dishonest. Either Fr. Jud agrees with Wicks that non-binary and other "culture war" flashpoints are incompatible with official Church positions, even if he does not articulate them in Wicks' way, or he dissents from the Magisterium. But we never find that out.

An interesting experiment would have been for Johnson to write a Wicks-like fanatic from the other side of the ideological spectrum – one who, rather than railing against Marxism and ostracizing sinners who transgressed Catholic moral teaching, attacked congregants from the pulpit who did not believe in "vaccines, pronouns…socialism, BLM, CRT, the CDC, DEI," etc. (the bugaboos of one of Wicks' sycophants). Would Johnson pit Fr. Jud against a firebrand dissident, like Fr. Michael Pfleger or Fr. Bryan Massingale? Rather than just militantly challenging the system the way those real-life priests do, this figure would publicly pillory parishioners he disagreed with as racists, misogynists, homophobes, etc. Since too many *Knives Out* viewers in this social climate might agree with a reverse-Wicks character, probably not. (The thumbs-up *America* "'Knives Out' Review: A whodunnit with a [thrilling] Gospel message [12/13/19]" praises the "strange, potentially powerful concept" of the first *Knives Out* as a "Christie parody for Trump's America," while complaining, "But why is the avenging angel here so nice?")

When all is said and done, Craig, O'Connor, and Brolin shine in their roles, and Johnson skillfully delivers a well-constructed

mystery that will keep you guessing. He never forgets that this is a whodunit and honors the conventions of the genre. After all its twists and turns, *Wake Up Dead Man* ends with a confession in both the sacred and secular sense, one that solves the crime in drawing-room dénouement fashion and does so without violating the seal of the confessional.

As for Catholic reaction to his film, Johnson tells *Sojourners*, "I know that…it was created with a thoughtful and generous spirit. I did a lot of work when I was making it to make it a multifaceted conversation as opposed to a didactic, finger-waggy thing on one side or the other." He does not see himself as "stok[ing] controversy," but as "stoking conversation [by getting] inside people, and [bringing] up questions within them [because] that's the most that art can possibly do, as opposed to trying to teach a lesson or convey a point of view." He swears he is not courting controversy, explaining that he ends the movie with the Tom Waits song "Come On Up to the House," which he interprets as "saying, put down your grievances, let's put down all this nonsense, just come on up, and let's be human beings together."

In keeping with Johnson's "generous spirit," not only does the unbeliever believe in the believer's innocence, in the end they part friends. Just before that, Fr. Jud extends Benoit an invitation to Mass, and a smiling Benoit – no less true to form than Fr. Jud – candidly declines with characteristic Southern charm and courtesy: "That is so nice of you. There is nothing I would rather not do. Toodaloo!" Consultant Fr. Bailey appreciates that "the story allows a friendship and air of mutual respect to develop between them, reflecting Johnson's own attempt to hold together different parts of his own worldview in dialogue."

Johnson admitted to *America* magazine (12/18/25) that, in a sense, Wicks and Fr. Jud are symbols: "Sadly, I didn't know anyone exactly like Father Jud, and thankfully, I didn't know anyone exactly like Monsignor Wicks. But they both represent a cloud of very real experiences that I had growing up in the church." The problem with Johnson's presentation of Fr. Jud, as the Evangelical Brett McCracken at *Gospel Coalition* ("2 Corrupted Christianities in 'Wake Up Dead Man,'" 12/17/25) perceptively points out, is that "notably, talk of sin is largely absent in Jud's ministry" and "nowhere does he mention the miracle of the gospel and our blood-bought salvation." Is "all are welcome" enough? McCracken rightly concludes that, though Fr. Jud and Benoit share a chari-

table regard for one another, "the 'hugs, not fists' Christianity of Jud isn't enough to compel a skeptic to take it seriously. It's a nice, inoffensive, inclusive faith, but one most people can easily live without." Which sounds like the predicament facing today's dwindling mainline Protestant churches, as well as many watered-down Catholic parishes.

As for the charismatic Benoit, entertaining and engaging though he may be, what we are left with is Johnson's deconstructed Golden Age detective, redesigned for contemporary sensibilities – more in keeping with the god of this present age than with anything Agatha Christie, G.K. Chesterton, or Dorothy Sayers, all classic mystery authors who practiced their faith in their private lives and even on the printed page. Evangelical theologian J. I. Packer in *Christianity Today* ("'Tecs, Thrillers, and Westerns," 11/8/85) lets us in on a dirty little secret about detective tales: "[T]hese are stories of a kind that would never have existed without the Christian gospel … Christian fairy tales, with savior heroes [who are] champions of the needy, bringers of merited judgment and merciful salvation [and where] [v]illains are foiled, people in jeopardy are freed, justice is done, and the ending is happy." In other words, Johnson's Benoit is everything that makes the classical crime-solver hero more palatable for progressive audiences inclined to find the old authors and their mystery fiction too "regressive" for their thoroughly secular morality.

Do you want
to help
the Priests
of
The Catholic Response?

Remove this centerfold to see how you can do just that...

The Priestly Society of Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman

NEEDS YOUR

What is the Priestly Society?

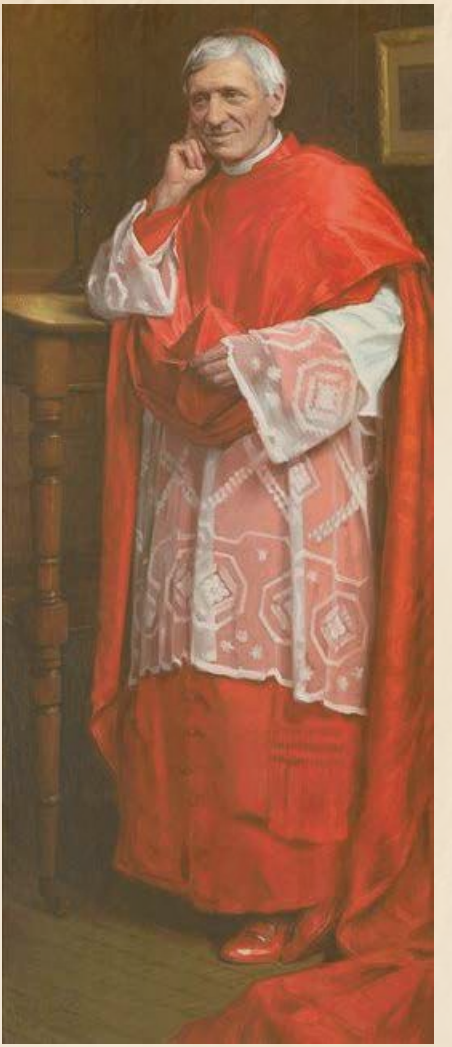
These are the priests who bring you the Catholic Response.

http://johnhenrycardinalnewman.org/about/

What are their needs?

The priests of the Society receive no assistance from the institutional Church and, indeed, receive no salaries, subsisting on the free-will contributions of the faithful. We are hoping to establish a "Council of Twelve Apostles," which will take responsibility for the maintenance of Newman House and its priests (e.g., mortgage; insurance for house, cars, members; utilities). If each "Apostle" could commit to an annual gift of $7000 (the monthly expenses), the financial concerns would be alleviated and the members could go about their important apostolates with serenity. All donations are tax-deductible.

HELP!



Please remember to keep the Priestly Society in your will and estate planning. The Society also accepts tax-deductible memorial donations in the memory of a deceased loved one.

You can mail a donation for
The Priestly Society to
601 Buhler Court
Pine Beach, NJ 08741

Pope Leo XIV on the Mystery of Holy Saturday

Editor's Note: The following was delivered at the Pope's General Audience in Saint Peter's Square on Wednesday, 17 September 2025.

In our journey of catechesis on Jesus our hope, today we will contemplate the mystery of Holy Saturday. The Son of God lies in the tomb. But this "absence" of His is not emptiness: it is expectation, a restrained fullness, a promise kept in the dark. It is the day of the great silence, in which the sky seems mute and the earth immobile, but it is precisely there that the deepest mystery of the Christian Faith is fulfilled. It is a silence laden with meaning, like the womb of a mother who carries her unborn but already living child.

The Body of Jesus, taken down from the Cross, is carefully wrapped, as one does with something precious. John the Evangelist tells us that He was buried in a garden, inside "a new tomb where no one had ever been laid" (Jn 19:41). Nothing is left to chance. That garden recalls the lost Eden, the place where God and man were united. And that tomb, never used, speaks of something that has still to happen: it is a threshold, not an end. At the beginning of creation, God planted a garden; now the new creation also begins in a garden: with a closed tomb that will soon be opened.

Holy Saturday is also a day of rest. According to the Jewish Law, no work is to be done on the seventh day: indeed, after the six days of creation, God rests (cf. Gen 2:2). Now, the Son too, after completing his work of salvation, rests. Not because He is tired, but because He loved up to the very end. There is nothing left to add. This rest is the seal on the completed task; it is the confirmation that what should have been done has truly been accomplished. It is a repose filled with the hidden presence of the Lord.

We struggle to stop and rest. We live as if life were never enough. We rush to produce, to prove ourselves, to keep up. But the Gospel teaches us that knowing how to stop is an act of trust that we must learn to perform. Holy Saturday invites us to discover that life does not always depend on what we do, but also on how we know how to take leave of what we have been able to do.

In the tomb, Jesus, the living Word of the Father, is silent. But it is precisely in that silence that the new life begins to ferment. Like a seed in the ground, like the darkness before dawn. God is not afraid of the passing time, because He is also the God of waiting.

Burial of Christ by Carl Bloch, c. between 1865 and 1879

Thus, even our "useless" time, that of pauses, emptiness, barren moments, can become the womb of resurrection. Every silence that is welcomed can be the premise of a new Word. Every suspended time can become a time of grace, if we offer it to God.

Jesus, buried in the ground, is the meek face of a God who does not occupy all space. He is the God who lets things be done, who waits, who withdraws to leave us freedom. He is the God who trusts, even when everything seems to be over. And we, on that suspended Sabbath, learn that we do not have to be in a hurry to rise again; first we must stay and welcome the silence, let ourselves be embraced by limitation. At times, we seek quick answers, immediate solutions. But God works in depth, in the slow time of trust. The Sabbath of the burial thus becomes the womb from which the strength of an invincible light, that of Easter, can spring forth.

Dear friends, Christian hope is not born in noise, but in the silence of an expectation filled with love. It is not the offspring of euphoria, but of trustful abandonment. The Virgin Mary teaches us this: she embodies this expectation, this trust, this hope. When it seems to us that everything is at a standstill, that life is a blocked road, let us remember Holy Saturday. Even in the tomb, God was preparing the greatest surprise of all. And if we know how to welcome with gratitude what has been, we will discover that, precisely in smallness and silence, God loves to transfigure reality, making all things new with the fidelity of His love. True joy is born of indwelt expectation, of patient faith, of the hope that what has been lived in love will surely rise to eternal life.

The Church and Darwin

Casey Chalk

Casey Chalk is an editor or regular contributor at many publications, including New Oxford Review, Crisis Magazine, The Federalist, Religion & Liberty, *and* Catholic Answers. *He is the author of* The Obscurity of Scripture: Disputing Sola Scriptura and the Protestant Notion of Biblical Perspicuity *(Emmaus Road Publishing),* The Persecuted: True Stories of Courageous Christians Living Their Faith in Muslim Lands *(Sophia Institute Press) and W*isdom From the Cross: How Jesus' Seven Last Words Teach Us How to Live (and Die) *(Sophia, 2026).*

Editor's Note: This piece was originally published at The Catholic Thing *and is reprinted here with their gracious permission.*

One of the oddest things about my evangelical upbringing was the catechesis I received in creationism. Because of a certain hyper-literalist interpretation of the Book of Genesis, the evangelical churches that my family attended periodically preached on the errors of Darwin, seeking to equip congregants with talking points on dinosaurs, carbon-14 dating, and various phenomena that evolutionary theory struggled to explain. All of us eager evangelicals, ostensibly trained to speak authoritatively on matters of science.

Of course, few of us could actually do so. The idea that an evangelical who learned his science at church would go toe-to-toe with a hard sciences major or professional scientist and tell them that in fact the earth was 10,000-years-old was ludicrous. Indeed, as much as Christians criticize religious skeptics for various philosophical assumptions – such as that miracles do not happen – an anti-evolution stance derived from a peculiar reading of Genesis is equally unfounded.

The more I learned about the contentious history of religion and science, the more I realized that the battle was largely the result of a colossal confusion, often perpetuated by atheists and fundamentalists. Science deal with empirical data, what can be observed and tested in the natural world; religion deals with metaphysical realities, some of which can be logically deduced and articulated, but cannot be empirically tested. To claim that natural selection somehow disproves the existence of God is equivalent to claiming that because human behavior is sometimes predictable, there is no free will.

I was thus thankful to learn that the Catholic Church understands evolutionary theory not as a villainous bogeyman, but, like

every other aspect of modern thought, something to be considered in light of philosophical truth and a proper understanding of divine revelation. *Darwin and Doctrine: The Compatibility of Evolution and Catholicism*, by biology professor Daniel Keubler, falls squarely in this fair-minded Catholic tradition, carefully parsing philosophical and metaphysical claims. He writes: "Over the years, I have gone from wrestling with how evolution might fit with Catholicism to exploring how an evolutionary understanding can enlighten our understanding of how God relates to his creation."

The Catholic Church does not actually have a position on the science of evolution, because it is in the business of determining truth related to divine revelation, not adjudicating the validity of various scientific theories. When the Church has spoken on science, it has focused attention on what St. John Paul II called "[pseudo-scientific] theories of evolution which, in accordance with the philosophies inspiring them, consider the spirit as emerging from the forces of living matter or as a mere epiphenomenon of this matter."

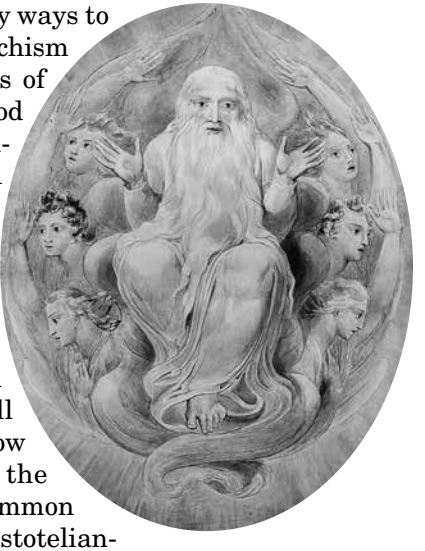
Catholics are therefore free to hold a range of positions related to evolution, from rejecting it outright as incompatible with Genesis, to accepting just about all evolutionary theory except for what denies formal Church teaching, such as claiming Creation can be explained solely via natural processes.

Keubler is persuaded that the available data is sufficient to conclude life on earth has evolved over the last 3.8 billion years. Yet he also believes that God has created a marvelous natural order, "a rare universe in which evolution via natural processes is indeed possible." Catholics, he argues, do not have to choose between the Church and evolutionary science, properly understood, particularly the elements that have strong evidentiary support, and those that remain debated within the scientific community. Keubler resoundingly succeeds on both counts.

He first presents an account of how the Church has understood Creation, and the philosophical confusion responsible for the common misperception that science and religion are incompatible. He explains the prevalence of scientism, the belief that science is the only means of acquiring real knowledge, and its fatal flaws. As Catholic philosopher Ed Feser argues, "the claim that scientism is true is not itself a scientific claim, not something that can be established using scientific methods."

The Church's concern with evolution thus stems not from the science itself, but from those who unite it with a materialist worldview that precludes the divine. John Paul II and Benedict XVI have offered Catholics a framework for understanding evolution and

Creation as two complementary ways to consider realities. As the Catechism teaches, whatever our opinions of evolution, we must believe God is the Creator of an ordered universe; that He made man both a physical and spiritual being; and that the Creation directs us toward God and reflects His power and wisdom.



God Blessing the Seventh Day by William Blake, c. 1805

Keubler goes on to explain evolution in language that even the scientifically illiterate will find accessible. He explains how the genetic code is probably the best evidence for universal common descent. He notes that the Aristotelian-Thomistic understanding of primary and secondary causality serves as a useful way to understand how random changes can occur in the natural world (which, by the way, is in many respects highly ordered) while preserving a belief in God as Creator.

In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas – more than half a millennium, before Darwin – considers the possibility that new species could emerge over time! Keubler's presentation of the origin of man, in which he correlates what we know about the evolution of hominid species with theories about how and when man acquired a soul and then fell into sin is important for preserving the doctrine of original sin and is especially fascinating.

A healthy intellectual humility should underlie these speculations, which allows for withholding judgment on theories of human development – or any other matter of evolution, for that matter – as new evidence and theories emerge.

St. John Henry Newman, our recently declared Doctor of the Church, was a contemporary of Charles Darwin, and wrote: "Mr. Darwin's theory *need* not, then, be atheistical, be it true or not; it may simply be suggesting a larger idea of Divine Prescience and Skill."

Keubler's excellent book, too, helps us understand how evolutionary science need not be an antagonist of religious faith, but can be a means of deepening our wonder at God's creative brilliance over millions of years.

THE CATHOLIC RESPONSE *Give the gift of Catholic truth*

Gift rate–Six issues (one year), $30 Foreign rates, add $5 per gift

Gift # 1:
Recipient's Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Gift # 2:
Recipient's Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Gift # 3:
Recipient's Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Please enclose check, payable to *The Catholic Response*, and send it to:
The Catholic Response • PO Box 10 • New Hope, KY 40052.

Your Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Telephone _____-_____-_____ Email _____

❑ Please also renew my own subscription at the special rate of $25
Any questions? Call: 732-903-5213.

Dear Father Stravinskas,
I have enjoyed this issue of *The Catholic Response* and would like to subscribe; enclosed please find my check in the amount of $_____, for:

- ❑ a one-year subscription (six issues for $30),
- ❑ a two-year subscription ($55),
- ❑ a three-year subscription ($70) (add $5 per year for foreign rates).

Please enclose check, payable to *The Catholic Response,* and send it to:
The Catholic Response • PO Box 10 • New Hope, KY 40052.

Your Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

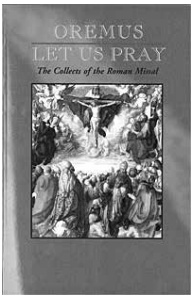
Telephone _____-_____-_____ Email _____

❑ Please also renew my own subscription at the special rate of $25
Any questions? Call: 732-903-5213.

Newman House Press

Catholic Publishers

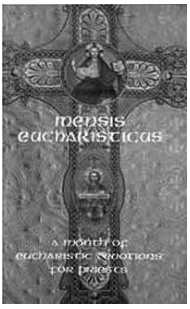
Newman House Press, faithful to the vision of its heavenly patron, Saint John Henry Cardinal Newman, seeks to aid in the Christian formation of its readers by providing works geared toward the Catholic renewal initiated by the Second Vatican Council in the areas of liturgical renewal, Catholic education and priestly identity.



Oremus–Let Us Pray: –$25.00
The Collects of the Roman Missal

Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskas, Editor

Newman House Press is pleased to fill a liturgical gap created by the new translation of the Mass. The collect of a day's Mass is normally that of the Divine Office as well. There is currently a "disconnect" between the text of the Mass and the old version found in the Liturgy of the Hours. To address that, we have "collected" the collects of the Roman Missal in common with the Office and put them into one volume. *400 pages.*



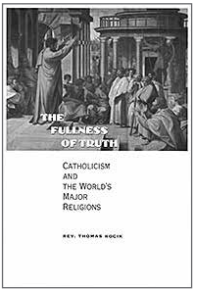
Mensis Eucharisticus **$10.00**

Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskas, Editor

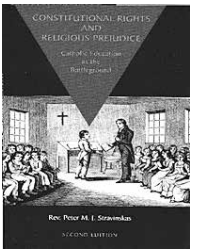
So much of the liturgical experience rises and falls on the priest's proper disposition. Based on the regular re-surfacing of this little work for nearly two centuries, it must have something to offer in this regard. Thus, it is to be hoped that during this Year of Faith, priests will commit themselves to highlighting the Holy Eucharist in their catechetical formation of our young and in adult education programs, to preparing homilies and sermons which probe the depths of eucharistic theology, and to honing their personal ars celebrandi, so that those committed to their pastoral care may enter more profoundly into the mysterium tremendum et fascinans.

Softcover: 96 pages

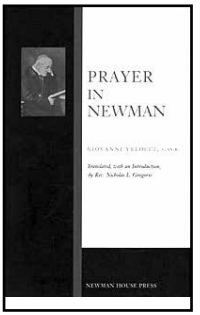
Order Online at: www.NewmanHouseCatholicBooks.org



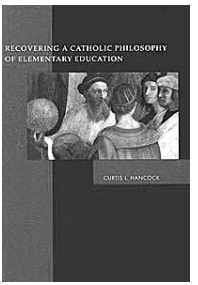
The Fullness of Truth **–$10.00**
Catholicism and the World's Major Religions
Rev. Thomas M. Kocik
Seeking wisdom wherever wisdom may be found, Father Kocik explores the world's major religions and Christian traditions, explaining how the religious truths they contain receive their fullest
dimensions in Catholic Christianity.



Constitutional Rights and **–$10.00**
Religious Prejudice:
Catholic Education as the Battleground
Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskas
Now you can read the book that was sent to every member of Congress, every federal judge and every Catholic bishop in the U.S.!
A clear and concise look at how anti-Catholicism has affected legislation and persuaded courts, to the detriment of Catholic schools!

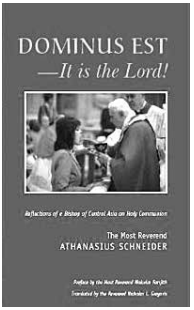


Prayer in Newman **–$9.00**
Giovanni Velocci, C.SS.R.
Thanks to the skill of Father Nicholas Gregoris, the publication in English translation of Giovanni Velocci's important work will bring before a wider audience a significant study. In a few pages are drawn together from Newman's sermons and meditations, both Anglican and Catholic, his reflections on the life of prayer. Moreover, this little work reveals Newman himself to be a masterful teacher of the art of prayer and–most important–to be essentially a man of prayer. In Father Velocci's memorable phrase, "prayer became the preferred occupation of Newman."



Recovering a Catholic Philosophy **–$20.00**
of Elementary Education
Curtis L. Hancock
A book long-awaited, this text examines elementary education in light of Catholic philosophy, revealing many of the unexamined presuppositions that underlie various forms of education practiced today. Professor Hancock shows that a truly Catholic philosophy of education is capable of understanding and responding to these currents clearly, critically and profitably. This work is ideal for use in philosophy of education courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels, as well as serving as a source-book for the in-service programs for Catholic elementary school teachers.

Order Online at: www.NewmanHouseCatholicBooks.org



Dominus Est : It Is the Lord –$10.00

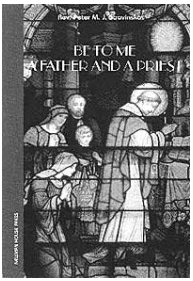
Most Rev. Athanasius Schneider

This book was sent to every Bishop in the United States and Canada. It is a must-read on the Source and Summit of our faith: The Holy Eucharist.

The Daughter of Eve Unfallen: Mary in the Theology and Spirituality of John Henry Newman –$18.00

Rev. Nicholas L. Gregoris, S.T.D.

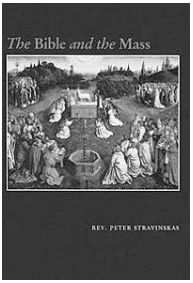
This book focuses on Mary's cooperation in the work of salvation, with particular attention to what Cardinal Newman has to say on her role of mediation in her Son's redemptive sacrifice, using his writing and theological principles to help see the best–and truly traditional way–of both understanding and using these titles. A reference point for all who will in the future write on the subject of Our Lady, especially on her co-operation in the work of redemption.



Be to Me a Father and a Priest –$15.00

Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskas

Father Stravinskas tells his vocation story, and follows it up with three hundred pages of his most popular essays, homilies and lectures related to the priesthood, including: Solving the Vocation Crisis; Why Can't Women be Ordained?; and, The Priesthood and Celibacy.

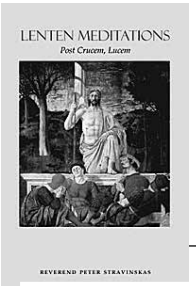


The Bible and the Mass –$10.00

Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskas

Let yourself be taken step by step through the Mass. This work explains the parts of the Mass, giving scriptural references and explanations for the various actions and prayers.

Each chapter ends with study questions geared toward group discussion. Perfect for the Bible study, theology class, or prayer group, or simply to deepen your own understanding.



Lenten Meditations –$8.00

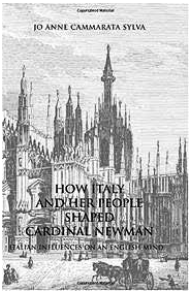
Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskas

Daily meditations for the Season of Lent to guide you through each day to help you prepare for the celebration of our redemption through Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection.

Advent Meditations – $8.00

Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskas

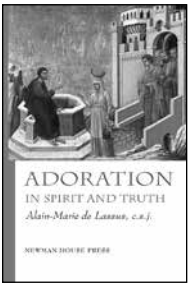
Wonderful daily meditations for the Season of Advent to guide you through each day to help you "Wait in Joyful Hope."



How Italy and Her People Shaped Cardinal Newman –$10.00

Jo Anne Cammarata Sylva, Ph.D.

Dr. Sylva explains how Newman allowed himself to be led into the fullness of Catholic truth by St. Alphonsus Liguori, Alessandro Manzoni, and St. Philip Neri, among others.

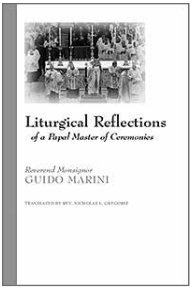


Adoration in Spirit and Truth $10.00

Rev Alain-Marie de Lassus CSJ

No one will deny that adoration is at the heart of the Catholic faith. Yet one seldom gives thought to the full meaning of the word. In this book, the author explores the Scriptural passages that speak of adoration, the theological aspects of the obligations that follow for every believer, and also the practical aspects of how adoration is to be expressed. There are echoes here of topics addressed in the writings of Cardinal Robert Sarah, who begins by looking first at where mankind stands before God as His redeemed creatures

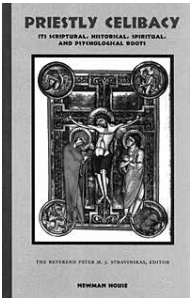
Softcover: 128 pages



Liturgical Reflections of a Papal Master of Ceremonies –$10.00

Msgr. Guido Marini

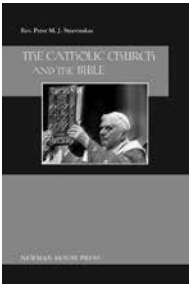
Anyone who watches or participates in a papal liturgy is struck with the seeming effortlessness with which it is conducted, resulting in a celebration that is prayerful, dignified and uplifting. The person responsible for orchestrating this is the priest designated the Master of Pontifical Ceremonies. Reverend Monsignor Guido Marini has performed this role for some time now, and his new book, translated by Fr. Nicholas Gregoris, explains how his liturgical judgments reflect sound theology as well as Pope Benedict XVI's goals for the liturgical life of the entire church!



Priestly Celibacy: The Scriptural, Historical, Spiritual, and Psychological Roots –$25.00

Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskas, Editor

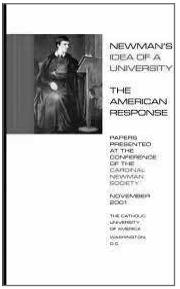
This anthology of essays has for the majority of its authors either Protestants or converts to the Catholic Faith. At once theologically and historically precise, it is intensely practical, helping the reader to appreciate that charism rightly dubbed by Pope Paul VI as "the jewel of the priesthood."



The Catholic Church and the Bible –$10.00

Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskas

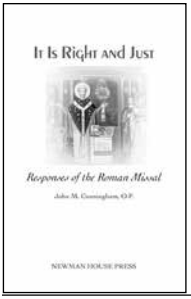
The third edition of a very popular work, which highlights the Biblical roots of Catholic doctrine and liturgy. This book demonstrates that the Catholic Church is **THE** Bible-Based church.



Newman's Idea of a University The American Response $15.00

Edited by Rev. Peter M. J. Stravinskas and Patrick J. Reilly

Papers presented at the November 2001 conference of the Cardinal Newman Society in Washington D.C. This small volume contains a variety of weighty topics concerning the Catholic university in America as treated by practitioners in the field of higher education, including the Revs. Ian Ker, Stephen M. Fields, S.J., C. John McCloskey, Peter Stravinskas, and Professors William Marshner, Alan Kors, John E. Murray, with a foreword and conclusion by two prelates committed to the advancement of Catholic academic excellence. Archbishop Elden Francis Curtiss of Omaha and Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J. Those especially interested in the preservation/ recapturing of Catholic identity at Catholic universities will gain a new appreciation for the university as a gift to the world, born from "the heart of the Church."



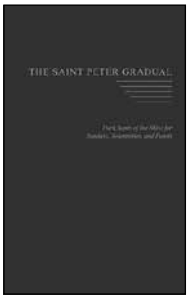
It Is Right and Just Responses of the Roman Missal **$10.00**

John M. Cunningham, O.P.

A commentary on the responses of the Ordinary of the Mass, drawing from the Fathers of the Church, with occasional additional references to the texts of Vatican Council II and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

"A spiritual guide whose aim is to make our participation in the Liturgy … more engaged, informed, and profound."

–Aidan Nichols, O.P.



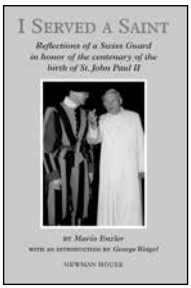
St Peter Gradual **$25.00**

The Chants of the Mass for Sunday's, Solemnities and Feasts

Carl L. Reid – Editor

Hardcover: 192 pages

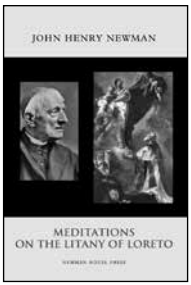
This book contains the proper chants for Sundays, Solemnities and feasts for the Anglican Use communities. However, they may also be used in standard Roman Rite liturgies.



I Served a Saint **$20.00**

Mario Enzler

The author is a former Swiss guard, who had the honor and pleasure of serving St. John Paul II. He shares with readers what he learned from the sainted Pope and what he believes his readers can learn as well.



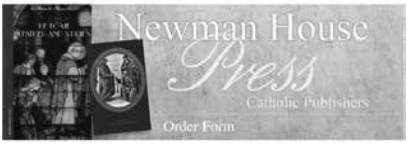
Meditations **$15.00**

St. John Henry Newman

St. John Henry Newman penned meditations on the titles of Our Lady found in the Litany of Loreto and subsequently delivered them as sermons for each day of the Marian month of Mary. The work is enhanced by etchings of the Italian artist, Enzo Anichini.

Newman House Publishers
601 Buhler Court • Pine Beach, NJ 08741
732-903-5213 • E-mail–fstravinskas@hotmail.com

Order Online at: www.NewmanHouseCatholicBooks.org



Please print and mail to:
Newman House Publishers
601 Buhler Court
Pine Beach, NJ 08741

(Shipping is for domestic delivery only. For international delivery email us)

732-903-5213 • E-mail fstravinskas@hotmail.com

BOOK TITLE	QTY	PRICE	TOTAL
Papal Master of Ceremonies		$10.00	
How Italy and Her People Influenced Cardinal Newman		$10.00	
Advent Meditations		$8.00	
Be To Me A Father And A Priest		$15.00	
Constitutional Rights and Religious Prejudice		$10.00	
Dominus Est		$10.00	
The Fullness of Truth		$10.00	
Lenten Meditations		$8.00	
Oremus: Let Us Pray		$25.00	
Prayer in Newman		$9.00	
Priestly Celibacy		$15.00	
Recovering a Catholic Philosophy of Elementary Education		$20.00	
The Bible and the Mass		$10.00	
The Daughter of Eve Unfallen		$18.00	
The Catholic Church & the Bible		$10.00	
Adoration in Spirit and Truth		$10.00	
I Served a Saint		$20.00	
It Is Right and Just Responses of the Roman Missal		$10.00	
Meditations on the Litany of Loreto		$15.00	
Mensis Eucharisticus		$10.00	
Newman's Idea of a University		$15.00	
The Saint Peter Gradual		$25.00	

Shipping–Domestic

$.01–$10.00=$5.00	$50.01–$75.00=$16.00
$10.01–$30.00=$8.00	$75.01–$100.00=$20.00
$30.01–$50.00=$12.00	$100.00+=Call

Shipping

TOTAL

*$1.50 Shipping for 1-5. Call for quanitiy discount pricing.

Ship to:

Name_____

Address_____

City_____State____Country_____

Zip _____ Phone _____

For shipping discounts on multiple quantities,
please contact admin@jhcnewman.org

Make check or money order payable to Newman House Press

Q & A

Dear Readers,

This is really your column, for you direct it by the questions you send me. I want to encourage you to do so for many reasons, not the least of which being that without your questions, there is no column!

Here are a few simple notes to keep in mind:

1. *Your letter may deal with any topic connected to the Church and her theology; you may "piggy-back" on previous questions to seek further clarification or take issue with a response I have given.*
2. *It is necessary that you keep your inquiry or comment to a single page.*
3. *To qualify for inclusion in the column, a letter must be signed, however, you may ask that your name and/or address not be published–and that will be honored.*
4. *Due to the volume of mail, it is impossible to respond personally to our inquirers. Obviously, not all letters can or will be used. Look for a reply in a future issue and realize that a response may take several months to make its way into print.*

Questions may be emailed to: fstravinskas@hotmail.com

Thanks for your continued interest and support.

Father Peter Stravinskas,
Editor & Publisher

Communion outside the wedding?

Q. Would it be okay to have Holy Communion outside of Mass at a wedding?

A. Holy Communion should not be distributed outside of Mass, except for the sick or other extraordinary circumstances. The reason is simple: Sacrifice and meal should always be seen as a unified reality in the Eucharist. That is another reason why removing the tabernacle to a spot remote from the altar of sacrifice is bad theology since it separates the Reserved Sacrament from the site of its confection.

I presume the reason for not having a Nuptial Mass is that one of the spouses is not Catholic. If that is the case, I wholeheartedly concur in that judgment as I think having a Mass when one party (and that side of the family) cannot communicate sets the marital union off in a bad, divided direction. If the Catholic party wishes to receive Holy Communion the day of the wedding, he or she should attend a Mass earlier in the day.

As I re-read your question, another possibility seems to suggest itself, that is, that you are envisioning having the distribution of Holy Communion at the wedding itself, even though it will not be a Mass. That would be totally bizarre and unacceptable.

Qualifications for Godparents

Q. Can an Orthodox Christian serve as a godparent for a Catholic baptism?

Must a Catholic godparent be confirmed?

Is a baptism invalid and/or illicit if one of the godparents is Catholic and the other, say, Orthodox or Lutheran?

A. As a norm, non-Catholic Christians cannot be sponsors for a Catholic baptism. The only exception is the allowance of an Eastern Orthodox, as noted in the Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism (1993): "Because of the close communion between the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Churches, it is permissible for a just cause for an Eastern faithful to act as godparent, together with a Catholic godparent, at the baptism of a Catholic infant or adult, so long as there is provision for the Catholic education of the person being baptized, and it is clear that the godparent is a suitable one."

Yes, a Catholic godparent must be confirmed since Confirmation is one of the "sacraments of Christian initiation" and it would be illogical for one not fully initiated himself to sponsor someone else in the Church.

The presence or absence of a godparent does not affect the validity of the Sacrament of Baptism. Church law actually requires only one godparent, who must be Catholic. If there are two, one should be male and the other female. If the second person is a non-Catholic, he or she cannot be a godparent but may function as a "Christian witness." Again, it would not make sense to expect a non-Catholic to take responsibility for the Catholic upbringing of a child; furthermore, part of the godparent's role is the integral witness of that person's Catholic commitment. Of course, all of this demonstrates how wrong-headed much of the social aspect of Baptism is when godparent selection is reduced to family ties or personal friendships, divorced from the person's living of the Catholic life.

Can God command evil?

Q. I have a pastoral question for you. How would you help a simple person who does not know a lot of theology who is struggling to reconcile belief in God if the God we believe in is the same God in the Old Testament as in the New Testament. Par-

ticularly, this person is troubled with the death and destruction not only permitted but commanded by God in the Old Testament. While I have heard many good theological explanations on revelation and the ongoing revelation of God to His people, I have yet to hear a simple, adequate answer to be able to use in pastoral situations. So in summary, how to reconcile the character of God in the OT with the character of God revealed in the NT?

My answer so far has dealt with the ongoing revelation of God to mankind. At the beginning, God needed to speak in ways man could hear and understand. Then as man learned to hear God and could accept certain levels of truth, God continued to reveal Himself through the prophets and the Law, eventually preparing the way for Jesus Christ and the full revelation of God as we now know Him. A question posed is, Why didn't God do this right from the beginning? Why did man have to go through all those stages?

Any insight would be much appreciated.

Q. I have been trying to work through to a correct answer in my own mind on the following age-old question, and wonder if you both might do a work of mercy and tell me whether you know where St. Thomas or Bonaventure or any other Doctor of the Church treats of it:

1. Socrates asked whether a thing is good in itself because it simply is good; or is something good because the gods say it is so. What do the Fathers say on this?
2. But there might be examples in Scripture which we do not "like," say, the invasion of Canaanites (always an "easy" one), an invasion involving extermination even of the children.
3. Must I assume a good somewhere in this that I cannot easily see, but which must be good if God, who *is* goodness itself, wills it?

Can we assume that this was a unique event in salvation history or is it fair to extrapolate to other much later military expeditions on the basis of it, even after having considered the law of the New Covenant?

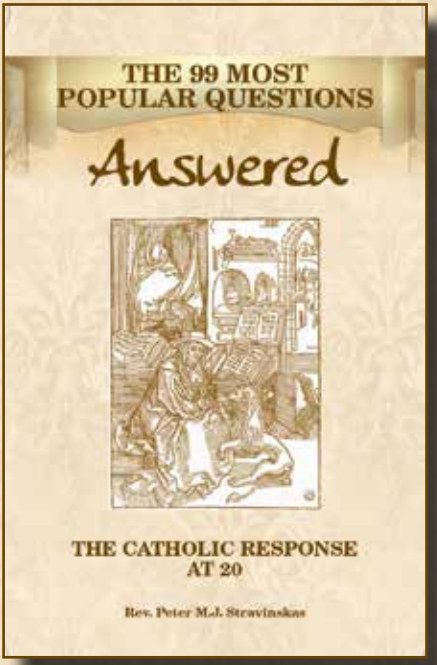
I await your thoughtful responses, if you can.

Let me add here what a scholarly friend sent me, which you may find of interest.

"1. Towards the beginning of the *Summa Theolo*giae Thomas discusses the convertibility of goodness and being. That is, something is good insofar as it has existence, or better, as far as it is what it is. Thus if a horse is strong, runs well, etc., we say it's a good horse.

continued on page 48

The 99 Most Popular Questions Answered:
The Catholic Response at 20



By Fr. Peter Stravinskas. This book is published in celebration of 20 years of *The Catholic Response* magazine. Fr. Stravinskas chooses the best questions he has answered over the years in the areas of Scripture, doctrine, morality, liturgy, and Catholic practices. Covers many intriguing topics such as Bible versions, women's ordination, lay minister garb, liturgical music, deaconesses, sin and grace, marriage questions, tabernacle placement, Friday abstinence, and much more. Fascinating reading! 131 pp. Softcover.

$9.95 + S&H

AVAILABLE FROM **Newman House Publishers**
601 Buhler Court • Pine Beach, NJ 08741
732-903-5213 • E-mail–fstravinskas@hotmail.com

"Now you may object that a horse does not have moral goodness. True. But moral goodness is a subset of the broader ontological goodness. That is, just as we wouldn't call a horse a good horse that was lame or blind, so we cannot call a man good who is consumed by vices and sins. A rational creature has a will, so that must be taken into account in saying whether he is good or bad. So, in a sense, if my will and my passions are bad, I am lacking something which is proper to a human being. A handicapped person of course can be morally good, but ontologically he is lacking something proper to his humanity.

"Now your question was about moral goodness, but moral goodness treated in isolation from ontological goodness will result in the errors of seeing good and evil as dependent solely on the will of God. This was one of the errors of William of Ockham, the nominalist philosopher. Such a view of moral goodness makes goodness seem like something extra, something not intrinsic to things.

"2. Prescinding from the question of the literary form of those Old Testament books (for I don't think we need necessarily believe that they record God's commands exactly), God is owner of our lives, our goods, etc. He has the right to take anyone's life since He owns it. This does not apply to our eternal destiny, so if (which would never happen), God sent people who had died in a state of grace to Hell, then God would act unjustly. But if God takes away your earthly life (or tells someone else to do so), He is not acting unjustly since He owns your life and your goods.

"3. If God in fact commanded the extermination of the Canaanites exactly as recorded in Scripture, etc., that means absolutely nothing as far as later military actions. Remember that the Church has pronounced officially on the meaning of only a handful of biblical texts. Monsignor Ronald Knox in a book I can't remember, opined that we need not think that the extermination of the Canaanites as recorded in the Pentateuch was exactly what God commanded."

A. First of all, I think your explanation is on-track. God could reveal Himself in the fullness of His truth and being, but would a finite human being "get it"? A basic rule of educational psychology is that you teach according to the capacity of the student to receive. To launch into a discussion of logarithms with first-graders makes no sense; they lack the background to understand any of it. We build "one brick at a time," whether that is a physical building or teaching concepts – going from the known to the unknown.

The revelation of God to man is, of necessity, progressive. Doctrinally, for example, we find many Old Testament passages that do not teach a clear-cut monotheism; rather, the God of Israel is presented as the highest of all gods, not the only God. With the passage of time, absolute monotheism could be taught effectively. Morally, we find the same type of progression, especially as we pass from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The so-called "cursing psalms" are a case in point: Can/should a Christian pray words which ask God to crush the skulls of infants against the rocks? A Christian can use those words in different ways: first, he can acknowledge, shamefacedly, that such sentiments of revenge are not foreign to him, for which he needs to seek divine forgiveness; second, he can say, "Thank God, because of Christ, I must never harbor or voice such sentiments."

Your friend is a good Thomist, who knows how to think logically, laying out the entire landscape. I especially appreciate his mention of William of Ockham and his error(s), which could lead people to an improper motive for moral action. I don't perform a moral act because God commands it; God commands it because it is a good act. In other words, God is not a tyrant who can play havoc with the laws that He Himself has put in place. Finally, I think it valuable to take seriously the insight of Monsignor Knox about literary forms in Scripture and proper modes of biblical interpretation. A very fine book on hermeneutics is entitled, *The Word of God in the Words of Men;* there will always be a gap between the fullness of truth and the human capacity to convey it and receive it as we finite beings attempt to grasp the Infinite.

The Catholic Church and Science

Q. With the ascendancy of the "new atheists," we seem to be hearing more and more about the Church's historic antipathy toward science and how the Inquisition attempted to stifle scientific research and progress. Do we have any materials with which to respond?

A. There is a compilation of documents from the Archives of the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office and the Index from the period 1542 to 1600. The series is entitled, *Catholic Church and Modern Science,* and seeks to shed light on how the Roman Inquisition really worked and to dispel age-old biases. While on a recent trip to Rome, I purchased the four-volume set (about $50 per volume). I would recommend the work for inclusion in Catholic high school and college libraries because it offers detailed evidence of just how the Inquisition worked and places the whole phenomenon in its proper historical setting. Interestingly, scientists fared

much better under the Catholic microscope than they did under the Protestant one. Indeed, the Church's concern – in general – was not with science as such but with dissenting theological opinions. Cardinal Georges Cottier, theologian of the papal household under Pope John Paul II, wrote that it is "misleading to see the activity… as a struggle against science undertaken in the name of faith."

The first volume contains thousands of documents from the Roman Congregation of the Holy Office, which dealt with individuals suspected of heresy, and the Congregation of the Index of Forbidden Books, which handled the suppression or correction of written works. The first volume reproduced all the doctrinal congregation's documents concerning science and natural philosophy from 1542 to 1600 – in their original Latin – but with extensive footnotes, summaries and commentary in English by co-authors Ugo Baldini (a history professor at Italy's Padua University and an expert on Galileo Galilei) and Leon Spruit (an expert on the censorship of science in early modern history).

Spruit told Catholic News Service that the Roman Inquisition did not target science and natural philosophy. Rather, he said, certain individuals and authors were condemned "often for their faith or religious creed." A perfect example, he said, is Nicolaus Copernicus, the sixteenth-century Polish scientist who first proposed in 1543 that the earth revolved around the sun – a theory that would get Galileo into trouble a century later. Copernicus was virtually ignored by censors until a Protestant wrote about his work and that author was put on the Index, not for supporting heliocentrism, but for being a Protestant!

The authors wrote that of the 86 cases handled in the sixteenth century, the majority of individuals involved were given very lenient sentences and their careers most often continued to thrive.

Even though the Roman Inquisition obviously violated many of today's basic human rights, the inquisitors actually introduced novel juridical procedures that are now fundamental in modern democracies. For example, the Inquisition introduced "the defense attorney, testimony under oath, appeals to a higher court, the adoption of the principle '*unus testis nullus testis*,'" in which uncorroborated testimony is inadmissible, as well as reducing life sentences to a few years of incarceration and offering a public defender for the poor.

The other point to make is that oftentimes people merge the Roman Inquisition with the Spanish Inquisition. The latter was not an agency of the Church but of the State, and its track record is not anywhere near as defensible.

Anglican Marriage Tribunals?

Q. Does the "high" branch of Anglicanism have a marriage tribunal for divorced and remarried Anglicans?

A. Excellent question. It is impossible to give an across-the-board answer to this inquiry because "High Anglicanism" exists in dozens of splinter groups, some of which frown on divorce and remarriage, while others forbid it outright, and yet others wink at it. I do not know of any of the groups that have the equivalent of a tribunal to adjudicate marriage cases, at least as the Catholic Church does. Regardless of whether or not they do or don't, any Anglicans in irregular marital situations would have to submit their cases to a Catholic tribunal before coming into full communion. Remember: Even when whole groups petition to enter the Catholic Church, each person is nonetheless individually reconciled.

Forgiveness without confession?

Q. If a person is a non-practicing Catholic but conscious and capable of making a good confession, but chooses not to do so for whatever reason, receiving the Sacrament of the Sick, are all his sins, mortal and venial, still forgiven? If yes, then may the priest administer Holy Communion to that person?

If a Catholic man comes for a general confession after ten or so years, who is presently married to an Episcopalian without proper Church dispensation, and, who, furthermore, never committed to having his children raised Catholic, but in fact allowed them to be raised Episcopalian, what would you do?

A. On the first item, mortal sins must be confessed, unless there is a compelling reason not to do so (e.g., In a hospital, would the confessional seal be compromised if others were within earshot?). Without a good reason, it would appear the person lacked the proper disposition to receive any sacraments worthily and fruitfully. Surely, the Sacrament of the Sick could not be marshaled to do "double duty" in that regard. As for Holy Communion, the priest would really have no way of knowing if the man were in the state of grace or not (presuming the patient did not confide to the priest that he was in the state of mortal sin) and so the priest would communicate the person, if he requested such. In my pastoral experience, I've never encountered someone who declared that he was conscious of grave sins, was unwilling to confess them, and then proceeded to ask for the Anointing of the Sick and Holy Communion. But I suppose any scenario is possible nowadays.

On the second front, it is simple: Such a person is ineligible

La penitente
by Juan García Martínez, c. 1884

to receive the Sacrament of Penance, period. Why? Because he is in an irregular marital situation. Unless he expresses a willingness to live with the woman in a brother-sister relationship, their sexual activity would be either an ongoing state of fornication or adultery (if either or both had been previously married). One must not only be sorry about the sinful condition one is living; repentance entails a change of life. Add to it all, that he failed in his very serious obligation to raise his children in the Catholic Faith. I would encourage him to remedy the invalid marital status by going to his parish priest for a simple convalidation; if he agreed to do that and simultaneously agreed to refrain from sexual intercourse with his partner, I would proceed to hear his confession. Absent those conditions, I would tell him that I will pray for him and offer him a blessing that would lead him to a conversion of life. If either or both had been previously married, the story is much more complicated since decrees of nullity would have to precede an ecclesiastical wedding.

Saintly Intercessors

Q. My question is in regards to saints in Catholicism. There is a patron for just about everything imaginable to whom we pray; to intercede to the Father. For example, it is acceptable for college students to pray to Thomas Aquinas who is the patron of schools. Yet the New Testament clearly states that the only way to the Father is through the Son and that "Jesus is not one of many ways, but the only way." Therefore, why does the Catholic Church ordain saints (and subsequently declare them the patron of something) when we already have Jesus (the only way to the Father) to intercede for us?

A. Firstly, the Church does not "ordain" saints; she "canonizes" them.

Your understanding of the unique mediatorship of Jesus Christ is completely in accord with Catholic doctrine. However, having Jesus as Mediator does not exclude other, subordinate forms of mediation. For example, it is quite normal for Christians to ask friends and others to pray for them (that is the role of intercession). If you and I (sinners that we are) can intercede or mediate on behalf of others, why not the saints in glory?

The Church honors certain men and women with the title of "saint" because their holiness warrants it, but also because the Church on earth can benefit from their example. Patron saints for various professions or nations are holy people who are offered to believers as models worthy of emulation. Feast days of saints are opportunities to celebrate throughout the year Christ's victory over Satan in the lives of His Chosen People. Such a devotion reminds us that God is glorious in His saints (cf. 2 Th 1: 10), and that every Christian is called to be a saint, even if never publicly honored by the Church through the process of canonization. The universal call to holiness is celebrated each year on November 1, All Saints' Day, as the Church honors all the holy men and women of every time and place (most of them known only to God) who stand before the throne of the Lamb (cf. Rev 7).

A Defective Rite of Exorcism?

Q. I have read a few articles by Father Gabriel Amorth, in which he has criticized the revised rite of exorcism. He says that it's ineffective. I think I'm getting in over my head asking this question, but I've always wondered! Is he right? Or is it all about politics? Or is he misquoted?

A. I too have read comments you mention attributed to Father Amorth (who died a few years ago). I tend to believe they are his remarks because I have read interviews with him that tend in that direction. At times, I find his reflections a bit "over the top." I never doubted his sincerity or holiness, but I am not sure that offering his opinions in the public forum helped the Church, especially since his insights come from such a specialized ministry and experience, while those reporting and interpreting usually do not have the requisite background to do the job properly.

I have heard many other exorcists complain about the inferior quality of the revised rite of exorcism which is why, I suppose, that Pope John Paul II allowed an exorcist to use either rite. Don't ask me why the revised one is not just withdrawn, as I don't have an answer to that one!

Fronleichnamsprozession by Carl Emil Doepler

Corpus Christi

Q. Is the "Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ" that we celebrate here in the United States still called "Corpus Christi" in Latin or have it been changed?

A. The Latin name for the feast is "Solemnitas Corporis et Sanguinis Domini Nostri Iesu Christi" (Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ). Prior to the post-conciliar calendar changes, the feast was known as "Corpus Christi" (Body of Christ), with July 1 designated as the feast of the Precious Blood. With some wisdom, the two feasts were merged since whenever we receive one consecrated element (the form of bread or wine), we receive the whole Christ – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity.

The Morality of Paying for Organ Transplants

Q. Is it morally okay to pay someone to get a kidney for one's son, who is on dialysis?

A. In principle, Catholic moral theology has no objection to organ transplants, with several provisos in place. Sale of organs is another matter. It should be noted that sale of organs is illegal under federal law. Why is donating an organ morally acceptable, while the sale of the same organ morally problematic? For two main reasons, I would say. First, sale of organs contributes to the objectification and commodification of human life, leading society to conclude that a person is no more than the sum of his body parts. Second, the poor and marginalized would be particularly susceptible to encouragement to sell their organs to achieve some level of financial stability or solvency. One can easily see someone in financial straits being seriously tempted to sell off various organs, without the appropriate degree of reflection.

In a culture like ours, which is already heavily tilted toward venality and materialism, the last thing we need is adding to the moral muddle by permitting the sale of human organs.

Heresy and Blasphemy or Minutiae?

Q. FACTS:

A. Since Vatican II, the terms "Jesus, the Christ" and/or "the Christ" have been surreptitiously creeping into almost all aspects of Roman Catholic worship, even including the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in particular the preaching!

B. Since Vatican II also, the wooden cross draped with a white sheet has permeated the Easter liturgy and Easter services in the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. This practice has recently been extended to the Season of Lent with the presence of a very large wooden cross draped with a purple/violet sheet.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do the terms "Jesus, the Christ" and/or "the Christ" amount to just a matter of "minutiae," resulting from the fact that Latin does not specify definite and indefinite articles as is done in English, or are these terms a matter of something very sinister and blasphemous amounting to heresy?
2. Is the use of wooden crosses during Lent, on Good Friday and during the Easter Season, with purple or white sheets draped thereon, another matter amounting to just "minutiae"?

DISCUSSION:

1. Many pre-Vatican II Roman Catholics find the terms "Jesus, the Christ" and/or "the Christ" to be not only revolting and very offensive but also blasphemous! These expressions do not involve just "minutiae" but they are very sinister and amount to heresy. Simply put, it is clear and a fact that these expressions originated with, and exist in, the doctrine of the Mormons, the Church of Latter Day Saints. The Mormons believe that "Jesus of Nazareth is the son of man and Jesus, the Christ is the son of God." This belief is also shared by the New Age Movement: "Jesus puts on the role of The Christ, but is not automatically Christ by nature. By making Himself, through effort and prayer, a fit vessel, Jesus enabled The Christ to dwell within Him. Christ is therefore used as a term for the perfect human being that Jesus exemplified, a human being that has been 'Christened' (anointed) and therefore made holy" (*Aquarian Gospel* 7:25-26)….
2. It has been well documented since Vatican II that Roman Catholics who were not open to Vatican II "changes" were alleged to be mentally unstable and in need of psychiatric help. This was particularly true relative to the clergy and in particular to seminarians. In many instances, seminarians were forced to undergo psychiatric tests if they were opposed to "change." Thanks to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, may he rest in peace, who, during the tsunami of change coming down the pike after Vatican II, tirelessly preached to the entire world that Christ does not "change," that He is the same yesterday, today and forever! After Vatican II, when Roman Catholics first encountered the use of the Ku Klux Klan paraphernalia in the Easter Season, and in particular the absence of the crucifix especially on Good Friday, needless to say such Roman Catholics were, and to this day continue to be, dumbfounded!

CONCLUSION:

The Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, February 22 – Gospel: Mt. 16:13-19 – Novus Ordo Mass: "Simon Peter said in reply, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Douay Rheims Holy Bible, Mt. 16:16: "Simon Peter answered and said: 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.'" It has also been well documented since Vatican II that the English translations of the various Protestant Bibles being used in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States are disastrous translations! Certainly the "Jesus, the Christ" and/or "the Christ" example is just one of those disastrous, sinister translations! With respect to the Ku Klux Klan paraphernalia,

Archbishop Fulton Sheen, may he rest in peace, summed this matter up best and succinctly when he stated many times in his preaching on television to the entire world that in Russia, the Communists have done away with the cross completely but in the West, they have taken Christ off the cross!

A. Sometimes, my friend, a cigar is just a cigar! You are apparently looking for bogey men all over the landscape.

"Jesus Christ" or "Jesus the Christ" are linguistic (and theological) equivalents. Latin has the name and title (which is what "Christ" is) as "Iesus Christus." The original Greek has "Iesous *ho* Christos," which is "Jesus *the* Christ (or Messiah)." So, if you have a problem with "Jesus the Christ," you need to take that up with the authors of the New Testament. The various other languages use the title with and without the definite article: (il) Cristo (Italian); (le) Christ (French); (el) Cristo (Spanish). How the use of the definite article (especially given its use in the original Greek text of the New Testament) could be deemed "blasphemous" or "heresy" is beyond me. Yes, there have certainly been many "disastrous translations" over the past forty years, but this is not one of them. It is noteworthy that one reason why the Douay-Rheims version does not use the definite article is that it is a translation of the Vulgate, and Latin lacks the definite article.

CC BY-SA 4.0 Nheyob

Saint Mary's Catholic Church (Sandusky, Ohio) sanctuary with Easter decoration

Why a white linen cloth draped over a cross would raise one's hackles is likewise a mystery to me. Now, liturgical law demands a crucifix (not a simple cross) for the celebration of Holy Mass, but that says nothing about an Easter shrine which points to the Resurrection with an empty cross and shroud. Indeed, I trust you do not think the display of the Shroud of Turin to be some kind of Ku Klux Klan plot!

And yes, you are correct that at times those opposing "changes" were alleged to be mentally unstable and in need of psychiatric help." Some of them were (and are); it is also true that some of those promoting those changes were also "mentally unstable and in need of psychiatric help." Nuttiness is not confined to one quarter.

Are Protestants Christians?

Q. Here's a question for you: How would you respond to a Catholic (I think of a traditionalist bent) who wrote to me that: "Protestants are not actually Christians, they are a heretical sect"?

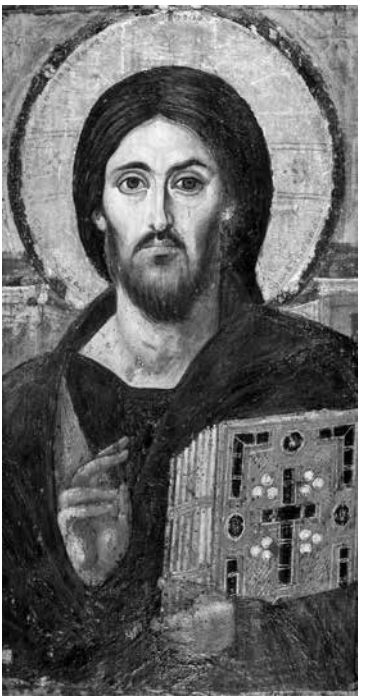
Were C.S. Lewis and Dietrich Bonhoeffer not Christians? Was Cardinal Newman not a Christian in his Anglican days? Was my father, a Baptist pastor for 40 years, not a Christian before he joined the Catholic Church in his old age?

I would certainly think that certain strands – like the "prosperity preachers" – have gone further astray than others, but does having heretical views disqualify one from being a Christian? Does the difference between formal and material heresy make a difference?

What would be the best way to reply?

A. This is a clear example of being "more Catholic than the Pope"! Actually, not a single pope in history, starting with the Reformation itself, ever made such an assertion. To be a Christian, one must be validly baptized, believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, and accept the divinity of Christ. That is why when any mainstream Protestant comes into full communion with the Catholic Church, he is never "re-baptized"; rather, he makes a profession of faith, receives the Sacrament of Penance, and is confirmed (unless an Orthodox believer, who has already been validly confirmed).

Granted, there are certain brands of Christians who deny that Catholics are Christians! But we don't return the favor.



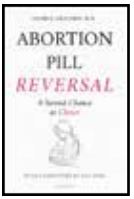
The *Christ Pantocrator* of St. Catherine's Monastery at Sinai. Artist unknown, c. 6th century

Short Reviews by the Editor

Alexandra Greeley, *Catholic Feastdays: A Cookbook for Connecting Faith and Food.* Sophia Press, 2025. Hard cover, 290 pages, $34.95.

This is an absolute delight at every level: It is a beautiful book; it makes liturgy a part of one's daily life; it has great recipes. A work like this is a help to scrapping the all-too-common American habit of "shnaffing down" food and leads us to dining as a social, familial and even liturgical experience. As one enjoys cooking myself, I look forward to making good use of this volume.

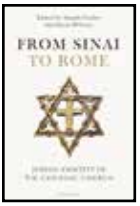
The lovely hymn, "Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether," concludes with the prayer, "May all our meals be sacraments of Thee." Let's get back to that holy desire.



George Delgado, MD, *Abortion Pill Reversal: A Second Chance at Choice.* Ignatius Press, 2025. 254 pages, $18.95.

With the advent of chemical abortions, the rate of abortions has risen dramatically. Interestingly, in the plan of Providence, the evil that can be done by one drug now can be undone by another. The author is the founder of the Abortion Pill Reversal Network, which has saved the lives of countless babies whose mothers were convinced to take the abortion pill but who, in short order, came to regret that decision. Of course, this is the one choice that the "pro-choice" industry doesn't want any woman to make.

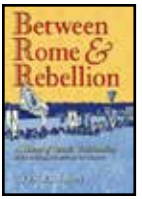
Dr. Delgado gives us a work that handles the issue from the medical, psychological, theological and spiritual perspectives and thus makes this a must-have for the library of anyone involved in the pro-life or family life apostolates, including clergy and doctors in general practice.



Angela Costley and Gavin D'Costa (editors), *From Sinai to Rome: Jewish Identity in the Catholic Church.* Ignatius Press, 2025. 284 pages, $19.95.

This collection of essays has a wide range of audiences in mind: the Catholic who wants to be better informed about the Jewish roots of Christianity; the Jew seeking reliable information on the theology and practice of the Catholic Faith; the person involved with Jews and perhaps desirous of leading them to Christ and His Church.

As one committed to the Jewish-Catholic dialogue for years, I found the essays cogent, well-written and theologically sound. I was pleased not to find any plea for Catholics to subscribe to the theory of many Christian Fundamentalists that the contemporary State of Israel is a God-willed reality (a theory that even many Orthodox Jews find repugnant); that the State of Israel has a right to exist, to be sure, but not of the positive will of God (any more than any other nation has such a sanction).



Yves Chiron, *Between Rome and Rebellion: A History of Catholic Traditionalism (with special attention to France).* Angelico Press, 2024. 413 pages, $24.95.

Between the near-suppression of the *Usus Antiquior* of the Mass by Pope Francis and the latest stir-up by the Society of St. Pius X's threat to consecrate new bishops without a papal mandate, this book takes on new value. Most commentators suggest that the "traditionalist" movement has its origins in the post-Vatican II era; our historian-author would have us go back to the French Revolution, which he does most ably. The narrative is objective and well-written; highly recommended. If one wishes to understand the present, one must understand the past out of which it has come.

Peter Kreeft, *What Would Socrates Say? An Introduction to Philosophy by the Socratic Method.* Ignatius Press, 2024. Hard cover, 351 pages, $24.95.

Anyone who has attempted to study philosophy over the past four decades or so has undoubtedly run into the inimitable Peter Kreeft. This time around, the Professor Extraordinaire by creating a dialogue between Socrates, the Grandaddy of Philosophy, and a budding, young, would-be philosopher, introduces his readers to the various branches of thought through, of course, the Socratic Method: epistemology, cosmology, ethics, philosophical anthropology, philosophy of religion, history, education, technology, and politics. Each chapter concludes with discussion questions.

Ideal for any seeker of truth, but especially worthwhile for an introductory course in philosophy for a Catholic high school or college.

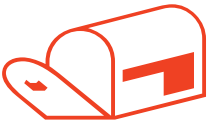
Ida Friederike Görres (trans., Jennifer S. Bryson), *John Henry Newman: A Life Sacrificed.* Ignatius Press, 2024. 291 pages, $19.95.

Exhilarated by Pope Leo's naming of Cardinal Newman a Doctor of the Church, we should pick up anything that furthers our knowledge and appreciation of this great thinker and churchman. The author produced this book in 1940s Germany. The fact that she was not well known was lamented by Father/Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI.

Let her tell you what she proposed to do in this portrait of "the boy, puzzled, who was startled and overwhelmed by God; the active, creative young prophet of his church in crisis; the hermit, who he was and wanted to be all his life; and the fighter, who he was with and against his will: the saint of the Church and the saint of humility, the one perfected in sacrifice."

Done with piety and accessible prose.

⏮ EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY:

Any subscriber who would prefer to change your print subscription to an electronic subscription, please email Father Stravinskas at *fstravinskas@hotmail.com*.

We will then deliver a pdf of each issue to your email inbox, and will no longer mail a hard copy to your mailbox.