Quarterly Review of the John Paul II Institute
ISSUE FOUR / 2019

Humanum

Issues in Family, Culture & Science

ADULTHOOD

"By Their Fruits..."

Quarterly Review of the John Paul II Institute
ISSUE FOUR / 2019

Humanum

Issues in Family, Culture & Science

ADULTHOOD

"By Their Fruits..."

When a plant grows to maturity, it bears fruit. This comes naturally. In the human situation too, bearing good fruit is not just something we adults are *supposed* to do, even less something we do only for others. It is something we *want* to do. We see this in the joy of a mother and father when a child is born and in the satisfaction we feel when we give life to those in need: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the lonely, the depressed, the addicted. We see it in the faces of the saints; in the face of a woman like Catherine Doherty. The law of charity is inscribed in our very being.

PAGE

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

BOOK REVIEW

Searching for Happiness On an Elephant's Back

COLET C. BOSTICK

Jonathan Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (Basic Books, 2006).

In the beginning of *The Everlasting Man*, G.K. Chesterton proposes that "there are two ways of getting home; and one of them is to stay there. The other is to walk round the whole world till we come back to the same place." At the end of *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*, Jonathan Haidt concludes that "we can choose directions in life that will lead to satisfaction, happiness, and a sense of meaning [but] we can't simply select a destination and walk there directly." The juxtaposition of these two images of the search for happiness as a journey lays bare a fundamental question for reflective people in the 21st century: If it's "not the destination, but the journey" that gives one a sense of purpose, does one need a destination at all? Chesterton and the Western Tradition assert that life's journey is a quest, but, for moderns like Haidt, life is at best a walkabout in the wilderness.

Jonathan Haidt is a social psychologist specializing in the field of positive psychology, the study of behaviors and conditions that lead to human flourishing. *The Happiness Hypothesis* was written in 2006, while Haidt was a professor at the University of Virginia trying to compress the entire discipline of psychology into a four-month semester. Overwhelmed by the quantity of material and concerned about how much his students could actually absorb, Haidt restricted himself to "10 Great Ideas." He then amassed a collection of quotes from the most prominent thinkers in "the world's three great zones of classical thought": India (Buddha), China (Confucius), and the Mediterranean (a vast category that includes the Old and New Testaments, ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, and the Koran); added core ideas from Shakespeare's history plays, as well as his favorite post-Enlightenment philosophers (Kant and Benjamin Franklin); and recorded his findings in a reflective journal for future reference.

Initial pages that rely heavily on Plato and Boethius may lead the reader to think that Haidt is a practicing philosopher, but he contends that he is not pursuing wisdom for its own sake or for an answer to overarching questions about existence. Rather, Haidt makes use of a selection of ideas from an assortment of thinkers in order to draw out themes which he found running through his work as a researcher—an observer, recorder, and predictor of (human) animal

behavior. He is, first and foremost, a social psychologist and a positivist. But a post-doctoral research trip to India, a detailed study of various cultures' purity laws, and that time in front of a classroom provoked a series of "treasonous thoughts" in his post-Enlightenment, Darwinian, rationalist (and, as he describes it, "politically liberal") scientist mind. If, as his experience and research showed, a widely-held understanding of something "other" (usually referred to as "the divine") exists across cultures and time, shouldn't the scientific community be willing to acknowledge that religiosity is worth examining as an aspect of the human experience?

The foundational principle for understanding Haidt's approach is that there are two extremes to all things, and the goal of science, psychology, philosophy, and life is to keep the opposites in balance. The structure of *The Happiness Hypothesis* is a four-step examination of just what a human being is before ascertaining how—or whether—happiness is possible for him. In the first step, Haidt asserts that the human mind, physically and mentally, is divided, and there is a never-ending struggle that occurs between these parts. Here Haidt introduces the metaphor that he has carefully developed through years of academic and personal attention, a metaphor that (very helpfully) accompanies the reader throughout the book. Borrowing from both Buddha and the ancient Greek philosophers, he suggests that the human mind is like a trained elephant and its rider; the animal represents not just the body and its passions, but intuition, and the man symbolizes the rational mind and control. Although this image finds its beginnings and develops along the lines of Plato's charioteer and Freud's id, ego, and superego, Haidt stresses repeatedly that one cannot stop at the distinctions. Rather than treating them as a collection of parts as was done in the past, we need to encourage these seemingly opposing actors to behave as members of a committee; thus, instead of stressing the physical over the spiritual or the intuitive over the rational, we must realize that we "are the whole thing. We are the rider, and we are the elephant. Both have their strengths and special skills."

Before deciding to pursue the elusive state of happiness (which is never clearly defined), Haidt wants to determine just what a person's brain is able to absorb. A crucial aspect of Haidt's philosophy established in the initial step is that our perceptions guide our thinking more than reality itself—Marcus Aurelius' "life itself is what you deem it." This is where Haidt's modern psychology comes into play most strongly. Based on his clinical work, evolutionary principles and psychology's interpretation of them, Haidt explains that modern research into the brain reveals that, biologically speaking, any given individual is able to experience only a limited amount of happiness. Unfortunately for most of us, that given amount is very limited indeed.The human mind, physically and historically, is not very malleable, but it can adapt gradually. Haidt the positive psychologist concludes that "meditation, cognitive therapy, and Prozac are three effective means" of setting the stage to "redeem yourself" from the limitations that biology and human nature impose on us.

The second step deals with relationality—how a rider-elephant team works in relation to other (rider-elephant team) individuals. The two sub-themes here are reciprocity (the "most important tool for getting along with people") and hypocrisy (we lie to ourselves consistently, seeing ourselves in a "rose-colored mirror"). Being in a group necessarily means that one must make judgments, but reactions come in at the intuitive (elephant) level and evaluation happens at the level of the rational mind (the rider). In evaluating how people interact based on the duality-tension-perception model, Haidt urges us to proceed with extreme caution. "The human mind…seems to come equipped with cognitive processes that predispose us to hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and moralistic conflict." Haidt is a dualist whose scientific and personal identity depends upon his ability to tolerate any opinion or outcome—except for the existence of unadulterated goodness or the "*myth* of pure evil." He sees other people as both the problem and the solution to the flourishing of human happiness. If one sees life as a

balance, one can be in balance with others; however, if a person (or worse, groups of people) chooses one side over another, the entire system collapses. He urges that "by knowing the mind's structure and strategies, we can step out of the ancient game of social manipulation and enter into a game of our own choosing…You can begin to follow the perfect way, the path to happiness that leads through acceptance."

In the third step, Haidt examines a variety of historic understandings of what the source of happiness could be, and again offers only opposites: the "hedonic treadmill" of worldly pleasures, or the ascetic isolation of the yogi and stoic. As an example of the effect of material comfort on contentedness, he points to studies in which the lives of lottery winners and serious accident victims are compared; the happiness levels of both situations are the opposite of what one might originally expect—lottery winners report being less happy than they had been before the windfall, and those who sustained serious injuries are more content because, after the initial blow, they achieved slow but consistent upward progress in their lives. Again, perception is key. "The human mind is extraordinarily sensitive to *changes* in conditions, but not so sensitive to absolute levels." At the other extreme, Stoicism and Buddhism put the metaphorical rider in control by building an internal world that shuts out the temptations and changeability of the externals, including human society. Again, Haidt urges a middle path, a yin-yang. "Happiness comes from within and without"; it makes an appearance in our lives but can only be perceived by a well-organized mind and properly adjusted perception.

Step four deals with how people grow and the conditions required for growth. As discussed in the second step, divided people (rider-elephant pairs) live in collections. We bond with one another, yet are often driven apart because of broken relationships or experiences of adversity. Any given instance of human connection or circumstance of disruption can be seen as healthy or detrimental. For instance, psychological studies reveal that parent-child attachment is essential for human growth and development—if, that is, the infant grows into an adult who has a sense of self. Haidt points out that the attachment displayed in modern romantic love, which has as its hallmark being "lost in the other," is exactly the kind of passion the philosophers cautioned us against. Similarly, while 1970's psychiatrists focused on post-traumatic stress disorder, in the 1990's researchers re-adjusted their lenses more positively and began to see that those who were well-adjusted before the traumatic incident experienced "post-traumatic growth." He credits positive psychology for this development, since it emphasizes the positive aspects of character traits rather than setting a diagnostic "norm" and labeling any deviation from that norm as a pathology.

The four steps outlined above occupy 180 of the 240 pages of argumentation of the book. Only at chapter nine does Haidt begin to look at the other, at something outside of man, and to ask what happiness might be in light of it. At this point he reveals that he rejected the Judaic worldview of his youth for a secular materialist one, and as an adult came to believe that discovering the meaning of life and discovering meaning *in* life are not interdependent. Haidt is discovering the necessity of science and religion to form a dialogue at least, yet he still seems to believe there are "irreconcilable differences" between the two. On his journey, he has come to realize the benefits of the sides with which he wouldn't normally identify (conservatism, religiosity) but along the way he's embraced a Daoist dictum that has him trapped in a relativistic view of good and evil.

Haidt is coming closer to home, but until he chooses more of a direction, it will prove to be a long meander.

Colet C. Bostick is a writer and editor living in Damascus, Maryland.

Keep reading! Our next article is Mandy Reimer's review of *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World.*

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

BOOK REVIEW

The Difference Between Charity and Philanthropy

MANDY REIMER

Tracy Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World* (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2009).

Haiti is a country rife with tuberculosis and AIDS, malnutrition, dysentery, worms, and malaria. It is plagued with alarming rates of infant and maternal mortality. A staggering 25% of Haitians die before they reach forty. In *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, an intriguing and page-turning account of the life of medical anthropologist and physician Dr. Paul Farmer, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Tracy Kidder transports the reader into the heart of this troubled region.

Reading Kidder's description of Dr. Farmer's life and work in Cange, Haiti and comparing it with Farmer's childhood, one senses that he was particularly suited to embrace the constant sacrifices entailed in living amidst great poverty. Living simply was not a foreign concept to Farmer. He grew up the second of six children and had what can only be described as a colorful childhood. Having lived with his family of eight in a large bus (nicknamed "The Blue Bird Inn") that his father had bought at an auction and which they drove from Birmingham to Florida and stationed at a trailer park, Paul was used to the inconveniences of doing without. Following five years of living in the bus, his father bought a houseboat. He built a cabin for it and, after a few eventful voyages into the Gulf of Mexico, anchored it in an otherwise uninhabited bayou. The *Lady Gin* then became the family home during Farmer's high school years. Kidder's description of this unusual childhood makes for an enjoyable and sometimes hysterical read. Fast-forwarding some years, Farmer's home in Haiti is described as a simple peasant house with concrete floors, a metal roof, and no hot running water. The hot dog bean soup of his childhood seems to have prepared him for a lifetime of simple cuisines and opened a space for gratitude within him. Farmer's youth included receiving the Sacraments of Initiation in the Catholic Church and attending Mass, though he described his childhood religion as "perfunctory… and nowhere near as exciting as the stuff I was reading." Happily, among his favorites at age eleven were Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, the reading of which he describes as a religious experience.

Awarded a full scholarship to Duke, he then went on to Harvard Medical School where he also studied anthropology, becoming enthralled by all things Haitian. However, it was not until he struck up an unlikely friendship with a millionaire donor, Tom White, that his dreamed-of project in Haiti could be realized. Together with a few others, White and Farmer formed Partners in Health, a nonprofit that continues to provide much-needed nutritional and medical care to the people of Haiti, as well as other countries. Farmer's work ethic is, at first glance, impressive; looking more closely, it appears nearly insane. With little sleep and a constant search for new ways to bring in resources and raise funds, he seems to never stop moving. In addition to its work in Haiti, Partners in Health began operations to research and fight multi-drug resistant TB in Peru, Russia, and South Africa, the findings of which were presented to the World Bank; consequently, Farmer was thrown into international health politics and a myriad of projects, too numerous to mention.

Farmer's life's work seems almost beyond critique. He is a man whose life is truly given for others, for the "least of these" that Christ describes (Mt 25:40). Yet despite his heroic embrace of charity as he understands it, and notwithstanding his heartfelt love for the poverty-stricken people of Haiti, Farmer's methods as portrayed by Kidder are at times not simply unorthodox—which in a system battling constant corruption can be meritorious—but perhaps overly harsh. Writing from the Christian standpoint, one wonders if this undercuts the charity that he wishes so much to convey. His initial intentions, portrayed as youthful idealism in his college years, have an attractive purity to them. Yet alongside this there is an implied scorn for structures and institutions of power, among which the Church is subtly counted. "I'm still looking for something in the sacred texts that says 'Thou shalt not use condoms,'" Kidder quotes Farmer saying. While the book does not address the complexity of Farmer's interior life, it is certainly implied by Kidder that Farmer rejects formal Catholicism, insofar as he fails to see the relevance of Church precepts to international healthcare or even the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus.

More positively, Kidder often describes Farmer as one who listens. Farmer immersed himself in Haitian culture and took notes wherever he went, inquiring about water and food supplies, sanitation concerns, local health centers, livestock, vaccinations, and mudslides. He had a keen sense of awareness that the people of Cange would know best what the people of Cange needed. But while he certainly gave an ear to the local people at any moment when beckoned, one wonders if he would have been willing to listen to other missionaries that had gone before him, whose mission was to bring, firstly, the light of Christ into the darkness of the world. For instance, one wonders whether his embrace of the Marxist ideology of liberation theology, which initially attracted him to his Catholic faith, is adequate to addressing the most essential questions, the questions that would have motivated Farmer's predecessors: namely, who the Person of Jesus Christ is, and, ultimately, how to relieve the greatest poverty that exists in every corner of the world—that is, the absence of the light of Christ.

"One Nation Under Stress," a 2019 HBO documentary produced with Dr. Sanjay Gupta, offers an American comparison. This film highlights the staggering rise in the United States of what have become known as "deaths of despair" (i.e., opiate overdose, drug and alcohol abuse, and suicide). The documentary serves as a poignant reminder that the lack of meaning and hope is a poverty that demands a response in the modern world. While not the same as the squalor, disease, and inequality that exists in Haiti, it is nevertheless a great suffering. As Mother Teresa observed in a 1975 interview, the poverty of the developed West was greater than the poverty of India because "your people suffer such terrible loneliness and emptiness. They feel unloved and unwanted." A response to any form of poverty, material or spiritual, requires a response commensurate with the fullness of the human person—a response that seems lacking in the liberation theology that captivated Farmer.

If he had had the opportunity to meet witnesses to the faith who were not simply Marxist ideologues, would he have been drawn to a more substantive proposal of the Church and to the Person of Jesus Christ, rather than feeling the need to set up a parallel structure, the "church of Paul Farmer" as Kidder describes? For Farmer, the attraction to liberation theology is bound up with its emphasis on "service and remediation." He wants a "pragmatic God" who lives and works in solidarity with the poor whom he loves. This beautiful instinct plays itself out in Farmer's late nights working, his long treks through the Haitian countryside to check on patients, his offering of himself to the soldiers who come to the hospital looking for villagers who had spoken out against the government, and his righteous anger at the corruption that leads over and over again to innocent deaths in the poorest of countries throughout the world.

And yet, Paul Farmer himself is not the hope of salvation for anyone. While we can all learn much from his passion for the poor and the challenge his witness offers to recognize the poor in our midst or hidden in the corners of the world where Partners in Health courageously serves, it yet remains true that "man does not live on bread alone" (Mt 4:4). I am reminded of Pope Benedict XVI's beautiful encyclical *Spe Salvi*: "to be without God is to be without hope." To offer true hope to the people of Cange (to believe that their deepest desire is for more than clean water, nutrition, and sanitation) is to point to Another, to the only One who can save us—rich and poor alike.

Mandy Reimer, MD, MTS is a general neurologist who lives in Auburn, AL. She is a graduate of the John Paul II Institute in Washington, DC.

Keep reading! Our next article is Brian Rottkamp's review of *The Monks of Tibhirine: Faith, Love and Terror in Algeria.*

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

BOOK REVIEW

The Gift of the Monks of Tibhirine

BRIAN ROTTKAMP

John Kiser, *The Monks of Tibhirine: Faith, Love and Terror in Algeria* (St. Martin's Griffin, 2003).

Stretching from the Mediterranean Sea to the heart of the Sahara Desert and capped by the Atlas Mountains, Algeria is an immense land full of contrasts and harsh beauty. It is a land that has known many masters, from the Numidians, Phoenicians, and Romans in antiquity, to Islamic caliphates in the Early Middle Ages, and in the modern age, the Ottomans and the French. Memorable spiritual reflections have been prompted by its varied, foreboding landscapes. Saint Augustine of Hippo contemplated the nature of the Trinity on its shoreline. The hermit Blessed Charles de Foucauld lived among the Tuareg in the Sahara. Meanwhile in Algiers, Albert Camus despaired of the absurdity of modern life. It is a land in which man has dwelled deeply upon his relationship with God and his fellow man.

In *The Monks of Tibhirine: Faith, Love, and Terror in Algeria*, John W. Kiser recounts the story of seven Trappist monks who came to Algeria from France to devote themselves to the triad of prayer, study, and work in a monastery in the foothills of the Atlas Mountains. This book served as the primary source for Xavier Beauvois' beautiful 2010 film, *Of Gods and Men*. The question so often asked of these monks by friends and family was *why*? Why spend their lives in a monastery in a predominantly Muslim nation with a miniscule Christian population where evangelization was forbidden? To begin to answer this question and unfold the mission of these monks, Kiser provides the reader with a detailed account of the deep rancor and misunderstanding inherent to French-Algerian relations.

France's invasion and subsequent settlement of Algeria in the nineteenth century was a messy business. Outbreaks of violence between newly-arrived French settlers and Algerians were frequent and brutal. As Kiser elaborates, part of the issue was theological. The devoutly Muslim Algerians were confused and disheartened by the lack of prayerfulness amongst the rough, pioneering French colonists (so-called *Pieds-Noirs*). The Qur'an describes Christians as a people of prayer: "The nearest to the faithful are those who say 'We are Christians.' That is because there are priests and monks among them and because they are free of pride" (5:82). Understandably, heavy-handed French colonialism was a shock. And yet, at the same time,

several Trappist monastic communities were founded throughout the country. These monasteries, most notably, Notre-Dame de l'Atlas in Tibhirine (founded in 1938) became known as places of friendship between Muslims and Christians. Cardinal Duval of Algiers poignantly described the essential role played by monks as the "lungs of the Church in Algeria" providing "spiritual oxygen" to Christians and Muslims alike.

In recounting the story of the monks of Tihbirine, Kiser's narrative is centrally focused upon the abbot of the monastery, Christian de Cherge. Born into an aristocratic military family (his father was a general and his mother a descendent of the Marquis de Lafayette), Christian was described by his devout mother as unique among her children, showing a deep piety at a young age. Exceptionally bright and well-natured, Christian was in seminary when his studies were halted by the 27-month military service obligation required of all Frenchmen. It was an assignment that changed the course of his life.

In the summer of 1959, Lieutenant Christian de Cherge arrived in Algeria to serve in the French army during the war of Algerian independence. Like many Frenchmen before him, he was struck by the beauty and immensity of the landscape, but more importantly by the cordiality, hospitality, and sense of the divine he witnessed among the locals. He developed a deep friendship with a local policeman, Mohammed, with whom he spent hours walking the rocky landscape and discussing the nature of God. On one of these walks, they were confronted by soldiers from the Algerian army. Mohammed protected Christian and insisted that his friend was a friend of Muslims. In the end, they were allowed to finish their walk. However, the next day Mohammed was murdered by soldiers for his kindness, leaving behind his wife and ten children. Christian was profoundly moved by Mohammed's generosity of spirit and his sacrifice.

Upon returning to France, Christian continued his studies and was ordained a priest in 1964, followed by a first assignment at Sacre-Coeur in Montmartre. However, in 1969, he responded to the call of the monastic life and entered the eight-hundred-year-old abbey of Notre Dame d'Aiguebelle in the Rhône Valley. Two years later he returned as a Trappist monk to the country he had left some ten years earlier as a French solider. In the years since he had last lived in Algeria, both the Church and the country had experienced profound change: *Gaudium et spes* embraced the universality of the Church and an openness to ecumenical outreach, and the independent Algeria of the 1960s diligently promoted religious tolerance. As Kiser explains, it was a time of hope and heightened expectations. At Tibhirine, Christian found a renewed peace that had escaped him in France. He wrote to a friend, "I have arrived in the Atlas Mountains surrounded by a population that is poor, but smiling, proud, and without bitterness. They are believers and respectful of all religious people, provided that what is in the back room corresponds with what is in the display window."

The monastery of the Notre-Dame de l'Atlas in Tibhirine served as a spiritual oasis for the people of Algeria. Christian ensured that Muslims were welcome to come to this tranquil setting to pray and go on retreat. Ecumenical *ribats*, or dialogues of understanding, were regularly held between Christian and various Muslim elders. His brother monks, all originally from France, came to Tihbirine for the opportunity to serve God in simplicity. One of the brothers, Luc, was a physician who worked tirelessly to meet the many needs of the rural community. In addition to praying the seven Daily Offices, the brothers worked the land to maintain their vegetarian diet, cultivated lavender, and, most famously, produced over 800 pounds of pure dark honey each season ("Trappist gold"). As Kiser describes, the production of honey had a special resonance for Christian: "Bee colonies reminded him of monks. Like a good monk, good honey, he would pun, was *sine cera*—without wax. Sincere. Pure."

It was a fairly idyllic existence, but that started to change with the Islamic socialist revolution in the fall of 1976. All Catholic schools were quickly nationalized by the government which caused many clergy to return to France. For the Christian communities who remained, nationalization offered, in the words of Cardinal Duval, a chance to love gratuitously; to love without expecting anything in return. In the coming years, living out this love would become increasingly difficult as clergy were assassinated and religious shrines were destroyed. Yet the monks persevered.

The monastery's position became increasingly perilous following the October Revolution in 1988 and the onset of the Algerian Civil War in 1991; a conflict which pitted the Algerian government against various Islamic rebel groups. By late 1993, the GIA (Armed Islamic Group) formally announced that all foreigners had thirty days to leave the country. Soon after, foreigners of various nationalities were killed throughout the country. Authorities in Algeria and France encouraged the monks to flee to safety. The local governor met with Christian to encourage him to allow a police presence in the monastery in order to provide protection. Christian steadfastly refused this offer: he would not accept the presence of weapons on monastery grounds. Tellingly, he did not want to compromise the monastery's position in dealing evenly with the "brothers of the mountain" (rebels) or "brothers of the plain" (army). At this time, he started to reflect upon the works of Etty Hillesum—a young Jewish mystic killed at Auschwitz.

Kiser's description of Christmas Eve in 1993 is harrowing. As the monks prepared for Midnight Mass, armed Islamic rebels entered the monastery demanding money, medicine, and the services of Luc, the physician. Christian heroically met with the rebels outside, explained the holiness of the night, and was able to keep danger at bay. However, it was now clear that the civil war, which eventually cost 100,000 lives, had reached Tibhirine. The Bishop of Algiers visited the monastery to discuss the situation with the brothers. Christian allowed each brother to consider whether he wanted to leave. All of them decided to stay: leaving would represent a cruel abandonment of the neighbors for whom they cared dearly. As one villager said, "If you go away, you will rob us of your hope, and we'll lose ours." In 1994, the situation worsened as religious leaders, journalists, and civilians were being murdered throughout the country.

And yet, the monastery maintained a peaceful détente with the army and rebel groups. Letters from the brothers to family in France show not only the clear understanding of the mortal danger they faced, but also of their deep faith and love for humanity. As Brother Paul wrote, "How far does one go to save his skin without running the risk of losing his soul? What will remain of the Church in Algeria in a few more months? Little, I fear. Yet, I believe the Good News is spreading; the seed is germinating." Christian wrote insightfully on the five pillars of behavior (patience, poverty, presence, prayer, and forgiveness) that must be practiced daily to have peace in one's life. Kiser describes how, in the face of impending danger, the monks exhibited a serenity through their connection to and patience in the sufferings of Christ.

In the spring of 1996, seven of the monks of Tibhirine were kidnapped by the GIA and held as part of a proposed hostage exchange. Some two months later in May 1996, they were found dead. For the first time since the death of Pope John Paul I in 1978, church bells rang across France. In Algeria too, the monks were mourned by Christians and Muslims alike. In the following decades, there have been conflicting reports on whether the GIA or the army were ultimately responsible for their deaths. Yet perhaps, in a way, this lack of clarity is fitting. In their uncompromising love of their fellow man, the monks of Tibhirine underwent a true martyrdom, relevant to all of humanity. As the contemporary world continues to be roiled in religious conflict, their lesson and sacrifice are timeless. Theirs was a love, like the "Trappist

Gold” honey that came from their hives: pure and sincere. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friend.”

The seven monks of Tibhirine were beatified on December 8, 2018.

Brian Rottkamp, father of four, received a Master of Arts in Comparative Literature from the University of South Carolina.

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

BOOK REVIEW

A Credible Witness of Mercy

SUZANNE TANZI

The Sisters of Life, *Regaining Sight: Stories of Hope* (2017).

> To hope, my child, we must be very happy. We must have obtained, received a great grace.
> —Charles Péguy

The Sisters of Life are unwaveringly clear about what they want to communicate to the world, as they state on their website: "We believe every person is valuable and sacred. … In fact, we give our lives for that truth." Drawing upon their contemplative home life of prayer, adoration, and intimate community, they are well known for the joyful charisma with which they impart God's tenderness in their varied realms of service, even in the darkest circumstances.

The Sisters' main media tool is *Imprint* magazine, whose educative method is dynamic storytelling. And they do not just tell any story. As the magazine title reveals, these are stories in which the "imprint" of the Lord's gracious hand is evident. Each issue unpacks its dedicated theme—such as freedom, hope, joy, wonder, prayer, and silence—through real-life narratives. *Regaining Sight: Stories of Hope* is a captivating compilation of some of these *Imprint* stories, whose archive has been growing since the Order was founded in 1991 by New York's John Cardinal O'Connor, just as the Congregation's numbers have been growing, to now more than 100 Sisters.

Regaining Sight is a testament to the profound evangelizing power of the "credible witness," as the editors unmistakably intended: "May these stories bring hope to all who read them, giving each a new vision to see the Presence of Jesus close by our side, always at work for our good." There is much to share from the Sisters' encounters because of the wide reach of their missionary work, which includes assisting pregnant women in need, offering post-abortion hope and healing, spiritual retreats, intercessory prayer, and outreach on college campuses, never mind their "chance" meetings on the streets, in airports, and anywhere they are going about their business. Welcoming and infectious smiles and Dominican-style habits tend to

attract attention…

Taking not only its material but also its thematic approach from *Imprint*, the book is organized in a sort of instructive series of seven steps, delineated by chapters, from "Letting Go of Control" to "Acceptance of God's Love and Mercy," ending with "Stepping Out of Our Comfort Zones." Each chapter offers four to seven miraculous anecdotes that elucidate the given step. These stories reveal much about the universal human desire for a deep and sustaining love, for purpose and fulfillment, and for true community—which come as gifts from the eternal God.

Such gifts, the book assures us, can be granted in every trying circumstance, not only in facing an unwanted pregnancy or seeking healing after abortion, the two ministries in which the Sisters have invested the most. Indeed, there is no lure, pitfall, or disability found in daily life and in today's cultural milieu that is outside of Jesus' mantle of ardent love. The book's protagonists attest to this truth in their lives, buffeted as they are by illness, death, addiction, crime, handicaps, abuse, loneliness, agnosticism, and more. Through these gripping reflections, the reader encounters the extraordinary abundance of God's generosity found in accompaniment, maternity and paternity, humility, chastity, compassion, self-gift, and other fruitful manifestations of His mercy—a mercy to which the Sisters of Life have introduced so many.

One woman recounts how she was freed from the painful resolution to abort her son with Down syndrome when she contacted the Sisters of Life, even though, "in my heart, fear was winning." Her happiness for this decision resounds in the sweetest of tones: "It is important to talk about how a child with a disability… strengthens us. … I can't imagine how I would be the person that I am today, as strong as I am and knowing God the way that I do, if it wasn't for Angelo." An older child with Down syndrome who was interviewed for another story explains, "I have an extra chromosome and that chromosome belongs to God. It is from God. It is between me and God." In a different submission, the brother of one of the Sisters communicates the challenges brought on by his muscular dystrophy, leading to "temptations to despair" and cultivating "habitual mortal sin." This young man's moving experience of God's intervention through an attentive priest and other events led him to learn that "God allows suffering for a greater good to come from it." There is not one of the 35 brief *Imprint* stories that does not attest to the redemptive value of suffering and a total surrender of love on new paths of hope.

Other incisive and surprising vignettes describe an "intense desire to love others and be loved by others, but that did not translate into me loving myself." Whether through an unexpected pregnancy, a regretted abortion, a retreat, or a random encounter, the Sisters of Life and others in the Church enabled these interlocutors to discover and live "authentic love":

> "I made bad decisions every day for years. … [N]ow I help heal the hearts of many women, so they can become the women that God created."
>
> "I told myself the way I was living was normal, but deep down I knew it was a lie. … God is gentle and patient and will wait for us as long as it takes."
>
> "The little kid in me who used to play 'Mass' was jumping for joy because the adult in me had said 'yes.'"
>
> "God is love, and he doesn't go back on His love. We do; we forget, but He

doesn't."

> "It took me 29 years of silence, fear, regret, and pain to get here, but as scripture reminds us in Joel, God restores the years 'eaten by the locust.'"

> "Joy and sorrow are like two vines growing together. If you try to cut out the sorrow, you will also cut out the joy."

> "I thought God could not forgive me for my past. … But… when God calls you, He doesn't just call you. He dwells in you. He changes everything. I love my new life."

In this simply written and thoughtfully composed book, the new vision, through which sight is regained, is proffered not only by the men and women the Sisters have served, but by the Sisters themselves, their founder Cardinal O'Connor, and the priests and "co-workers" all over the country who assist their mission in myriad ways. This range is a testament to the broad reach of their ministry, whose healing power radiates far and wide.

It is perhaps fitting that they are first known for their support of pregnant women and their unborn children, for it is through contemplating the model of the child that all can be inspired to recognize their own worth, born of God's steadfast love:

> God is not only a Father; he is also an Eternal Child. [I]t is the child's strength which enraptures me. … [T]he purity of the child stands firm and triumphs. Even in our own lives, no matter what they might have been, it is possible to discover that triumphant purity and reawaken it. … God declares to all that they must become as little children to enter the Kingdom. The sanctity of childhood is what most resembles God. This is what must be redeemed in every human being.
>
> —François Mauriac

Suzanne Tanzi, a mother of five living in Kensington, MD, is Media and Promotions Manager at Theological College, the national seminary of The Catholic University of America, and a contributing writer for Magnificat. *Her daughter is a Sisters of Life postulant.*

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

FEATURE ARTICLE

FOCUS: Hope for the New Evangelization

JOHN BISHOP

In his *Letter to a Suffering Church* Bishop Barron suggested that FOCUS (the Fellowship of Catholic University Students), and organizations like it, are among the most hopeful prospects for renewal within the Church. On another occasion he said, "I don't know any other group or institution in the Catholic Church today that's fulfilling its mission and living up to its charism more than FOCUS." Since its founding in 1999, FOCUS has exploded from two missionaries on a single campus in Kansas to the international apostolate it is today, with nearly one thousand full-time staff serving on 170 campuses in the United States and Europe. Many have wondered about the charism animating this outreach, and as a FOCUS missionary, I am able to offer at least a basic description. FOCUS' vision can be understood as a specific understanding of *discipleship* and *evangelization*. This vision takes much of its inspiration from the life Pope Saint John Paul II, so it seems appropriate to begin my explanation with the story of one of John Paul II's most influential mentors: Jan Tyranowski.

The Nazis who dominated 1940s Europe were not neutral towards religion. They sought to destroy the Catholic Church, sending thousands of priests and religious to concentration camps, silencing opposition from religious leaders, prohibiting most public expressions of faith, and outlawing education in the Christian life. In this time of crisis, some heroic laypeople stepped up to lead underground groups in passing on the faith, often behind closed doors or under cover of darkness. Jan Tyranowski led just such a group, accompanying a dozen or so college-aged men in regular recitation of the rosary and faith-filled conversation. Jan was a tailor in Poland. He was not a priest and had no formal training in theology. Nevertheless, at the risk of his own life, he opened his apartment to instruct several young men in the spiritual life, training them to form Living Rosary groups of their own with peers at their university. He was intentional in his ministry, reinforcing the basics of the Faith and helping the men to deepen their relationship with Christ. He taught them how to root out sin, progress in prayer, and discern God's will. He revealed for them the beauty of the rosary and the wisdom of the saints. He also trained them for mission, sending them out to reach their peers with the Gospel. Jan's underground ministry had such a deep impact that ten of the men involved eventually became priests. One of those, the young Karol Wojtyła, would eventually become Pope Saint John Paul II, and it is his call for a New Evangelization that gave rise to the mission and vision of FOCUS.

While FOCUS takes inspiration from the witness, legacy, and thought of John Paul II, its core practice, its method of discipleship, is perhaps more closely exemplified by the apostolate of Venerable Jan Tyranowski. This little-known tailor may be one of the most influential people of the 20th century, not because he rose to wealth, fame, or power, but rather as a result of the way he invested himself personally in a few good men, leading them to encounter Christ in the interior life and training them to go out and do the same for others. It is this type of personal accompaniment that lies at the heart of FOCUS' mission. At its core, FOCUS seeks to bring the lived reality of the Gospel to the daily lives of college students through the conduit of peer-to-peer relationships, something which we at FOCUS refer to as "the Little Way of Evangelization."

The *Little Way* is a distinctive mode of evangelization. Unlike televangelism or Christian publishing, it is essentially personal.[1] FOCUS missionaries do not operate through printing presses or mass media. Instead, they invest in individual college students, spending their time in places like dorm rooms, sorority halls, and dive bars. Their goal is to invest in a few students, accompanying them into a deeper faith. The hope is that those few will in turn invest in a few more who will then invest in a few more, etc. So, the *Little Way* brings about a multiplication of evangelizing disciples, something referred to as *Spiritual Multiplication*.

We at FOCUS aim to bring about Spiritual Multiplication through a simple paradigm which we refer to as "Win, Build, and Send." In short, this is the method by which those involved with FOCUS *win* students over to the Gospel, *build* them up in imitation of Christ, and finally *send* them to do the same with others. Each of these phases is presented in greater detail here:

Win

The first step in forming missionary disciples is to lead people to a life-shaping encounter with Jesus Christ—one in which they become a true disciple, where Christ is not just a part of their lives but the very center. Many people might know about Jesus and the Catholic faith, but a disciple is someone who knows Jesus in the same way John and Andrew did. Disciples live in abiding relationship with him. For the disciple, Jesus is not merely informing; he is proposing a new way of living, including a willingness to make any sacrifice in order to follow him. Jesus himself says, "This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (Jn 17:3). In the "win" stage, we invite people to form this kind of friendship with Christ. We do this through our prayer and example, as well as through investing our lives in authentic friendships, sharing the Gospel message, and inviting them to say "Yes" to Christ—to surrender their lives to Him.

Build

At FOCUS, we have noticed that there is often a period of transition from the "win" stage to the "build" stage. That is to say that most disciples have a period of their life in which they set their life's trajectory toward sanctity. Once a college student has so surrendered his life, it is crucial that we "build" him up in the faith. As Paul VI says in Evangelii Nuntiandi:

> Proclamation only reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it…an adherence to the truths which the Lord in his mercy has revealed; still more, an adherence to a program of life—a life henceforth transformed.

In other words, we need to help students deepen their intimacy with God by growing in prayer, fellowship, the sacramental life, and their rootedness in Christ's teachings (Acts 2:42). The act of building answers two questions: What do people need to know so they can think with the mind of Christ? And with which habits ought they be formed so they take on the character of Christ? The goal is to help them become more and more like Jesus. But we don't just talk about these things, we model them as we accompany the students.

Send

"It is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn."[2] After "serious preparation,"[3] FOCUS encourages students to go out and share the Gospel themselves: winning, building, and sending their own friends for the rest of their lives. At FOCUS we do not believe that we have been true to our charism until we have launched students as spirit-filled evangelists who become disciple-makers themselves. A true disciple is someone who seeks to make more disciples. St. Paul did not merely pass on good Christian teaching to his disciples. He sent them out to find other trustworthy people to train them to do the same for others (2 Tim 2:2)—in other words, he trained his disciples to become disciple-makers. This is our task as well. We train others in the mission of making disciples. Within FOCUS, we call those in the "send" phase "commissioned disciples."

I began with a story about Jan Tyranowski, but I would be remiss if I did not say more about the influence of John Paul II on our apostolate. As a good pastor, Fr. Wojtyła went out to his people. He didn't simply schedule talks at a parish and wait for people to come to him. He went out and got involved in their lives. He planned outdoor excursions involving kayaking, camping, hiking, and skiing. He entered into the lives of the young people who joined him—learning about their hopes, dreams, and fears, understanding how they experienced friendships, love, and the moral life. He truly shared life with them. They sang. They laughed. They told jokes. They recited poetry. Fr. Wojtyła was a master of "accompaniment," walking with people amid their daily joys and struggles, ever witnessing Christ's love to them. He said that God called him "to live with people, everywhere to be with them, in everything but sin."[4] One friend said of him, "We felt that we could discuss anything with him; we could talk about absolutely anything."[5] Others said that he "had mastered the art of listening," that he "was always interested," and that he "always had time."[6] Another simply said, "He lived our problems."[7]

Taking John Paul II as an example, FOCUS has articulated three key virtues which it encourages among its staff and students:

1. Divine Intimacy

As men and women committed to forming disciples, FOCUS students' first goal is to have a deep, personal friendship with Jesus Christ. Evangelization is first and foremost the work of God, and we will be fruitful in the mission of sharing the Gospel only to the extent that we ourselves are abiding in deep union with him. The Gospel tells us, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:5). As Pope St. Paul VI explained, "Only your personal and profound union with Christ will assure the fruitfulness of your apostolate whatever it may be."[8] Thus, before all else FOCUS encourages faithfulness to prayer, fellowship, the sacraments, and intellectual formation in accord with the teachings of Christ (Acts 2:42). In a manner reminiscent of Jean-Baptiste Chautard's *The Soul of the Apostolate*, FOCUS missionaries are encouraged to place a regular prayer life over any evangelical activity. Thus, all FOCUS missionaries commit to spend

at least an hour in silent prayer each day and to attend daily mass. Authentic evangelization ought to be an overflow of the interior life of the missionary and his own lived encounter with the Gospel. Anything else would constitute a disingenuous witness. It is prayer, the interior life, nothing more and nothing less, which constitutes the wellspring of FOCUS' apostolic work.

2. Authentic Friendship

It is so often the case that the mysteries of the Gospel are realized within the context of communities, or groups of friends. In forming missionary disciples, it is not enough to pass on the Gospel message and the teachings of the Church. That is essential, but we must do more. We must genuinely love the people we are serving, accompanying them in life by personally investing ourselves in them through authentic friendship. Like John Paul II, who met people not merely at the altar rail or death bed, but throughout the ordinary course of their days, we seek to meet people everywhere. We want to bring the light of the Gospel into contact with all the complexity of contemporary life. This meeting certainly includes religious activities; but it includes much more! St. Paul models this in the way he himself evangelized—giving people not just the truths of the faith, but also pouring his life out for the people he served. In 1 Thessalonians 2:8, he writes, "So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the Gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us." Personal investment matters. A true missionary disciple gets to know the people he serves. He doesn't passively wait for people to come to him but goes out to them. As Pope Francis says: "An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives…. Evangelizers thus take on the 'smell of the sheep' and the sheep are willing to hear their voice."

3. Spiritual Multiplication

Jan Tyranowski and Father Karol Wojtyła invested their entire lives in the people they served. And, from the beginning, they sought to prepare those people to be evangelists themselves, just as St. Paul exhorts Timothy to do. "What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). It isn't enough to teach people the Christian life; we must also teach people to teach others the Christian life. Disciples must not only seek to be faithful but fruitful. As we strive to make disciples, we must have both clarity and conviction about spiritual multiplication—the method by which we imitate Jesus, who invested in a few and commissioned them to do the same.

Within the context of the Win, Build, Send paradigm, the three virtues of Divine Intimacy, Authentic Friendship, and Spiritual Multiplication constitute the cornerstones of FOCUS' apostolic work. Together, they make up the charismatic life of the organization. By practicing these virtues in their own lives and among the small communities they form, FOCUS missionaries have been able to walk tens of thousands of students from a place of sin to sanctity.

Having personally seen FOCUS work miracles in the lives of so many students, it makes sense to me that FOCUS has gained such an overwhelmingly positive reputation, owing in part to the constructive criticism it has received. For instance, some have expressed concern that in the use and application of concepts like *spiritual multiplication*, FOCUS missionaries treat people like numbers, subtly downgrading the nuance of the Gospel and the dignity of the person. Also, some see various elements of FOCUS' charism and ministry as too Protestant. After all, FOCUS takes some of its inspiration from Protestant organizations like Campus Crusade for Christ (now Cru). Fortunately, FOCUS has responded to such criticism. For example, its leadership has

made intentional efforts to keep the people, not the numbers, at the center of our work, encouraging missionaries to maintain the integrity of the mission, even if doing so yields lower results. As for the concern regarding undue Protestant influence, it has always been the practice of saintly Catholics to integrate the goods realized outside the faith into the fullness of Catholic thought (here one might think of Greek philosophy). To this end, I am consoled by and grateful to those individuals who have prudently guided FOCUS in our process of integration. Such individuals have helped FOCUS staff to incorporate insights from other Christian communities, while cultivating fidelity to magisterial orthodoxy, a deep appreciation for the devout life, and a love for the mystical tradition of the Church.

Bishop Barron is right. If we are to move forward in this present time of confusion, organizations like FOCUS can provide a way forward. Personally, I have seen FOCUS transform non-believers into daily communicants, lost fraternity brothers into professed religious, and secular couples into faithful spouses. I have seen addictions broken. I have seen relativism overturned. In short, I have seen the ills of our contemporary world healed and wounded souls made new! Further, for me and for others, FOCUS has been a vehicle for connecting with other apostolates. For example, it is through FOCUS that I encountered the thought of Luigi Giussani and Josemaría Escrivá. It is in part as a result of FOCUS that my intellectual disposition flowered into a love for the intellectual tradition of the Church. And it is for similar reasons that FOCUS itself is indebted to the various apostolates, communities, and institutions which have cultivated its good and supported its charism.

John Bishop is a doctoral candidate in moral and systematic theology at the Catholic University of America. He is writing his dissertation on masculinity in John Paul II, and his interests include sexual ethics, anthropology, virtue ethics, and Thomas Aquinas. John works full-time for the Fellowship of Catholic University Students developing curriculum and training missionaries. He leads several initiatives with the apostolate, most notably FOCUS Summer Projects.

Travis Todd and Stephanie Parks work alongside John in FOCUS' formation department, each overseeing substantial curriculum development initiatives.

[1] This, of course, is not to say that FOCUS discourages these media as vehicles for communicating the Gospel. On the contrary, FOCUS partners with many of the most successful writers and speakers of the day. FOCUS' annual conferences, for example, have featured notable figures like Bishop Barron, Jim Caviezel, and Father Mike Schmitz. FOCUS benefits from the work of such accomplished individuals and sees their work as complementary to its own.

[2] Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 22.

[3] *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 22.

[4] George Weigel, *Witness to Hope* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), 104.

[5] Ibid., 105.

[6] Ibid., 102, 105.

[7] Ibid., 107.

[8] *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 17.

Keep reading! Our next article is on Dr. John C. H. Wu and the vocation to public service.

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

FEATURE ARTICLE

John C.H. Wu: Judge, Diplomat, and the Vocation to Public Service

TONGXIN LU

When I was a child, I always wanted to be a diplomat. I do not remember exactly from where I got that idea. Perhaps I was fascinated by international travels or was ambitious about bringing countries together on a grand scale. Even though this childhood dream of mine never came to fruition, what has stayed with me over the years is a passion for learning about the lives of those who have changed the political history of their nations. Two of my favorite Chinese diplomats are Dr. John C. H. Wu, ambassador to the Vatican, and Lou Tseng-Tsiang (Lu Zhengxiang), ambassador to Belgium and Russia, who later became a Benedictine monk.[1] Since this essay is about the lay vocation, I will only discuss Dr. Wu.

Dr. Wu (1899–1986) was one of many Chinese intellectuals who contributed to his country's legal, political, and religious developments when China was undergoing overwhelming transitions. In 1912, after decades of political and cultural turmoil, the last Emperor of the Imperial Chinese Court abdicated in favor of the Republic. The capital was in a ferment, political circles were seething with tension, and the whole country was disturbed and agitated. The work of national renovation was finally possible thanks to the leadership of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen (1866–1925), who served as the first president of the Republic of China. The new-born Republic needed a legion of men and women who would labor intensely both in depth and breadth for a complete renewal of China in every sphere of life.

Wu grew up in the early years of the 20th century in Ningbo, near Shanghai, just before the fall of China's Imperial system. As the world around him was being transformed from ancient to modern, Wu's early education combined both classical Confucianism and new learning from the natural sciences of the West. English was already the second language in all schools, and Wu began to learn it at the age of nine. In 1916, he married Theresa Li Wu (1899–1959), and they eventually had thirteen children. In 1917, Wu began to study law at the Comparative Law School of China in Shanghai, which had recently been opened by the American Methodist Mission. There Wu converted to Methodist Christianity from Confucianism. Wu graduated from Law School in Shanghai in the summer of 1920, and in the fall, he continued to study law in the U.S. and earned his J.D. at the University of Michigan Law School. While studying in America, Wu gradually drifted away from Christianity as he immersed himself in his legal studies. In 1921, Wu sent his first article from the *Michigan Law Review* to U.S. Supreme Court

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. (1841–1935), and the two began a friendship and correspondence on various topics in law and philosophy that lasted until Holmes' death.[2] From 1922–1924, Wu studied international law at the University of Paris and philosophy of law in Berlin.

After four years of studying in the West, Wu came back to China in 1924. He saw as his life's mission the work of bringing authentic justice to China and was eager to contribute to the cause of "saving China." Wu's letter to Holmes from Paris in his early twenties expressed his profound sense of duty and mission in this regard: "I shall get the best out of Paris; I shall read and write as much as I can; I shall observe and think as profoundly as possible. As a Chinese I have a country to save, I have a people to enlighten, I have a race to uplift, I have a civilization to modernize." [3] Wu, like most Chinese students of his generation, never thought of utilizing his higher education for a private career but used it as a means to serve his country. As Wu prepared to return to China, he indicated to Holmes that he was committed to his mission at all costs: "I tremble before my heavy task. To enlighten, to ennoble, to bring joy to the joyless, to procure minimum wages for the laborers, to provide human homes for human creatures, to take Life in hand and direct it to purer channels—these are some of the problems toward the solution of which I shall contribute my part."[4]

In the 1920s and 30s, Wu was a rising star in the field of law and played a leading role in shaping the development of law in China. In 1924, he began teaching at his alma mater, the Comparative Law School of China as a professor of law. He co-founded the *China Law Review* and dedicated the first volume to Holmes.[5] In only three years, Wu became the dean of his law school. In 1927, he was appointed a judge of the new Shanghai Provisional Court. As a judge, Wu attempted to establish true judicial independence, acting to uphold justice and the law regardless of possible political consequences. In 1933, Wu joined the Legislative Yuan [6] and was appointed by Dr. Sun Fo, son of former President Sun Yat-Sen, to draft China's new constitution. Wu wrote the preliminary version, which later became known as the "Wu Draft."[7] Externally, he enjoyed great worldly success and was widely regarded as among the best legal minds of his generation in both China and the West.

Spiritually, however, Wu confessed that he was pessimistic in the extreme.[8] The chaotic conditions in China—the political maelstrom of Chinese nationalism and the Western colonizing forces—contributed to Wu's pessimism. More deeply, it was his worldly philosophy of life that made him unhappy and restless. As the Sino-Japanese war began in July of 1937, throwing China into one of the worst disasters of the century, Wu had to take refuge in a Catholic friend's house where his friend introduced him to St. Thérèse of Lisieux and gave him the saint's autobiography to read. After reading *Histoire d'une Âme*, Wu decided to become a Catholic after years of being a nominal Christian and was conditionally baptized in the Catholic Church on December 18, 1937.

Many scholars who have written about Wu's life have treated his early legal career and later conversion to Catholicism as two distinct stories having little to do with one another. It might appear to be the case, since some of Wu's friends observed that once he became a Catholic, he had somehow lost his ambition. Nevertheless, Wu believed that to be contented with perishable things was not to be ambitious at all. In fact, Wu was more ambitious than ever in fulfilling his mission in China: rather than believing that Holmes' legal philosophy could save China, he trusted in Christ and his Church. In his early twenties, Wu had regarded himself as being on a mission for legal reform through the implementation of some contemporary Western legal principles. But he was unable to bring what he believed to be modern legal science to bear effectively on China's problems. After his conversion to Catholicism in his late thirties, his idea of legal reform, now interiorized and given a much more metaphysical and

theological foundation, became intimately linked with the moral virtue of justice. For Wu, the profession of law is noble because it is the handmaid of justice. He wrote, “To my mind, the excellence of justice consists in the fact that it is a compound of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. …The justice of a law or a judgment depends upon whether it is based on truth, whether it is directed toward the good life, and whether its dispositions are fittingly adapted to the end.”[9]

Wu viewed his diplomatic career as a sign of being called by God to pursue justice through public service. In the spring of 1945, he attended the inaugural United Nations conference in San Francisco for three months and was the principal drafter of the UN Charter in Chinese. Later that year, President Chiang Kai-Shek appointed Wu to serve as China’s ambassador to the Vatican. In 1946, Wu and his whole family (except the oldest son, who was married) sailed to Rome. As a diplomat, he presented his credentials to Pope Pius XII, the first time in the diplomatic history of the Holy See that a Catholic ever represented a non-Catholic nation. Wu described his public service as “the diplomacy of love” and told the Pope that

> I am keenly aware of the importance of my mission, and of my own unworthiness of it; for my mission is nothing less than to confirm and increase the intimate relation between the greatest spiritual power of human society and a people of the oldest oriental culture. The wedding between the two will be such a momentous event in the history of this, God’s world, that the marriage of Cana would be viewed in the light of eternity as its prefiguration.[10]

When Wu was living with his family in Rome, he was called back by the Prime Minister Dr. Sun Fo in February 1949 for an urgent consultation about the future of the Nationalist government. It was dangerous to return to China at that time and difficult for Wu to leave his family in a foreign land. But Wu agreed to face this challenge. The day before his departure for China, he wrote to the Holy Father and asked him to pray for him that he may be guided by the Holy Spirit in the world of politics. Wu wrote, “O Holy Father, pray for me that I may face my tasks fearlessly in the interests of love and justice and for the glory of Christ and His Church. By nature, I am a weak child, afraid of danger and sacrifice. Only the grace of God can make me strong and ready to make sacrifices whenever they are called for.” When he returned to China, Dr. Sun Fo asked Wu to join his Cabinet and offered him the position of Minister of Justice. Wu’s friends urged him not to accept the position because of the instability of the government. Wu believed, however, that as a Christian, sacrifice was his vocation. After careful thought and an agreement from the Acting President to guarantee true judicial independence, Wu accepted the position with the spirit of a martyr and inspired his friends to join him. Even though the Cabinet fell shortly after Wu’s acceptance, Wu secured a moral victory of deep self-denial and sacrifice. With the decline of the political situation in China and his increasing personal interest in study and teaching, Wu decided to quit his diplomatic post and devote the rest of his life to education and the spiritual life.[11] Even though Wu left his diplomatic position in 1949, he nevertheless lived out his vocation to public service with love and integrity.

Tongxin Lu is a Ph.D. candidate at the John Paul II Institute and a St. John Paul II Fellow at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine. She is currently writing her dissertation on Dr. John C.H. Wu and the Evangelization of China.

[1] Lou Tseng-Tsiang (1871–1949) served as Prime Minister of China in the 1910s and was appointed by Pope Pius XII as the abbot of a Benedictine abbey in Belgium in 1946. He wrote

about his diplomatic career and spiritual journey in *Ways of Confucius and of Christ* (Burns & Oates, 1948 [1st ed.]).

[2] The Wu-Holmes letters are available in digital format at the archives of the Harvard University Library.

[3] John C. H. Wu, *Beyond East and West* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 91.

[4] *Ibid*., 106.

[5] At this point of his life and career, Wu looked to Holmes as his primary role model, both as a legal philosopher and as a guide in the art of living. Later in his life, though Wu had a revised estimate of Holmes, he nevertheless, remained grateful to him throughout his life.

[6] Yuan is the Chinese name for "branches" or "courts." The Legislative Yuan is one of the five branches (called "*w□-yuàn*") of government stipulated by the Constitution of the Republic of China, which follows Sun Yat-sen's *Three Principles of the People*.

[7] For the history of Wu's Constitution, see here.

[8] Wu, *Beyond East and West*, 222.

[9] John C. H. Wu, "Toward a Christian Philosophy of Law" in *Women Lawyers Journal*, 37, no. 4 (Fall 1951): 35.

[10] Wu, *Beyond East and West*, 326.

[11] After he left Rome, he became a teacher and a world-class author. He taught philosophy at the University of Hawaii from 1949 to 1951 and law at Seton Hall University from 1951 until his retirement in 1968. During this period, he also wrote books on law, philosophy, Christianity, Chinese religion, and poetry. Dr. Anthony E. Clark in a recent article on the 2018 China-Vatican agreement claims that when discussing Sino-Vatican relations before 1949, no one can ignore Dr. John C. H. Wu's important contribution.

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

FEATURE ARTICLE

Poustinia: The Desert Where the Word Speaks

FR. DAVID MAY

When Catherine de Hueck Doherty first thought of serving the poor in the slums of Toronto in the 1930s, she envisaged what she called "a *poustinik* way of life"—spending the mornings in prayer and fasting for the world, especially for the disadvantaged, and serving those in need in a direct way in the afternoons. (*Poustinia* is Russian for "desert" or for a place of solitary prayer; a *poustinik* is one who lives in the poustinia.) She would earn her keep by doing humble services, or taking enough work for her most basic needs, while living among the people she felt called to serve. For the way of life of a poustinik is not simply a life apart from the world, but a way of existing for the world and for its salvation. She was adapting to new circumstances in a New World different from the Russia she had left behind when the Communists took over in 1917. Different, but, given the severely depressed economy, not so much as to be invulnerable to atheistic communism and its glittering promise of economic transformation for the benefit of the poor and the working class.

Catherine intended to carry out this work with the blessing of her bishop—Neil McNeil, Archbishop of Toronto—as a lone apostle. However, things did not turn out as she had planned. She had been discussing her ideas in a small group studying the social encyclicals of the popes and some of its members now wanted to join her! Her enthusiasm for the Gospel was apparently infectious. Their wish presented Catherine with a great difficulty, for it seemed to directly contradict the very nature of the vocation she thought herself called to. She brought her dilemma to the Archbishop, who was to her mind (from her Russian Orthodox upbringing) the "father of her soul," in order to secure his discernment. This very wise man told her she had a vocation 50 years ahead of its time, and that she should accept these five young people for the work that God evidently had in mind. For it seemed the Lord was aiming to start some type of new community that would be obedient to the local Ordinary, dedicated to living among and working for the disadvantaged, and remain entirely lay in nature. So much for the idea of poustinia. It appeared to be put on hold for the time being. But the original dream never left Catherine's heart or consciousness. Always the longing remained for a form of solitude that was also at the service of humanity.

Now some 30 years have passed, and Catherine has been through many adventures and misadventures living community life at the service of the poor. The movement which was called Friendship House in those years had begun well in Canada and then suddenly collapsed

through various circumstances and lack of support. Yet soon it began again in the United States, notably in Harlem, Chicago, and Washington, DC as a movement promoting principally interracial justice. Then came more difficulties, and this time Catherine was more or less ushered out of her own community due to conflicting visions of both the apostolate itself and the exercise of authority in the community.

In 1947 came a third try, this time back in Canada, in rural Ontario, in a little village called Combermere, about 200 miles northeast of Toronto. Within a few years the nascent community, called Madonna House, began to flourish, with missions to the poor thriving not only locally, but also in places as far-flung as the Yukon, Arizona, and Alberta. Membership was growing steadily. Virtually no one was expecting that in a very short time the Church would begin to go through years of massive change, renewal, and upheaval stemming from the Second Vatican Council. When Pope John XXIII made public his desire to call a council, Catherine sensed the need for prayer and fasting, because of the immensity of what was being proposed and the possibilities inherent in this for both good and evil. It was at this moment that she reached back into her Russian past and brought forth a word lying dormant for many years. That word was *poustinia*. She introduced the term to the community and invited them to begin to take time, perhaps one day a month, and spend it in prayer and fasting. This was becoming, in any event, a recognized necessity for lay apostles involved in an extremely challenging apostolate on-site and serving the poor. But she also saw it as a call to a more universal awareness of the needs of the Church and the world in a time of flux, change, and crisis.

Catherine herself began to spend time in an actual cabin which was simply called a "poustinia." Other cabins were also built in order to provide space for the growing demand. And many guests who were coming to visit the community also wanted to take advantage of this time of silence, prayer, fasting on bread and water, and reading the Word of God. Here, at last, was the opportunity to live out more fully the original call from God, though not in the way originally understood.

It was not until 1975 that various teachings of Catherine about the poustinia were compiled, edited, and put together in a book by that name published by Ave Maria Press. An immediate success, it has since gone through several editions and been translated into a number of languages. But here's the interesting and even strange thing about this book: It is written by someone who always longed to be in the poustinia but was prevented from doing so because of the demands of an extremely active apostolate. Even in the 1960's, when time and space began to be available, she was taken up in the foundational years of teaching the spirit of Madonna House to its young membership. Yet she writes about the journey inward and its many aspects in such an authoritative fashion, one might think she had spent the previous 30 years or so in a kind of solitude, or at most, on the edge of society rather than some 25 years in such bustling places as Toronto, New York, and Chicago.

On the outside it appears her life was completely given over to the service of the poor and to the formation of Catholic laity. What kind of spirituality speaks of the interior life as central to faith yet never loses sight of suffering humanity with which it is often engaged in a direct and personal way? Is it possible to be actively involved in the heart of society's struggles, and all the while be consciously journeying inward to meet the God who dwells within, drawing from that wellspring gifts of wisdom, compassion, and generosity for the sake of those in need? Or as Catherine put it: falling in love with God who was incarnate for our sake leads naturally to falling in love with human beings for whom the Son of God laid down his life.

I was far from understanding such talk, however, when I arrived in Combermere in 1972, a

college dropout from Maryland. I came to Madonna House with a specific purpose in mind: to find out if Jesus Christ was real or not. I was a practicing Catholic. I ended up there because I wanted to be in a Catholic environment of some kind rather than a secular one. I was yet another seeker of that generation who through a variety of circumstances found his way to rural Ontario and to the community founded by Catherine Doherty. Very quickly I was plunged into the daily life of the community—communal prayer, meals in common and definitely not in silence (Madonna House is a very hospitable, talkative community), daily manual labour, some little free time for reading and recreation.

I first met Catherine Doherty during evening "tea-time" in a room that serves as a combination library, dining room, recreational space, and listening post. She was making her slow way, going from table to table, introducing herself particularly to the new guests, many of whom were in their early 20s like myself. My table was the last one she visited. She looked at me with piercing blue eyes that seemed to look at me, but through me to some far-off place, and then offered me a pamphlet containing a reflection she'd written on evangelical poverty. But I ignored the pamphlet and went straight to what was most important to me: "B (her nickname), in John's Gospel Jesus says, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life'; I want to believe it but I can't. What should I do?" Her response was immediate. "Oh! You're not ready for this yet," and with that she took her poem on poverty and put it back in her basket. "What you're asking about is faith. How does one come to faith? Sweetheart, that's very simple. I'll show you."

With that this 75-year-old woman turned to the nearby wall, upon which was hanging an icon of the Lord. She made a sign of the cross, bowed deeply, and then lay prostrate on the floor before that humble image of Christ. She lay there, very still, for what seemed like an extremely long time. Then slowly, with the help of her cane, she got back on her feet and made as if to walk away, then turned, winked at me, and said, "A couple nights of that, and leave the rest to God!" Then she left the room. As time passed, I began to see, ever so slowly at first, the truth of her words. Humble oneself before God, and wait in patience, crying out to him. No other activity quite replaces it. And, yes, like nearly every other guest at that time, I wanted to go "into the poustinia," that is, to spend 24 hours in one of those log cabins, alone with God, with nothing to read but the Bible and nothing to eat but bread. I did that. It was a good experience. I touched the reality of silence in a profound way, perhaps for the first time.

Through Catherine's teaching, I learned to be alert to the word of God which might come while reading the Scripture in the poustinia. (It did from time to time.) But that was not all. The eternal Word of God is guiding all of life according to his mysterious purposes, and He makes his will known to us at any time or place He chooses—while working, walking along, while reading the sports pages, while getting dressed in the morning, driving a car—God can speak to us at any time. It is quite up to him!

Time passed. I joined the community, worked at the farm for a number of years as cheesemaker, and from there was sent to the seminary. After 35 very busy years of active ministry, I was allowed to enter the poustinia full-time, that is, three days "in" and 4 days "out" with the community. But long beforehand, I had begun to learn about "the poustinia of the heart" that deep place within one's soul where God dwells. We usually don't stay in that place for long; we are distracted and taken up with concern for many things, but the poustinia of the heart is always with us, always beckoning. I first discovered it the day Christ revealed himself to me at the centre of my deepest place of anguish. Suddenly, there He was, sharing my pain completely, filled with compassion and not with bitterness as I was at times. In his eyes the peace of a majestic king who has conquered the enemy and won a great victory. He was offering me a share in that victory, a pure gift of his love. And, yes, it was a cheesemaking day, so off I went to make the cheese, a changed man.

> Now I become as one on fire with love of him and of all humanity across the world. Now it is not I who speak. I speak what God tells me to speak. When my immersion into his immense silence has finally caught fire from his words, then I am able to speak. I can speak because his voice is sounding loudly and clearly in my ears, which have been emptied of everything except him. Now only his name is on my heart, constantly; it has become my heartbeat.[1]

Father David May has been a priest of Madonna House for 38 years and living in poustinia since 2016.

[1] Catherine Doherty, *Poustinia: Encountering God in Silence, Solitude and Prayer* (MH Publications, 2000).

Keep reading! Our next article is *Fit for Mission: Forming the Young in a Homeschooling Community* by Marie Hansford-Jones.

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

WITNESS

Fit for Mission: Forming the Young in a Homeschooling Community

MARIE HANSFORD-JONES

The journey from being a carefree child to a self-possessed young person, apt for the service of both God and neighbour, has always been a long and arduous one. Most, if not all, of its sojourners fall many times along the way. In our day this transition seems harder to accomplish than ever before.

Over the last decade my husband and I have welcomed over 60 young people into our home, each one staying anywhere from two weeks to three years. This has given us great insight into the struggles young people are facing today and how quickly things have changed since we were leaving school. The vast majority of these young people are from practising Catholic families and have a very deep love for their faith and for their fellow men, a love which sets them apart from the average young European. In helping them, we ourselves have been helped to become more human. Some of these young people struggle to a greater extent than others. What strikes me is that those whose wounds run deepest, are those whose identity and sense of purpose are weak. Those who know they are part of a family and community seem to be able to weather life's storms with more agility. Divorce and family breakdown play a major part in undermining this sense of identity: but so do other factors such as social media and the pressure to conform.

My working background is in youth ministry, working with teenagers and young adults, particularly within the context of Christian formation. I still occasionally go into schools to speak to the students about the plan God has for them. This work has given me a unique perspective on the lives many young people are living, very different from the sheltered home life I knew, and the one in which my own children now live. The great majority have not been given a moral compass: they find it hard to know right from wrong. By contrast, those young people who do have strong moral convictions are at risk of being considered judgmental or intolerant: more often than not, they keep a low profile.

The pressures young people feel today are far removed from what I experienced as an emergent young woman. Many young people have told me that they feel pressure to perform academically, to be physically attractive, to be popular, to think in a particular way, to "accept everyone"—code for accepting everything—to speak in a particular way, to be conscientious

and successful; yet little care is taken of their spiritual or emotional well-being. The expectation that their private lives, so often in tatters (e.g., nights spent at the homes of separated parents, grandparents, or friends) should be embellished and shared with the world via social media does not in any way help them feel a strong sense of identity.

Despite having witnessed the grim realities which stare many youngsters in the face, I find myself surrounded by young people who are thriving and developing into confident, competent and contented human beings. Our home and immediate environment feels like an oasis teeming with life in a barren wasteland. This is because my husband, five children and I have as our closest neighbours four fabulous Catholic families. Between us all we have 21 children whom we are homeschooling. We have lived here since our eldest was a year and a half old.

We are not an official community, simply a group of families and single people living alongside each other, attempting to carry out God's work in our lives. As with all families, we are all very different, and whilst there are many things we join forces for, we are still able to maintain our familial autonomy.

Once a month we set aside a day to work together on those projects from which everyone benefits. It might be preparing the barn for a performance or turning it into a seasonal gym or maybe repairing the raised vegetable beds, collecting manure for the garden, laying a new path, oiling the outside of the chapel, reseeding the lawns, weeding or preparing hanging baskets. Everybody gets involved and even the smallest children have overalls and work gloves! We also celebrate Holy Mass together and have times of Eucharistic adoration for anyone who wishes to come.

In many ways it is similar to the rural community in which I grew up in the Scottish Highlands where people were dependent on each other for their mere survival, so remote were we and so long and tedious the winter months. As children we felt welcome in the homes of many of our neighbours, including those without children. We would often go and sit with the elderly in their homes, listening to their tales and hoping for the odd biscuit. Our situation today differs, however, in as much as we are intentional about creating a particular environment for our families and the others who live alongside us. The adults among us have spent many hours discussing the needs of each family, coming up with strategies for meeting these ever-changing needs as well as possible and brainstorming ideas for activities, projects and also boundaries that will enable our children to flourish. Whilst one of the benefits to living alongside other like-minded families is sharing so much, it can also be problematic when our children want spend all their time with these friends, being reluctant to focus on school work if they know their friends are playing outside. We also have to find ways of carving out family time for ourselves.

However, the active concern of our friends and neighbours has also helped in teaching our children lessons we would have had difficulty in imparting by ourselves. There is a great benefit in being surrounded by adults who want to be instrumental in helping our children become the people God made them to be. Whilst most of our children's education is done within the family home, we do pool our resources and are therefore able to offer our children learning opportunities which would be hard to access otherwise. One of our neighbours is a science teacher by profession and teaches each of the different age groups for an hour each week. Another teaches art, and another is a brilliant builder and often leads big construction projects. Others take responsibility for teaching the catechetical program, and some are beautifully musical and will lead the singing for different liturgical seasons. As I write, we are in the final throes of preparing for a production of C.S. Lewis's "The Horse and His Boy", with

which everyone gets involved.

It is beautiful to watch our young people mature into confident and competent individuals each with their own strengths and interests. Nurtured as they are within an environment where they know they are accepted, loved and valued, they have largely escaped from the pressure to conform to superficial fashions and fads. I am sure it is this freedom to just "be" that has allowed them to flourish. The fact that all of the older children here have a strong faith and a genuine relationship with God reflects the example and care of everyone in our small community.

Marriage is a beautiful sacrament, designed to help a person to grow to holiness through the love, support and dedication of their spouse. It is the source from which a community of love can spring. Friendships mirror this, providing practical help in moments of need, giving a different perspective in more challenging moments, or pointing out accomplishments when all one can see is failure. Being surrounded as we are by friends adds another layer of insulation to the cold realities of life that can cause families to falter. I find it easy, as a busy mother, to feel as though I'm doing a poor job of everything I turn my hand to and that the day is too short to accomplish only the mere essentials; yet when I step outside my own small world these problems seem to shrink. So many times I have shared a struggle with a neighbour and, because they know my situation so well, they have been able to suggest a different way of looking at things, which is exactly what I needed to hear. Sometimes, as occasionally happens, when one altercation follows another they are there offering to look after the children, cook meals, take my bins out, walk the dog, feed the chickens: or even clean my house!

I am often struck by the depth of understanding our young people have in matters of faith and morals. This is due in great part to Sofia Cavalletti's *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd*, which encourages and teaches children contemplation and enjoyment of God. From the age of three our children have been drawn into a deeper and deeper relationship with their creator and Lord and know him on a personal level. It is also due to the classical approach to education we have adopted. Among other things, we use *The Mother of Divine Grace School Program* for Catholic home educators, which places great importance on the development of the mind.

The ultimate object of all this is of course God himself, and we are fortunate enough to have easy access to weekday Mass. It often makes me laugh when I realise that my children are keen to get there on time because they don't want to be the last in the chapel; or worse, not being present at all for something which all their peers see as normal part of the day. Whilst peer pressure might not be the healthiest reason to attend Mass, I am relieved to know that they are being motivated by their friends to make good choices: with maturity, they will have acquired a habit which will enable them to appreciate the beauty and merit of the divine mystery.

From my kitchen window, I love to watch as hordes of children clamber, with such speed and agility, on the giant climbing frame in our garden. As soon as school is through for the day the children rush for the door and, unless they are playing on the said climbing apparatus, might not be seen again until supper time. The freedom this gives is good for the inquisitive soul. To have the time and space to explore the outdoors without constant supervision from parents is a rare luxury. Apart from our own gardens, we have common areas for prayer, play, gardening or building. The children are encouraged to take on the various tasks which need to be carried out in order to maintain the beauty and safety of the shared gardens. It is great to see the older teenagers helping the younger children, and a general openness to work for the common good. In this way our young people are becoming competent at many practical tasks which will pay dividends in their adult lives.

I have heard people say that by creating a sheltered Christian environment for our families, we are trying to protect our children from the real world: that they will be lost when we finally let them loose. Rather, I see our community as a seed-bed, where young people can mature into confident human beings. We do our part by focusing our energy on the development of a strong Christian identity, intimacy with God and concern for others. When the time comes for our children to fly the coop, they should be well prepared to carry out the mission entrusted to them. To set the world ablaze with the love of God, just as early evangelisers like St Augustine did, after being formed in the monasteries and seminaries of their time.

Marie Hansford-Jones lives in rural Surrey in the UK, with her husband, five children and a sister with Down's syndrome. She loves homeschooling, the outdoors, art and music.

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

WITNESS

A Missionary Family

EMILIA HENNEMAN

Remember the song “Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart”? I remember at age nine tearing up as I sang that song at Mass with all my heart. Inside, I was praying “Yes, Lord, send me!” Even then, I had the seeds of a missionary desire in my young heart.

Five years later, my parents decided it would be good for our family to experience a different way of life before we four children became too absorbed by different activities. Shortly thereafter, we took our first trip abroad, flying to Bombay (Mumbai) and then traveling further by land to a remote village in the state of Andhra Pradesh. This is where we stayed for the next seven months, at a Catholic mission run by a priest and ten religious sisters. There was a boarding school for 73 boys on the second floor of our house. They taught us how to hand-wash our clothes at a water pump, eat rice and soup with our hands, and kill a chicken. I was devastated when it was time to leave.

Life was never the same after being exposed to the world beyond my Portland, Oregon suburb. All I wanted to do was go out into the world again, to explore God’s beautiful creation, but I had to finish high school first. The summer before senior year, my parents allowed me to return to India alone to meet Mother Teresa and work with her sisters. Then I went to college, volunteered in Belize for a year and studied theology at the John Paul II Institute in Washington, DC.

After discerning that God was not calling me to religious life—which I thought had to be the case for me to be a missionary—I met and married Nick. He shared my love of the Catholic faith, travel, and service. We were married in 2010, and by 2017 we had five children and had moved four times. Nick and I worked hard—he outside the home, I in the home—so we could afford a big comfortable house for our young family, as well as a Catholic education, martial arts and swim lessons, occasional beach weekends, home improvements, in short, all the things that meant giving a good life to our kids. On date nights, I’d sometimes share my desire of taking our children to a foreign country one day, just for a couple of weeks or a summer. It would be good for them to see poverty first-hand and do some works of mercy. Though he had never been on a mission trip, Nick shared this desire. Not now, however…some years down the road. In the meantime, we would work hard, looking forward to that trip and save money to

travel more in retirement.

I did not want to become too comfortable in what I knew was, by most standards in the world, a luxurious lifestyle. In an attempt to simplify our life and prioritize family, I decided to switch to a "dumb" phone, declutter the house, and try homeschooling. We also kept our old minivan instead of upgrading as our tiny way of being in solidarity with the poor and making less waste.

In the summer of 2017, a family came to our parish to help with Vacation Bible School. I recognized them from a Catholic newspaper a year earlier as the family who were going into missions with an organization called Family Missions Company (FMC). My heart leapt—I had said a prayer that I could meet them someday, and here they were! I invited them for dinner and asked all kinds of questions about their mission life. Although we enjoyed their company, the lifestyle didn't sound very glamorous. What struck me most was that they were an ordinary family like us. As Nick and I waved goodbye, I told him, "I thought maybe I would feel called into missions like their family, but I guess God took that desire away. I definitely don't want to live like that," and we shut the door behind us.

Six months later, however, it felt like something was missing in our lives. One night it dawned upon me to look up that same missionary family and see how they were doing. When I went to the FMC website and clicked "Meet our Missionaries," my jaw dropped; I saw many large, young Catholic missionary families. People were doing this?! I read all the family bios aloud to Nick. Then I read everyone's blogs. My questions were answered—FMC was started by a lay Catholic family. It had 300 missionaries in 10 countries preaching the Gospel and serving the poor. Becoming missionaries meant making a two-year commitment. I was ready to sell the house immediately! But what about the kids? If this was our vocation as a couple, then this was our kids' vocation too. Why *wouldn't* we do this? Nick shared his reservations—he didn't feel comfortable leaving for two years without having a job when he came back. He had a family to support. Though we had no immediate answers, we knew God did. We started praying and placed our lives in His hands.

Things started to fall into place, miraculously. First, Nick found out that he could take two back-to-back sabbatical years. Then we attended a "Come and See" weekend which confirmed everything we were hoping for. Moreover, FMC accepted our application; they thought we could do this! Our house sold in a couple of weeks. We either got rid of our things or stored them in a donated space. A week before leaving, we had some other news to share: we were expecting another baby. People asked me if I was scared to take my kids or have a baby abroad, but I was never afraid. The experiences that Genie Summers, co-founder of FMC, shared in her books about her family in missions reassured me of God's protection and shield over my family.

In September, instead of being in school, our kids were with us at "Intake," a three-month missionary formation program. After a period of study and preparation, we spent one month at a mission post in Mexico. Our family shared one bedroom, something I never would have believed possible. At the end of this trip, each missionary was handed a sealed envelope with their first year's mission post assignment. Ours was Costa Rica. The second year, we could decide to stay or go somewhere else. I used to avoid bringing all five kids to Costco, yet here we were going to take them abroad to Central America.

We went home at Christmas to fundraise and prepare for Costa Rica. There were many generous people eager to help with the mission work. They became our partners. As Mother Teresa said, "Some go by giving, others give by going." We are the part of the Body of Christ

who goes to the foreign missions, and we are so grateful for the part that supports us financially and in prayer, and the part that stays home and evangelizes in our own parish.

We had a few things to do before settling into our small town of Coopevega. Our first stop was Guatemala for a month to study Spanish. The practice boosted our confidence in speaking. Then we flew to the capital San Jose and drove the five hours along winding and bumpy roads to our simple but clean, little yellow house. For the next two weeks, we unpacked and got the kids enrolled in the local public school, hired a housekeeper, and bought a car. We headed back to San Jose where little Felicity was born. My parents and sister and brother-in-law came to help for a couple of weeks. Then we headed back to Coopevega, our town near the Nicaraguan border, to finally settle in.

Our main parish has two or three priests who serve forty-two communities. Three religious sisters, the priests, our family and another missionary family are responsible for the seventeen communities in our zone. Some of the locations where we catechize and bring Holy Communion are quite remote, accessible only by unpaved roads. The priests can only reach some chapels once every three months, and many communities don't have any qualified catechists.

Getting started was slow and steady, but we had been advised to approach missions as a marathon, not a sprint. Father introduced us at Mass, and the congregation gave us a standing ovation. We had also been advised to start a routine right away, including our most basic commitments--daily personal prayer with Scripture, family prayer, community time with the other missionary family here, and one family day a week. We didn't even look for ministries for the first couple of months. Being a missionary is not primarily about doing; it's about being. Our vocation as missionaries stems from our identity as beloved children of God, which is revealed through our relationship with the Lord. Our daily prayer sustains us; without our prayer, we cannot be true missionaries.

After four months, we went on a family retreat to discern what ministries to become involved in. We had a list of over fifty possibilities. We alternated personal prayer with family sharing to discern where the Holy Spirit was calling us. We concluded that this first year, the Holy Spirit would like us to strive to live as a holy family, then be spontaneous and willing to help people as they come along, each with a unique challenge, and finally, through friendship to journey with people in their relationship with Jesus. It was very simple.

Although we have not met personally with the bishop yet, he sent us a message: if you do nothing else but just live here, that is enough. I was confounded by that message, but it comforts me often. Sometimes it seems like we are doing so little—not building a hospital, orphanage, or a business, not running retreats or conferences. However, we are open to wherever the Holy Spirit leads us. We do things such as building houses, bringing the sick to a medical clinic, passing out food bags from our home, praying with people, encouraging them to consider marriage (which is not often considered here), teaching a baptism class, and hiring locals to plant a garden to feed the poor. Right now, we're looking at starting a sponsorship program for immigrant Nicaraguan high school students who need legal documents in order to work and receive health care. At first, our heads were spinning trying to juggle the kids, the projects, the visitors and our other responsibilities. Now, we are more used to it. Our home is in the middle of town, so it is a center of activity, not a place of rest. We were advised to take one day a week and one weekend a month away from our post in order to avoid burnout. This has helped.

On a typical day, Nick and I take turns taking time for personal prayer in the church across the

street. We get the kids to school and do supplemental homeschooling. People will stop by to ask for food or rent money or help with an infirmity. We meet and talk with them on our porch, pray, and either help them on the spot or discuss and let them know later what can be done. In the afternoon, we do whatever tasks need doing that day. In the evening, we pray as a family. On Saturday, we do ministry in one of the remote communities, sometimes go to the city for errands, and attend Mass. Sunday is a day of rest.

Sometimes people line up in front of our gate waiting to talk, and one of the most difficult responsibilities of being a missionary is deciding how, who, and when to help. For example, Jose is a twenty-year old man who was going blind, and, after discerning prayerfully, we decided to pay for special lenses that were supposed to prolong his vision. He traveled to the capital to the eye clinic, but then called to explain that it was too late; because he couldn't afford it sooner, his vision impairment had advanced too much. He no longer needed us to pay for anything. We grieved with him over the phone. He's not Catholic, but we share our Christian faith. Although he won't be getting the lenses now, this experience allowed us to journey with him. We ended up offering him, his brother, and his sister-in-law jobs in our garden.

God has been faithfully guiding our every step, but even so there are hardships. One week, all of my kids had a rash, headache, fever, vomiting, or all of the above. Then, I got my first migraine. Also, the news informed us that there were kidnappers at large. I was anxious about the kids. I also really missed having a couch, a living room, some chicken noodle soup, a house without bugs, a comfortable bed. How I was worshipping the idol of comfort and luxury! As I quickly realized that most of the world doesn't even have a house as nice as the one we have here. It seemed my whole life revolved around ensuring that neither I nor my family would suffer any discomfort when we were living in America. Blessed be God for removing us from those comforts and allowing us to live in closer solidarity with the poor. Though we are still far from living in true solidarity, the Holy Spirit is leading us step by step. I'm not sure if or when I will stop missing the comforts of home. However, what has become easier is persevering. I just envision myself following on the heels of Jesus, watching intently those heels as He leads me up and over mountains, and never being distracted or looking away.

Some days I feel like I'm not doing much—I have this vision of getting up in front of the congregation, preaching the Gospel from my heart to a church full of people and playing guitar while leading beautiful hymns. Then reality hits: I don't speak Spanish that well, and I can't play the guitar. This has been a lesson in putting what little I have at the disposal of the Holy Spirit, even my weakness.

The children enjoy the adventure of being here, the toucans in our yard, the monkeys down the road, and the challenge of learning Spanish. Some love school more than others, but overall they are happy. Some days they too are homesick for grandparents, holidays and comfort.

Life is wonderful here for Nick and me as a married couple. We are working together, sharing the roles at home and our ministries. He participates more in the parenting of the kids and also gets to lead and manage meaningful projects. We make decisions together, meeting often to brainstorm, delegate tasks and execute them. We are working as partners more than ever. Our greatest challenges here are the same as at home: the challenges of married life and parenthood. We continue to work on them both. Thanks be to God, Nick and I are in full agreement that we love this life of missions. Many couples struggle with only the husband or the wife feeling called to it, but we both feel called to be here.

In many ways, life is easier here than in the U.S. for us. Our family gets to spend all day together. The school schedule is more like part-time school, so we get to be with the kids more. We get to personally help people every day. We have a key for the church directly across the street. We live in a beautiful country where the people are extremely kind and life is much simpler. There are other American missionary families here, and we have support and continuing formation from the Family Missions Company. In fact, this is the first time in my life that I don't feel restless. I no longer need to know what we'll be doing in one, five, or ten years from now. My only goal is that we serve the Lord, anywhere that He may lead us, and He will take care of everything. As for the kids, I find consolation knowing that God called us here. They are His children first, and He will take care of them. We are here to serve, but we have already been so blessed ourselves. When God does one thing, He does a thousand!

I have an immense sense of peace and gratitude. There's no place I would rather be. Our plans are placed at God's feet. Each person in our family has the same title, down to our baby: we are all Catholic missionaries.

Emilia Henneman, along with her husband and six children, serves as a Catholic lay missionary in Costa Rica. You can learn more about the Henneman family on the Family Missions Company website.

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

WITNESS

A Young Priest Growing As a Father

FR. JACOB A. STRAND

The question caught me off guard. Nothing about it was out of place. I just hadn't been asked it before. "Why do you want to be a diocesan priest and not a religious?" Still young and wanting to make a good impression, I searched for some theologically impressive reply, but came up empty. This was a blessing because it forced an honest response. "Well, growing up I always admired my pastor. He was a father to the whole parish. I guess that's what I want to be too."

During the next decade of my life, I finished seminary formation, became comfortable doing priestly things as a parochial vicar, and completing extra theological studies. During this time, I interacted often with priests who were doctoral candidates, curial staffers, seminary formators, and professors. Being a parish pastor was not at the forefront of my mind. Then, just two years ago, I received an assignment as pastor to two parishes, four churches, and a school in Wisconsin farm country. I have discovered that, although my desire to become a pastor was dormant, it never disappeared. My current assignment has revived it: I have been introduced to the joy of being a spiritual father.

My parochial territory consists of many rolling hills. It would be easier to grow crops in flat fields, but much less aesthetically pleasing. Given a choice, most farmers would probably opt for this terrain over level fields, even though unpredictable topographic contours invite an unequal distribution of water flow that impacts part of the crop every year. Not all the land is farmable however, mostly because of the glaciers moving through the area 20,000 years ago, leaving erratic groupings of unexpected depressions and sudden peaks, which are now covered with hardwood forest.

This land was first settled by mostly German immigrants about two centuries ago. These pioneers were poor in everything but faith. They arranged themselves in small communities, worked hard and suffered much as they began cultivating the virgin soil. At the same time, the newly formed diocese was attempting to serve the Catholics in its massive territory. Priests would ride on horseback to find the Catholic communities and minister the sacraments to them. One can only imagine the happy relief the priest's visit occasioned, even if his stay was brief. There were babies needing the cleansing waters of baptism and couples desiring marriage. Much of the community undoubtedly desired to confess and receive the Eucharist. As the settlement expanded, it would become a greater diocesan priority and the people would

receive priests more frequently. If it grew large enough and boasted of a beautiful Church, it would become a parish and the people would earn a resident priest. The settlers now had their own spiritual father. They were no longer orphans.

But that was a long time ago. Nowadays most of these churches are used as photography studios or secular wedding chapels. Others have been demolished. Still others are retained by large parishes for occasional use. When I speak to old-timers about their parishes, they fondly rehearse all the pastors they knew, recounting to me the unique quirks of each one. When they arrive at the end of the list, their hearts sink as they tell me: “That’s when we lost our priest.” When I first began hearing this, I thought they meant the priest died. But he didn’t. It was just that they lost their own pastor. And this meant something in them died: they were orphans again.

Shortly after I began my current assignment, a few long-time parishioners from the smaller of my two parishes asked me, “Father, is it alright with you if we put your name on the sign outside of church?” I balked and requested a couple days to think about it. I had no desire to emphasize the man over the office, yet I was moved by their request. I sensed that they wanted to be reminded, every time they passed the church, that they still had a priest, whom they knew as a father and who was entrusted to them by the Archbishop. This particular man, this father, would show up to anoint their spouse in the hospital after being rushed to the emergency room, would challenge them with the Gospel by weaving it into their daily lives which he understood and appreciated, and would pray for their wayward children. In the end, I said: “Sure, that’s fine.” And they breathed a sigh of relief.

There may be droves of fallen away Catholics who are disgruntled by the bad decisions of clerics, scandalized by their sinful behavior, and put off by their selfish lifestyles. But there are still many who have experienced the worst of clerical decadence and still show up. Inevitably, a pastor will spend most of his time caring for these people. What they need more than anything else is a priest willing to be their father. Spiritual fatherhood exists at the convergence of the vertical and the horizontal. On the one hand, Christ, who is the image of God the Father, offers the paradigm of priestly fatherhood. On the other hand, the needs of the people draw out the spiritual fatherhood from within a priest’s soul, just as the needs of a child elicit the fatherhood from within the masculinity of a man. A priest brings Christ to the people in a way with which they are familiar, as a father. This paternity of the priest is highlighted within a parish, which is an extension of the parishioners’ families. My pastoring experience over the past couple years has reminded me time and again that spiritual fathers, influenced from above and below, are both with people and with God.

Christ walked with his disciples for miles and miles, he fished with them for hours and hours, and he ate and drank with them day after day. He who knew them had to become known by them. Likewise, a father spends his life with his children. He teaches them not primarily in a classroom, but through daily experiences. He shows them how to work, he plays games with them, and he converses with them. He doesn’t count the hours: his fatherhood is not a job but a mission that demands only one thing—because it demands everything.

My parishioners want a priest who is present. When I began my assignment, there was talk of tearing down the rectory that stands five steps from the church, and purchasing an off-property residence for the priest. But a majority of the parishioners were quick to share with me their resistance to this idea. Put simply, the parish was part of their family, and they didn’t want an absent father. They wanted to be able to water his flower beds and knock on his door when they needed to talk. They wanted the comfort of knowing that Christ not only lived in the tabernacle of the church, but also in the man who lived next to church. More than being a

talented preacher or a competent administrator, they wanted a father who found them worthy enough to be with them. They didn't want to be sheep without a shepherd.

When I assumed my current posting, I initially perceived it as somewhat of a project, having been brought up with a focus on hard work, good time management and productivity. I observed the parish, recognized areas in need of improvement, and listed things I wanted to do to bring the parish to a better place. But my parishioners soon taught me that there was a much more urgent need that wasn't on my list: namely, themselves. They did not want me to be in my office pushing papers and brainstorming plans for solving problems. They wanted me to be with them; so they could tell me who they are related to in town, what their children's favorite sports are, and where they have seen signs of big whitetail bucks. Noticing and appreciating this desire shifted my personal priorities. If I were to father these people who were assigned to me, I had to spend time with them. Only after showing them that I loved them enough to visit their homes, shake all their hands after every Mass, and show up at their 5th grade daughters' basketball games, would they trust me enough to lead them. Nearly every page of the Gospels recounts Christ leading his disciples. He turns his face toward Jerusalem, and they follow. He tops strict justice with mercy, and they listen. So too a father guides his children. He not only is with his family: he gives it direction.

A few weeks after beginning my assignment, the finance council told me a cell phone company would like to erect a tower on our property and significantly compensate the parish. "What should we tell them?" they asked. Still new, I didn't even know the parish property lines. I couldn't even begin to weigh the monetary reimbursement against the aesthetic damage to the landscape. Nonetheless, these committed parishioners wanted to follow my lead. I've noted that most of my parishioners want to follow their priest: not just in trivial dealings with cell phone companies, but also in matters of ultimate importance such as the moral life, liturgical worship, prayer, and education. In these areas, a spiritual father orientates his family to God, or it will be lost.

I have always had an instinct for consulting with others before making decisions. Though a commendable trait, it also masks a hidden desire to please people, to not only make the best decision but also the most agreeable one. As pastor, I have experienced how this adolescent insecurity can preserve the status quo and restrict a parish from interior growth. A spiritual father leads by acting upon deep interior convictions formed by prayer, study, and discussions with trusted friends. He needs fortitude to protect these decisions from the complaints of the displeased. He also needs humility to admit when the complaints are justified, for he leads most powerfully through his weakness.

The greatest way of directing a parish is neither through decisions nor words. In fact, it isn't active at all. A spiritual father's strongest act is actually a passive one: suffering. He must let his people's pain act upon him. Christ's passion is the paradigm for this. "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb 4:15). A true father would rather suffer himself than see his children suffer. Their pain pierces more deeply than his own. Nonetheless, when they suffer, as they inevitably will, he is there.

Whenever I receive the call, the world stops spinning, whatever was causing me stress disappears, and I brace myself. A parishioner committed suicide. A parishioner died in a car accident. A parishioner lost her child in the womb. Those grieving don't want words; they want to know they are not alone. So I get in my car and drive to them, wanting in some ways never to arrive; yet inevitably, I do arrive. As I enter the door, I am conscious of crossing the threshold that separates an anesthetized world from a raw world of pain. Those grieving only want one thing: Jesus. I will never get accustomed to feeling people's bodies shaking against

my own. If you got used to it, then it wouldn't hurt. When I was coming of age, notions of safety were drilled into me. Always wear a bike helmet, buckle your seatbelt, and never smoke cigarettes. Such messages instilled within me a desire to run from pain and suffering. Yet the more I grow as a spiritual father, the more I find God calling me to run toward such brokenness. My parishioners, too, invite me into it. They seem to intuit that my presence brings the presence of Christ, who gives their pain some purpose, some meaning.

A spiritual father may be with his people, he may lead boldly and even suffer lovingly: but if he is not with God, he will bring no life to a parish. The Gospels recount Christ escaping in prayer to be with the Father, which undoubtedly left a deep impression on his disciples. So too, when children see their father praying, they learn lessons incapable of being communicated with words. To some extent, the holiness of a parish depends upon the depth of its pastor's union with the Lord. As a spiritual father, this truth has moved from theory to reality. I see it daily. When my heart is open, the Lord uses my weakness as his privileged instrument of grace to change the hearts of those I love. This has brought about a new incentive to know and love God. It's not only for me, it's for them too.

The Church requires every pastor to offer Mass on Sundays and Holy Days, without exception, for the intention of the people entrusted to his care. Mediating between the people and God at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the climax of my life. By serving as a spiritual father, the peoples' prayers, pain, and sins, penetrate my body and soul. As I daily go to the altar and pray the Roman Canon, I beg the Father to "accept this oblation of our service." My priestly service at the altar, which draws upon my priestly service in the world, is nothing short of offering my existence, made one with Christ, to the Father in heaven.

Christ's Passion lays bare his spiritual fatherhood. At the Last Supper, he was with his Apostles whom he led. Afterwards, his suffering with them and for them began to intensify until he offered his life to the Father on the dead wood of the Cross that he brought to life through his resurrection. My experience as a parish pastor has invited me to closely follow the interior movements of this paschal mystery, uniting me to Christ, priest and victim, in ways I could have never have imagined.

Perhaps, without giving it much thought, this is what I noticed in my parish pastor as I was growing up. Like Christ, he was a true father to his family, which included my family, my relatives, and my friends. He was with us and with God, not for himself, but for our eternal benefit. He may have had no children on earth, but he had many whose names are written in heaven.

Father Jacob Strand is the pastor of Holy Trinity and St. Michael Parishes in Kewaskum, Wisconsin. He is also the chaplain of Seton Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

EDITORIAL

Adulthood: Bearing Fruit

THE EDITORS

When a plant grows to maturity, it bears fruit. This comes naturally. In the human situation too, bearing good fruit is not just something we adults are *supposed* to do, even less something we do only for others. It is something we *want* to do. We see this in the joy of a mother and father when a child is born and in the satisfaction we feel when we give life to those in need: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the lonely, the depressed, the addicted. We see it in the faces of the saints; in the face of a woman like Catherine Doherty. The law of charity is inscribed in our very being.

The present issue of *Humanum* looks at this principle as it plays out in the lives of a variety of individuals and groups. The seven recently beatified monks who gave hope, friendship, medical aid to—and ultimately their lives for—their Muslim brothers in Algeria; Madonna House, a lay community serving the poor in Combermere, Canada and across the world; an order of nuns in New York City who offer aid to unwed mothers; a new and thriving university movement giving life to students searching for a reason to live. We hear the witness of a young priest in charge of two rural parishes, on how fatherhood is the fruit of his service to his flock. We also profile a missionary family in Central America, witnessing to the goodness of married life, and a group of families in rural England living a form of the "Benedict Option" for the sake of their own children, as well as the many others they welcome into their homes. Finally, we look at one of the most notable Chinese Christian laymen of the 20th century, the jurist and diplomat John Wu.

In each case the fruitfulness is irrepressible. It is an *urge*. "The love of Christ urges us" (2 Cor 5: 14). As Catherine Doherty put it in her instruction to the maturing Madonna House communities: "Love is not an abstract thing… Love is a fire. It must spend itself. It must spend itself in service." Many people in our time ask what can truly give us happiness or personal fulfillment. It is this urge to reach out to the other, which is surely the mark of the fully mature human being: it springs forth in a life drawn from the center where the person is rooted. It is the *love of Christ* (for us) that urges us to reach out towards the "peripheries." This couldn't be more evident than in the lives of those presented in this issue: each of whom is as much planted in the center as they are actively moving out. This is why missionary fruitfulness is so much more *humanly* satisfying for both giver and receiver—compared to mere humanitarianism, as our review of a book about the great Dr. Paul Farmer and his notable

medical work in Haiti points out. For “man cannot live by bread alone.”

This is why Catherine Doherty is so central to our fourth issue on adulthood. A Russian émigrée, who rubbed elbows with Thomas Merton in New York at Friendship House, Catherine Doherty wanted to serve the poor. But it wasn’t until she discovered the “*poustinik* way of life”—a common life rooted in God’s charity for us (through solitary prayer, as well as fasting and the sacraments) that she fulfilled the full depth of her desire. She had to immerse herself in the depth of human poverty—the deepest human need—before she could really serve the poor. Doherty embodies the loving, humble service of which a truly mature human being is capable: rooted in what is central, and thereby empowered to reach out to the peripheries in the deepest way.

Léonie Caldecott is the UK editor of both Humanum *and* Magnificat*. With her late husband Stratford she founded the Center for Faith and Culture in Oxford, its summer school and its journal* Second Spring*. Her eldest daughter Teresa, along with other colleagues, now work with her to take Strat’s contribution forward into the future.*

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

RE-SOURCE: CLASSIC TEXT

“Spirit of the Constitution”

CATHERINE DOHERTY

The following article is a transcript of a talk given by Catherine Doherty on March 22, 1956 to the membership of the fledgling Madonna House community. Founded in 1947, this group of 20 to 30 mostly lay people and a few priests were already making a commitment based on the evangelical counsels and were in the process of exploring the canonical options available at that time, hence the references to “Constitution” and “the Institute.” In this talk, Catherine is at pains to give the spirit of her vision to the community, whatever its ultimate legal status in the Church.

The talk is reprinted here with the permission of Madonna House Apostolate.

The Spirit of the Institute is one of ardent zeal for the glory of God, the salvation of souls and the restoration of all things in Christ through Mary. You have come here by inspiration of the Holy Ghost to dedicate your life in this very humble Apostolate, hidden like the apostolate of Nazareth, or I should say, like Nazareth was, and like the Holy Family was—unknown, unsung, utterly undistinguishable outwardly—except for a cross, which many wear anyhow from the rank and file of everyday humanity.

What you do matters. But not much. What you *are* matters tremendously. And not only for yourself, but for the other aim, number two, of this Institute [*the first being “ardent zeal for the glory of God”—ed.*].

The second aim of this Institute is: to restore man and his institutions to Jesus Christ through Mary in the Lay Apostolate by means of work on any phase of Christian reconstruction. That’s the work that you do, but the way that you are going to do it depends on what you are.

The world is restored to Christ by being a flame. The zeal of my Father’s house consumes me. I cannot rest! This is you, unable to rest because you love. I shall arise and go and find my Beloved, for I shall not rest until my heart rests in him.

And ours are the words: “I sleep but my heart watcheth.” Because we are passionately, utterly, completely (or should be), as we progress along this road of our Institute, in love with God. We breathe, we live, we eat, we sleep, only for one reason—to serve Him whom our heart loves. To serve Him; to extend His Kingdom.

You have heard the plan of God outlined for you well enough. The miracle of that plan is that God invites you and me to participate in it. To put it perhaps a little more simply, pinpointing it to one space, one point of history in that plan of God: behold the Crucifixion. A simple Cross, a Man on it who thirsts—SITIO! Does He thirst for water? For wine? Maybe. But He also thirsts, above all, for souls.

The gesture of a lay apostle of Madonna House Institute is simple; the gesture of his or her life. "My life, Lord—for the zeal of your house consumes me—to bring you souls to assuage your thirst."

That is the vocation. That is the spirit of the Institute. That is what will make it function. The moment that spirit is lost, the Institute is dead! Even if it covers the earth. It matters not that we are many in number, that our shelves groan under books, that we have an army of nurses rendering services to all the sick, that we live to feed the poor; unless our hearts are filled with the charity of Christ and we burn with the zeal of bringing that charity, whose other name is love, we are like sounding brass. And nothing that we do registers. No restoration follows, only an extension of things that Communists do and pagans do these days, and social workers do. The difference between us and them is motivation. We do it because we cannot help doing it, because, like a person on fire, we *must* serve, because otherwise our love of God will simply tear us apart. And because any love serves.

Love is not an abstract thing. Love is not something that you can classify, weigh, organize. Love is a fire. It must spend itself. It must spend itself in service. Service is the dry wood to love that makes it into a bonfire that reaches on to eternity and burns there. What you and I have to be is a flame in this tight Stygian darkness, utter darkness of this world. A lamp to my neighbour's feet. A place where he can warm himself, his hands; a place by which he can see the face of God—for how can a man see in darkness? It is to *be*, to love, to burn, that we have come together! And who brought us? The Fire of Love, the Holy Ghost. Little flames, coming together, each growing, uniting in various patterns, according to the call of God as expressed by the bishops. Loving, burning, offering ourselves up in holocaust. "It is I that burn, Lord; consume me, take no notice of me in the sense of my weaknesses and my difficulties. Shape me unto Your likeness."

And we turn our face to God the Father, the Immense Sculptor. There we are; clay yesterday. Dust, we call it. And out of that clay, He fashioned man. Out of that clay, He fashioned man once, and blowing with His breath, He made him come alive and gave him a soul. Now, turning our face to God the Father, we say in all simplicity, "Once more, Lord, clay comes to you, but now clay with a free will. Of my own free will, I come. Shape me into the likeness of Thy Son. I know that before the face of the resurrected Christ will be shaped on my soul by Your hands, O Holy Hands, I have to be shaped into the likeness of the Man of Sorrows. Shape me. For that is the aim of my life. That is the desire of my soul, to be even as my Beloved. Here I am, Father, shape me."

And God the Father will bend toward me, and you, and in our poor human faces, in a manner of speaking—I speak more of souls—shape the likeness of the Christ in Gethsemane; the Christ of Pilate; the Christ sorrowful; the Christ persecuted, spit upon; the Christ flagellated, crowned with thorns, crucified. And then, someday, God the Father will come and say, "Now arise, for I desire to shape you in the likeness of my Son in glory." That's our vocation. That's the spirit of it: an utter surrender that knows no bounds. What is death to me, but entrance into life? …

I burn with a fire that will never be quenched, until it becomes one with the fire and the movement that is the Most Holy Trinity! Nothing matters except the Lord of Hosts, and His

will.

For into my ears constantly should come back again and again—of the members of this Institute—the words of Christ: “I have come to do the will of my Father”. And again the words of Scripture: “He was obedient unto death.” And so, burning with love, a holocaust of it, with a zeal that consumes me for the glory of my Father’s house, I look. How else can I surrender? And I hear, “I have come to do the will of My Father.”

And so, joyous that I have an answer, I say, “Lord, O Lord, I have come to do thy will. For if I do it, I too, do the will of thy Father. For thy will and the Father’s will, is one.” And so I see, in every moment of my day, in every step that I take, the will of God; the duty of the moment speaks to me in accents of a lover, literally.

And so I remember again: “He was obedient unto death.” Crosses are not fashionable in the 20th century, yet. The Iron Curtain has not enclosed this place, this little place we call the Free Nations. As yet, its shadow has not fallen over it, over you. It might. Then, another will give you a speech about a real cross. But the cross of Christ casts its shadow over all of us always. It is a simple death, but, oh, how profound! And how strange and how mysterious. It is a death that within itself carries the very seeds of life. It is the death that opens all doors; the death to self, simple, profound, complete.

When the “I” is no more, except to surrender oneself, then the hallways of the Kingdom of Heaven have come upon earth. Greater love has no man than he dies for his fellow man. Our vocation is of dying that we may live and give life to others. In proportion that I die, in that proportion my neighbour lives. In that proportion I bring the light of Christ, for I spoke of zeal and of fire and of light, but all fire and all light must have a container of some sort—fireplace, stove, lamp—to burn in. Death is that container, death to self. Death is the immense torch we can lift to push the darkness away. For what are we fighting against? We are fighting against not only the world, the flesh, and the devil, but against powers and principalities. And these can be only exorcised in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and by love.

Love, the mother of all virtues. Love, the fire that can alone push back the darkness of those powers and principalities. They thrive in darkness. Darkness covers so many things. Whispers become loud in darkness. Evil blends with it. It is so easy to bring doubt, to sow discord, to plant anger against one’s brother in darkness. What will make it disappear? Only one thing: love. Like a poisonous flower, hate flourishes in dank and dark places. In all kinds of marshes; in dead fields or lakes and rivers that used to be and are not anymore. There hate emanates its deadly, stifling, sweet, putrid perfume. Who shall venture into the kingdom of death and hate, real death, death to the soul? Only he who has died to self because he loves; and hence, obedient to the will of God, a lamp, a light, a torch, a bonfire, unafraid—he alone can walk in the darkness and conquer hate! For there is only one thing that conquers hate, and that’s love.

And so, there is our vocation. To burn. To die. So as to become a flame, so as to give room to Christ to grow in us; and once the feet of Christ touch through our feet this earth of ours, it blooms and is restored. Father Ledit [*a missionary and friend of the community—ed.*] told you, dedication is seen in a face. There is a radiance from that face that catches the shadows in another face and throws them out. …

In everyday life, as you trudge through this vale of tears, which it is, for you are always looking for the Promised Land, aren’t you? You don’t even mind that. You love God so much that you do not care when He will call you. Come a time when you wish to die simply because to live is difficult. But even then you shall say, “Another hundred years? O.K.” Because you are more interested in His will than even in heaven, for it might not be His will that you should be in

heaven at this moment when you desire it.

And so, in everyday life, what do we expect of you? Or why should I say, “I expect” because I am just the foundress; Well, maybe I could use the pronoun “I,” but what I think God expects of us: a great simplicity, an absolute naturalness. A humility that comes almost like the air, for who are we? In the line of apostles, we are the smallest, the littlest. We are lay people, consecrated, dedicated, I should say, but lay. We are very small. Remember what I always say. David looked at Goliath, and saw a brook, and in the brook he saw stones, little pebbles, and he had a childish sling. He bent down and picked pebbles up, put them in a sling and slayed Goliath.

The Lord is doing likewise. David is a prefiguration of Christ. The Lord looked at the world and saw the Goliaths of darkness waxing strong, sort of fat and blotchy, and taking away from Him the souls His Son died for. And there is His Son again, with the sling of His grace, bending down into the brook of life, and getting little pebbles—you and me—to place into His sling. It is up to God to shoot. What must we be as lay apostles? The little pebbles must be just this! Here is the hand of the Lord, and here are the pebbles. They must be shiny. The pebbles were worked over by the water, ready and still. Still on the palm of God’s hand, for Him to pick up and put into His divine sling, to shoot wherever He wants to. That’s all. But, oh, what goes into being still. Chastity, poverty, obedience, humility, simplicity, naturalness, death to self, and charity goes into lying still in the palm of God’s hand, content to rest there.

How are you going to achieve all this? What a program! Almost superhuman. Of course, superhuman. Let us call it supernatural. The only way you are going to find it is in prayer—that strength to stand still, to die to self in the duty of the moment, which for you never will be glamorous, always will be monotonous. … The monotony of variety will get hold of you. New faces with old problems, always the same treadmill, always the feeding of the souls, and always the feeding of the body. Always the clothing of the naked, and the clothing of a naked mind. Always the nursing of tired and sick bodies, and tired and sick minds, and tired and sick souls. Always the same story repeated *ad nauseam* and *ad infinitum*.

To the person saying it, new; to you, a gramophone record. What is going to make a gramophone record alive? Pulsating? The Lord. The vocation to love will give you the courage, the all- consuming zeal to listen again and again; to clothe again and again, to nurse again and again, to feed again and again, with the zest of a young person going on his first date.

And so, in the splendour of the greyness of everyday, your days will be spent, like a rosary without mysteries, just one chain without any interruption. And yet all the rosary—the mystery of love, the love of a soul in search of her God. Drop, drop, drop into time, the beads of your days, grey days, grey beads—results, splendour blinding, and incomprehensible. Fire that renews the face of the earth, restores sick and raises the dead, in the sense that you might help a soul to come back to God. Such is your vocation. Strangely hidden, like a rich pearl in the grey, flabby body of an oyster.

It is so simple. You have to pray to endure the monotony of those grey days. To hear your days fall into time, to be gathered in eternity somewhere, sometime, in faith, by God, you have to pray. You have to pray without ceasing.

Moses went up a mountain and there God spoke to him, and Moses came down, and his face shone so much, that the people were afraid. He heard the voice of God. But you, friends, when you are a holocaust of love, when you are surrendered as your holy vocation calls you to be, you don’t hear the voice of God. You belong to God. You are one with Him. You live not. Christ liveth now in you. How much does your soul shine, unbeknownst to you. How much? That

shining soul is the essence of the restoration of the world to Christ. That shininess, that light spills itself into the works.

I needn't talk to you about the works. I must talk to you of the spirit tonight. I find it hard to get words to describe that spirit. It is so simple and so stupendously splendid, that I falter in a sense. All similes, as they come to my mind, drop and are dead before I finish speaking them. And I seek another one to give you the essence.

Simple is our vocation, humble, of God, as time has shown. The Psalm says that there is a rock and in the rock, there are little crevices, where birds, little birds, can nestle. The rock, of course, is Christ. Big people, like John the Beloved, simply lay on His breast. Little people like us can nestle in the crux of His hand, can nestle perhaps behind, in His neck, to speak symbolically, as the psalmist did. We are so small. What a nice place to nestle. He who loves can nestle any place in the arms of the Beloved. Our vocation is that of nestling. Much goes into the right of nestling. Give that much, and you will receive much in return, for you will receive God, who is never outdone in generosity.

If people ask you, "What is the Apostolate of Madonna House?" "We say," you answer simply, "it is an Apostolate to love, for where love is, God is. And we desire to be God in our midst. For we are dedicated to the restoration of the world—man and his institutions—to God, and the only way we can restore them is by loving, by having God within ourselves, a flame." The rest will follow. If you are interested in the rest, let me tell you about it, after I have told you about loving. That's all there is to it: love and death, both life everlasting in Christ. That's all.

I haven't mentioned Our Lady, but that is because perhaps to me it is so self-evident that he who seeks Christ without Mary, seeks Him in vain. And that all the things that I spoke to you about, presupposes the entry unto the way to the Father, which Christ is, for He said, "I am the Way." But the gate to the Way is Mary. And we are *DOMUS DOMINAE*. Should one mention the self-evident?

All the things I spoke about will happen to you, if you go to Jesus through Mary. For she possesses the secret of prayer, the secret of wisdom, for she is the Mother of God. That's why I didn't speak of her in words, for who else can teach you to burn with the fire of love, than the Mother of Fair Love. Who else can teach you to pray, than the woman of prayer? Who else can teach you to go through silence, of deserts and nights, of pain and sorrow, of joy and gladness, than the Woman wrapped in silence? Who can make the bridge between the old you and the new you, the undedicated and dedicated you? But Mary—the bridge between the Old Testament and the New. The Jewish girl who brought forth the Messiah, the Son of the Almighty.

Sometimes it is difficult to speak of the self-evident. It is difficult to speak of Mary, for how can one speak of Jesus without Mary? Of God the Father, who was so well pleased in her that He made her the Mother of His Son? Of Christ, who was her Son, and of the Holy Ghost, who was her Spouse? Our Lady of the Trinity, Our Lady of Madonna House, are one and the same.

Such is the spirit of our Institute, so wrapped up in Mary that I didn't mention her. Perhaps my silence tried to be a tribute to the Woman wrapped in silence. But maybe I should say that all that we do in this house, and in this Institute, we do through Mary. For all of us here today, listening, are slaves of her. That's why we are free. That is why we can dedicate ourselves so utterly to her Son. Because she will show us how.

Catherine Doherty was the foundress of the Madonna House Apostolate, a family of Christian lay men, women, and priests striving to incarnate the teachings of Jesus Christ by forming a

community of love. The community has its main house in Combermere, Ontario, Canada and also operates a number of missionary field houses throughout the world. Doherty authored a number of books on Russian spirituality, of which Poustinia: Christian Spirituality of the East for Western Man is best known.

Keep reading and learn more about the mission of FOCUS and the New Evangelization!