

Christianity and Culture: *A Truly Christian Life Bears Witness to Christ*

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I wish to begin by expressing my appreciation to Professor Dariusz Karłowicz, and all those at the St. John Paul II Institute of Culture and the Saint Nicholas Foundation as well as the Rector of the Angelicum, Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P. for the invitation to this lecture series. I am also grateful for the suggested topic: “Christianity and Culture.” I added a comment from Pope Francis which he made the week I received the invitation to deliver this lecture: “A truly Christian life bears witness to Christ.”<sup>1</sup> In the context of today’s culture, his quote captures the timeless challenge of living the Catholic faith amid the influence of secularism.

In preparing this lecture, I thought again of Mario Vargas Llosa’s *Notes on the Death of Culture*.<sup>2</sup> The “death of culture” has for some time been a theme in North Atlantic discussions and one might have hoped for new insights from a Noble Prize winning Latin American author. Instead, Llosa relies on the late George Steiner’s earlier work, *In Bluebeard’s Castle: Some Notes Towards the Redefinition of Culture*,<sup>3</sup> as the foundation for his analysis. Both Llosa and Steiner take Nietzsche’s claim of the death of God as their point of departure. Llosa adopts Steiner’s view that “the death of God did not signify the advent of paradise on earth, but rather a hell... The world, liberated from God, gradually became dominated by the devil, a spirit of evil, cruelty and destruction that would culminate in the world wars, the Nazis crematoriums and the Soviet Gulag. With this cataclysm culture came to an end and the era of post-culture began.”<sup>4</sup> Not too much to argue with there. But Llosa accepts not only Steiner’s starting point, but also his conclusion: Western culture has come to a dead-end, to a time, in Nietzsche’s phrase of “night and more night.”<sup>5</sup> But then neither Llosa nor Steiner offer a positive way forward.

*In Bluebeard’s Castle* is the published version of lectures delivered by Steiner at the University of Kent in honor of T. S. Eliot. Steiner took the occasion to criticize Eliot’s *Notes toward the Definition of Culture*.<sup>6</sup> His chief complaint is that Eliot, having published *Notes* soon after the Second World War (1949), takes virtually no notice of the Holocaust or how it occurred in the heart of European culture. Bluebeard’s Castle is a reference to the 1918 opera by Bela Bartok which puts to music a French folktale about a wealthy man who marries and then murders a succession of his wives. In Bartok’s opera, Bluebeard and his fourth wife Judith arrive at his castle shortly after their wedding. Judith finds that seven doors within the castle are locked, and she insists that they must be opened. Bluebeard pleads with her to respect his privacy and to accept him without uncovering his past secrets. Judith ignores his request and begins opening the doors. The doors lead to a bloody torture chamber, a storeroom filled with weapons, a treasury filled with riches, a beautiful garden. The fifth door opens to a view of Bluebeard’s kingdom where everything is tinted the color of blood. The sixth door reveals a “lake of tears.” Bluebeard begs Judith to leave the final door closed. Instead, she opens the last door and through it walk Bluebeard’s previous wives who take Judith back with them into the seventh room. The opera ends with Bluebeard alone in darkness.

Early performances of the opera made sense of all this by emphasizing Bartok’s use of symbolism and especially the opera’s prologue in which the audience is asked, “Where is the stage? Outside us or within us?” Steiner uses the opera as metaphor suggesting that like Judith, we are standing before the final door

of Western culture. “We cannot turn back,” he writes. “We shall, I expect, open the last door in the castle even if it leads, perhaps *because* it leads, onto realities which are beyond the reach of human comprehension and control (even if they) envisage possibilities of self-destruction.”<sup>7</sup> Steiner then offers us two alternatives—neither of which seem very promising. He describes them this way: “There is Freud’s stoic acquiescence, his grimly tired supposition that human life (is) a cancerous anomaly.... And there is the Nietzschean gaiety in the face of the inhuman.... Both attitudes have their logic.... Personally,” he writes, “I feel most drawn to the *gaia scienza*” of Nietzsche.<sup>8</sup> Steiner dismisses Christianity as influencing post-modern culture. “Christianity cannot serve as the focus of a redefinition of culture,” he says, “because of its highly ambiguous implication to the holocaust.”<sup>9</sup>

Steiner provides his own interpretation of the holocaust. It begins with Nietzsche’s description of a monotheistic deity whose demands upon humanity are so completely unattainable that they ultimately become an unbearable burden. The death of such a demanding god becomes inevitable. Then Steiner takes Nietzsche’s analysis and extends its logic to the Jews. According to Steiner, having achieved the death of such a god, it follows that society would seek the death of the people who were his messengers. The death of God thus leads to the destruction of the Jews.

There may be a logic to his thinking, but it is not the logic of history. The god that Steiner describes is *not* the God of Christianity—it is not the God of Jesus Christ—no matter what Nietzsche may have thought of nineteenth century bourgeois German Protestantism. Nor is this the God of Jews. But even if we grant that Steiner’s cosmology is a fair description, it is nonsensical to claim Judaism has influenced Western religious experience to the extent that this was the reason the Nazis sought their destruction. Steiner may be entitled to his own myths; he is not entitled to his own facts. This is one reason why the post-modern turn toward myth is so handy—it frees one from the tyranny of the real.

But if Christianity, according to him, cannot help Western culture out of its cultural dead-end because of a “highly ambiguous implication to the holocaust,” how is it that the obviously *unambiguous* implication of atheism to the holocaust and to the *gulag* is not a disqualifier? Having chosen the holocaust as a turning point, how do we take seriously the suggestion that the path forward is the gay science of Nietzsche? Steiner offers only the dead end of a self-destructive future. The problem again is Nietzsche. But not only his ideas of *Urbemensch* and *Untermensch*. Consider his view of suffering. He “rebelled against the idea that our highest goal is to preserve and increase life, to prevent suffering.... He rejects the egalitarianism underlying this whole affirmation of ordinary life. But his rebellion is in a sense also internal. Life itself can push to cruelty, to domination, to exclusion,” for Nietzsche, “life properly understood also affirms death and destruction.”<sup>10</sup> Looked at in this way, the gay science is not so gay after-all. There is in its understanding of domination the logic of Auschwitz. There is nothing “ambiguous” about nineteenth century atheism’s implication to the holocaust. Try to image Hitler, without the preceding cultural influences of Wagner, Nietzsche and Bismarck or the Third Reich without *Die Götterdämmerung*, *Der Urbemensch* and *Der Kulturkampf*? So why no disqualification of atheism from the future of the West?

Mario Vargas Llosa may take Nietzsche as his starting point, but he parts with Steiner and refuses to embrace a Nietzschean end point. Yet, he too offers no way forward, hence his title, the death of culture. Both conclude we are at the end of an epoch—an emptying out of a cultural center that can no longer hold. Both reflect a sense of dissolution and self-defeat. As Carl Becker so aptly describes in *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*, having rejected Christianity, the Goddess of Reason was “to lead us safely out of the long night of superstition into the light of day.”<sup>11</sup> But she has not. What Henri De Lubac

describes as “the drama of atheist humanism,”<sup>12</sup> has lost its intellectual stamina. It has left us, like Bluebeard, standing alone in the dark.

So, what is to be done?

First, the obvious: resist efforts to cancel two millennia of Christianity in the West and resist also a reductivism that sees this only as a matter for historians. The Christian heritage of the West cannot be preserved by looking backward. It can only be preserved by looking forward. And if Christianity has been effectively “cancelled” for many in the West, then the question is, “How is belief to be re-introduced?” Pope John Paul II saw the issue clearly when he challenged us to “Open wide the doors for Christ. To his saving power open the boundaries of States, economic and political systems, the vast fields of culture, civilization and development.”<sup>13</sup> In doing this, we should *not* ignore Steiner’s concern about the holocaust. Especially here, Catholics have an important, irreplaceable voice. We may ask, “On what basis is someone entitled to choose which victims of the holocaust will be respected and which will not, which voices from the holocaust will be listened to and which will not, which lives will be remembered, and which will not?”<sup>14</sup> Last year, while traveling in Poland, I had the opportunity to visit the St. Maximillian Center. Located several miles from Auschwitz, the center houses a collection of drawings by the Polish artist, Marian Kolodziej entitled, *Labyrinths*. Kolodziej was on the first transport train to Auschwitz where he became prisoner number 432. He witnessed Maximillian Kolbe offer his life for that of a fellow prisoner and toward the end of his life, Kolodziej recorded this and the experiences of many other inmates in a series of drawings depicting the reality of Auschwitz far beyond anything in the imagination of Hieronymus Bosch.

Father Jozef Tischner writes this about Kolodziej’s work: “I have been to Auschwitz several times.... But I have never seen there what I saw at this exhibition. My reaction is: the real Auschwitz is here” (in Kolodziej’s art).<sup>15</sup> Having also been to Auschwitz several times, I agree with Fr. Tischner. What is truly horrifying is how these drawings capture the depth of spiritual suffering. Kolodziej relates a practice at Auschwitz during Christmas; the authorities would erect a tall evergreen tree and from its branches hang the bodies of dead inmates and at the base of the tree stack the bodies of other inmates. Then as the prisoners would march by the guards would announce: “Look over there; there is *your* Christmas!” It is only one example of the strategy of the death camps—destroy *first* the spiritual life and then the physical life. Steiner described the massacres, death camps and *gulags* of the twentieth century as “a season in hell.” In his exhibit, Kolodziej introduces St. Maximillian Kolbe as a spiritual light in the darkness of Auschwitz. His witness and that of Kolodziej himself not only have a right to be remembered, but it is also necessary that we remember. Otherwise, we are in the situation described by Alexandr Solzhenitsyn in his Nobel Prize lecture of “a slashing to pieces” of memory and “a closing down of the heart.”<sup>16</sup>

In this context I would suggest another spiritual light—Edith Stein, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Some of you may already be thinking of her death at Auschwitz and her *The Science of the Cross* as a providential response to Nietzsche and *The Gay Science*. She is a saint more relevant today than ever. Charles Taylor begins his study of secular culture in this way: “I want to talk about belief and unbelief, not as rival *theories*.... Rather what I want to do is focus attention on the different kinds of lived experience involved in understanding your life in one way or the other, on what’s it like to live as a believer or an unbeliever.”<sup>17</sup> I think Stein’s background as a philosopher engaged in phenomenology with Husserl opened for her a way of explaining in a more contemporary way the spiritual life and the mystery of transcendence. Consider this description of a knowledge that precedes the action of the intellect from her discussion of “The Interior of the Soul and the Thoughts of the Heart” in *The Science of the Cross*: “The thoughts of the heart are the original life of the soul at the ground of (an individual’s) being, at a depth that precedes all

splitting into different faculties and their activity. There the soul lives precisely as she is in herself, beyond all that will be called forth in her through created beings.... The *thoughts of the heart* are absolutely not *thoughts* in the usual sense of the word; they are not clearly outlined, arranged, and comprehensible constructions of the thinking intellect. They must pass through various formulations before they become such constructions.”<sup>18</sup> It seems to me there is a richness here especially regarding the “intelligibility” of belief in a secular age.

In his *Introduction to Christianity*, Joseph Ratzinger discusses the problem as society’s tendency of reducing our knowledge to only that which can be quantified. Knowledge of the “real” is understood from the standpoint of *factum* and *techne*. “All that can be known,” he writes, “is the *factum*, what has been made, man’s own particular world.”<sup>19</sup> This leads to a technical way of thinking that has “fundamentally altered” our understanding by reducing reality to only that which is “demonstrable.”<sup>20</sup>

Stein’s description of the “thoughts of the heart” is one approach to the problem. Jean-Luc Marion also touches the question, but from a different angle. He presents the question as an anthropological challenge. According to Marion, modernity presents only partial and therefore necessarily distorted images of the person since it ignores what is essential in human existence. This happens because at the depth of each person’s being there is a mystery that cannot be reduced to an object—that can never be objectified. This mystery is at the heart of what it means to be created in the image of God and it is this mystery which in a sense protects the person “from having to be conformed to the ideological models that dismantle the humanity of man.” This is because according to Marion, “God does not give a fixed and closed essence to man as things and animals have it; God gives him unknowability itself, which frees him from any definition; bearing the image of the likeness of God (means) to be exempted from any reductive knowledge.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, he says we must embark on “a kind of knowing in a mode different from objectification, so as to reach something better than an object.”<sup>22</sup> This mystery at the center of what it means to be a person liberates us from a reductive characterization of the self while at the same time affirming a sense of transcendence. But it also raises the question of how amid this mystery we may come to know God’s presence. Ratzinger sees the problem clearly; he writes, “If God is not in Christ, then he retreats into an immeasurable distance, and if God is no longer a God-with-us, then he is plainly an absent God and thus no God at all: a god who cannot work is not God.”<sup>23</sup> The problem at one level is how in the mystery of God we are to know his presence. We are offered some guidance by the Cappadocians—Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa—and what Jaroslav Pelikan calls their “Lexicon of Transcendence.”<sup>24</sup> The “ineffability of the divine nature” was for them the key to overcoming the limitations of the prevailing Neo-Platonism of their time.<sup>25</sup> According to Gregory of Nyssa, the divine nature (*ousia*) cannot be described since God is ineffable, yet the Lord “is named, by those who call upon God, not what it is essentially (for the nature of God is ineffable), but it receives its appellations from what are believed *to be its operations in regard to our life*” (emphasis added).<sup>26</sup> This Christian understanding of a transcendent God who may nonetheless be known through his operations in us, offers a starting point for a reawaking toward transcendence.

Another starting point is suggested by Larry Hurtado in *Destroyer of the gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World*. Hurtado emphasizes the *radical* distinctiveness of Christians amid Roman society and how their everyday lives struck at the foundations of classical pagan culture in ways that would cause Tacitus and Suetonius to refer to Christians as holding “a *wicked* superstition”<sup>27</sup> and Pliny to call Christianity a “depraved superstition carried to extravagant lengths.”<sup>28</sup> These descriptions are extraordinary since pagan Rome was exceedingly tolerant of a wide variety of religions. So why would a

community centered on the Beatitudes elicit such responses? In ancient Rome, the pantheon of pagan gods was the guarantor of survival, prosperity and success—both for the family and for the state. Pagan gods could be generous towards their favorites. But they were more often prideful, arrogant, and vengeful. Insulting the gods could provoke their wrath. A child or spouse who refused offerings to the household gods not only fractured the family’s unity—they jeopardized its future. Citizens who refused piety toward the gods of the city or the empire threatened its prosperity and survival by risking “brutal Juno’s unforgetting rage.”<sup>29</sup> We may see the horrific persecutions of Christians by Nero and Caligula as the products of deranged despots. But the persecution under Emperors Trajan and Marcus Aurelius were something else. Hurtado’s point is that “Christianity was considered, and really seems to have been, a dangerous development that challenged what were then accepted notions of religion, piety, identity, and behavior. Indeed, in that ancient Roman setting, Christianity was perceived by many as irreligious, impious, and unacceptable, a threat to social order.”<sup>30</sup> During the Altar of Victory debate with St. Ambrose, the Roman prefect Symmachus summed up the pagan attitude: “Rome is calling to us and saying: Respect the great age which the holy rites have helped me reach.... This worship has made the world subject to my laws.”<sup>31</sup> The Jews also refused to offer sacrifice to the pagan gods and were regarded as troublesome and at times were considered subversive enough to be dealt with harshly. But unlike Christians, Jews did not pose a general threat to the empire. Whatever threat they did pose was understood as limited by race and geography. Moreover, they were an inward-looking community with little interest in encouraging converts. To the contrary, the Christian claim was not so limited, but was universal as to both geography and society.

Christians threatened classical family behavior in fundamental ways. Most obvious is the Christian condemnation of abortion and infanticide; that affected family prosperity, autonomy and the authority of the *paterfamilias*. Basil of Caesarea’s view of abortion was not untypical of Christians: “The woman who purposefully destroys her unborn child is guilty of murder.”<sup>32</sup> But even more disruptive of classical family life was Christian sexual morality. Hurtado quotes the Greek orator Demosthenes to describe a common attitude of pagan husbands: “We have concubines and courtesans for pleasure, female slaves for our daily care and wives to give us legitimate children and to be guardians of our households.”<sup>33</sup> Obviously, Christian morality was at odds with such latitude. But Christian converts within the household could present other difficulties to their pagan husbands and masters. The daily functions of the Roman family were held together by a complex network of pagan gods. There were numerous deities invoked throughout the conjugal life of the married couple<sup>34</sup> as well as those associated with a wife’s pregnancy, childbirth and those guarding the mother and child after childbirth.<sup>35</sup> Every meal in the household reserved an offering for the gods. And the first century frescoes preserved at Pompeii suggest the extent to which pagan religion could be integrated into the environment of the family home by artwork depicting pagan deities and mythological scenes. Thus, Christian converts within the family could be a deeply disruptive force regarding household piety, threatening the peace and security of the family.

The religion of the family was not only an essential part of family culture and identity. It was also an important part of ancient Rome’s culture and identity. In Rome’s national epic, *The Aeneid*, Aeneas is urged to take the household gods of Troy and establish a new city for their home. Household gods from Troy were not only essential to the founding of Rome—they were the reason for the city’s existence. They were Rome’s mythological link to its Trojan ancestors, heritage and its claim to legitimacy. Christians’ refusal to honor the household gods thus struck Roman culture at many levels. As Robert Louis Wilken writes, “Christians were seen as religious fanatics, self-righteous outsiders, arrogant innovators, who

thought that only their beliefs were true. However, the Roman belief in divine providence, in the necessity of religious observance for the well-being of society, and in the efficacy of traditional rites and practices, was no less sincere than the beliefs of the Christians.”<sup>36</sup> My point isn’t the rehabilitation of pagan Rome, but to emphasize the entrenched philosophical, political and cultural establishment against which the early Christians struggled.

Christians brought not only a new cosmology; they brought a new way of looking at religion. Yves Congar points out that at issue in the confrontation of Christianity with classical culture “was essentially the reform of *man*.” It was a question of anthropology—what was meant by “the reality of men living in communion with God.”<sup>37</sup> In his treatise *On the Nature of the Gods*, Cicero observes, “Did anyone ever give thanks to the gods because he was a good man? No, he did so because he is rich, honored and secure. Jupiter is called ‘Best and Greatest’ not because he makes men just, moderate and wise, but because he makes them healthy, secure, wealthy and prosperous.”<sup>38</sup> Christians had a different idea. As to the Christian critique of classical culture, Charles Norris Cochrane observes that the Church Fathers presented both a radically new cosmology and anthropology.<sup>39</sup> The distinctiveness of early Christians was expressed in an anthropology inseparable from their cosmology. The *Roma Aeterna* of Augustus was rejected not only because the cult of the emperors was considered sacrilegious, but because the *Pax Romana* was seen to be an illusory promise of human progress and human perfectibility under the political regime and religious cult of the Caesars.<sup>40</sup> Thus, Christianity defied “the whole authority of Greco-Roman antiquity, abjuring, in its very essence, the classical idea of the commonwealth.”<sup>41</sup> Gerhart Ladner makes similar observations in his study of *The Idea of Reform*, in particular, the idea of reform as an overcoming of sin and evil through regeneration in Christ.<sup>42</sup> As Pelikan notes, the radicalness of the Christian claim could be seen in their attitude toward the founding of the New Rome. The city of Constantinople was celebrated by Christians of the time for never having been polluted by pagan temples, altars or sacrifices; instead, it was from its beginning a Christian city.<sup>43</sup>

Charles Taylor observes that we now live in an age where an entire population has “managed to experience (their) world entirely as immanent.” Harvard professor Harvey Cox had predicted the situation in the mid-1960s with his book, *The Secular City*.<sup>44</sup> Cox argues that secularization requires Christians to accommodate themselves to a culture in which words and images of religious experience no longer convey meaning to millions of our neighbors. He suggests rethinking our approach to evangelization by adopting what we might describe as “a more down to earth” way of communicating—not only in dialogue with non-believers, but also in liturgy, music and the translations of sacred texts *for believers*. Joseph Ratzinger also sees the problem. He writes: “It has been asserted that our century is characterized by an entirely new phenomenon: the appearance of people *incapable of relating to God*. As a result of spiritual and social developments, it is said, we have reached the stage where a kind of person has developed in whom there is no longer any starting point for the knowledge of God” (emphasis added).<sup>45</sup> Ratzinger sees the problem not so much as involving language—for him it is more a question of experience. “After two thousand years of Christian history,” he writes, “we can see nothing that might be a new reality in the world.” He continues, “in our own lives too, we inevitably experience time and again how Christian reality is powerless against all the other forces that influence us.”<sup>46</sup>

If we return to Taylor’s formation of the problem, that is, of people who experience their world as entirely immanent, the issue becomes how to introduce a sense of transcendence. Historically, this has been a function of art. Although this was taken up in the remarkable lecture in this series last year by Remi Brague,<sup>47</sup> I would like to add a few observations. I think the issue is fairly presented by the American

painter, Mark Rothko and his book entitled, *The Artist's Reality: Philosophies of Art*.<sup>48</sup> Like Steiner, Rothko was influenced by Nietzsche, especially *The Birth of Tragedy* and Nietzsche's idea that art is bound up with myth.<sup>49</sup> Rothko is undoubtedly America's most important abstract expressionist. Simon Schama, in his BBC series on *The Power of Art*, chose Rothko as one of eight artists along with Caravaggio, Bernini, Rembrandt, David, Turner, Van Gogh and Picasso to explain the development of Western art. The Second World War marked a turning point for Rothko. He finds in Nietzsche's philosophy a way of proceeding. He writes, "Nietzsche's analysis of Greek tragedy offers a fine hypothesis of how Greek tragedy itself solved the problem of pain and evil. Nietzsche found that life would have been unendurable for the Greeks ... unless a heroic attribute was imported to suffering by means of art."<sup>50</sup> There is also a Nietzschean influence in Rothko's characterization of classical culture and Christianity as providing nothing more than myths. The problem as Rothko sees it, is that "When an artist wants to show interaction, he must invariably go back to these old myths, but if anything, these myths represent a type of nostalgic paganism, or in the case of the Christian myth, a forced emotionalism where the gyrations and suffering are more a devotion to the past—and in that sense academic—than the presentation of a meaningful experience."<sup>51</sup>

Thus, presenting "a meaningful experience" requires the abandonment of the old "myths" and the creation of new ones. He writes, "In a sense, the whole artistic process since the Renaissance can be described as a nostalgic yearning for a myth and a search for new symbols that will enable art to symbolize again the utmost fullness of reality." Rothko continues that in the twentieth century, "artists understood that the then present concept of reality did not possess a myth.... Hence, they made their subject matter referable ... to the abstractions of form and sensations, wherein the human mind lived most profoundly in relation to reality in its own day. Similarly, the artist of emotionality abstracted emotion itself, and referred to this abstraction rather than to the portrayal of emotion in human interaction. In that sense subject matter began to operate on a plane wherein our own age finds its own utmost coherence, in the plane of atomic elemental, where everything is reduced to an abstraction of the lowest denominator of all existence."<sup>52</sup> Thus, the reduction of meaning to myth is ultimately abandoned as the creation of new myths is seen to be an exercise in meaninglessness. Yet the purpose of myth according to Nietzsche is to make bearable suffering and pain. Without the possibility of such a resolution—even a mythic one—the artist is left without a form which gives meaning within the graphic context of his work. Rothko describes the resolution of the dilemma by the artist abstracting emotion itself from his work leaving the artist to ultimately reduce everything to an abstraction of the lowest denominator. But such reductivism cannot itself answer the problems of suffering and evil. They remain, only now the artist is silent. We have returned to Bluebeard's Castle; and in his personal life, Rothko appears to end up here as well. Rothko's last commissioned work, now known as the Rothko chapel in Houston, was to provide 14 monumental paintings for a windowless, nondenominational chapel. What he provided were 14 paintings all variations of black, except one center panel in purple. Schama describes Rothko's chapel as giving the impression as "a sepulcher of the spirit." He says, the "room feels like a chamber of live burial, a black full stop to Rothko's journey."<sup>53</sup> And so it was for Rothko. He did not live to see the chapel completed. He committed suicide in 1970. Sadly, Rothko appears to personify in his writing, his artistry and his life the internal logic of Modernism in art.

So, again, what is to be done? During my 20-year service as supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus, I oversaw the creation of three places of worship. The first was the construction of the Holy Family Chapel at the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council headquarters in New Haven, Connecticut followed by the construction of the Redeemer of Man church and Luminous Mysteries chapel at the St.

John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, D.C. These projects were undertaken with Father Marko Ivan Rupnik, S.J., and his community of artists at *Centro Aletti*. During this time the Knights of Columbus also cooperated with the *Fabbrica di San Pietro* in a series of restoration projects; the most significant were the restoration of the fourteenth century wooden crucifix of Saint Peter's Basilica; the Madonna "*Mater Ecclesiae*" of the Column from the Constantinian Basilica of Saint Peter; and the Madonna "*del Soccorso*" displayed for centuries over the relics of St. Gregory of Nazianzus in Saint Peter's Basilica as well as the chapels and frescos of the *Madonna della Bocciata* and of the *Madonna delle Partorienti* in the Vatican Grottoes near the Tomb of St. Peter. Each of these projects was an opportunity for reflection on the role of art and architecture in Christian worship. The Vatican projects emphasized Otto von Simon's observation that "The religion of medieval man was a communication with a sacred reality that was invisible, yet immediately and continuously present"<sup>54</sup> through "an architecture particularly attuned to religious experience." He describes the great medieval cathedrals as representing "a mystical image of the Lord's eternal sanctuary in the Heavenly Jerusalem."<sup>55</sup> It is this approach we envisioned in our work with Fr. Rupnik at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine. That work made evident one of von Simon's most important observations; namely that, "The life of art forms is governed by two conflicting principles, one creative and original, the other bound by tradition and conservative." The relationship between style and language is key to understanding the problem according to von Simon. He says, "Both are media through which a culture, during several generations, expresses itself, a fact that accounts for the static, retardatory character by which the imagery of languages and the styles of art tend to limit the creative scope of the individual artist and poet. This enduring matrix," he continues, "is broken only if a universal experience receives expression at the hands of a great artist or poet. In that event, the poet creates ... a new language, (and) the artist (creates) a new style."<sup>56</sup> I think this is our situation today. After decades of static imagery and styles influenced by secular culture, it is time this secular matrix is broken by Christian artists with a coherent theological vision. Fr. Rupnik and *Centro Aletti* represent one example of how this can be done. There are undoubtedly others who can help lift the spirit of worshipers in prayer through an art and architecture that reflects a community in a living communication with sacred reality.

Hans Urs von Balthazar describes a temptation in this regard. He writes that for the artist, "His first move will be to return once more to the past. This return will be beneficial, but only on one condition: that he understand well that history, far from dispensing us from creative effort, imposes it on us. Our artists, and in particular our architects, all acknowledge this. A Greek temple, a Romanesque church, a Gothic cathedral all merit our admiration, because they are witnesses to a beauty and truth that are incarnate in time. But to reproduce them now in our present day would constitute an anachronism."<sup>57</sup> Thus, it is not only a question of creativity. It is a question of theological vision. And it is something more, it is the responsibility of the artist to a Christian witness that is incarnated in *our* time and within the context of *our* culture and not simply reproducing the witness from another time.

An episode from Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters* is relevant here. It seems that Donatello, having finished a wooden crucifix for a church in Florence, invited his friend Brunelleschi to see it and asked him his opinion of the work. At first, Brunelleschi refused to comment but when pressed gave a negative review saying Donatello had put a peasant on the cross and not Christ since the body of Christ even in death "was most delicate in its members and adorned with a noble appearance." Donatello, not happy with his friend's reply responded with a challenge: "take some wood and try it yourself." Brunelleschi did just that, crafting a crucifix of the same dimensions that today is in the church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. Vasari records that when Donatello viewed his friend's masterpiece, he acknowledged that Brunelleschi had



indeed presented Christ while he had only produced a peasant.<sup>58</sup> In his discussion of this encounter between Donatello and Brunelleschi, Richard Viladesau reprints a description of Christ reportedly written in first century Palestine; a description in circulation towards the end of the fifteenth century that concludes, “He is the most beautiful among the children of men.” There is no evidence that Donatello or Brunelleschi were familiar with this text. But both would have been familiar with the idea of “physical beauty as an image of the soul.”<sup>59</sup> What I am suggesting is different from the classical Greek ideal of beauty as perfection with its dependence on order, symmetry and mathematical proportion. The fourteenth-century crucifix in Saint Peter’s Basilica which I mentioned earlier is not that, rather it presents us with what we might well describe as “the most beautiful among the children of men” at the agonized moment of *his* death.

To my mind the Lord joined this discussion nearly 500 years ago through the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe appearing on St. Juan Diego’s tilma. In *Ecclesia in America*, St. John Paul II called Blessed Mary of Guadalupe “an example of a perfectly inculturated evangelization.”<sup>60</sup> In our study of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Msgr. Eduardo Chavez and I reviewed the symbolic language of the tilma, little understood by the Spaniards at that time, but which the indigenous people understood and embraced. But one sees more in the tilma—one sees an extraordinary image of the physical and spiritual beauty of a mother. Seen from just inches away it is a radiant, luminous image of a face which so many have found confirms her words to Juan Diego: “Am I not here, I who have the honor to be your mother? Are you not in my shadow and under my protection? Am I not the source of your joy?”<sup>61</sup> Writing in *Communio*, David C. Schindler has asserted that “beauty is not accidental to religion but an inevitable expression thereof: the divine cannot enter into the physical differentiation of matter in time and space without thereby revealing its meaning-conferring unity, which is to say, without causing that matter to radiate forth a beauty that transcends it.”<sup>62</sup> This too is part of the Guadalupe miracle. As St. Augustine observes, “everything beautiful comes from the highest beauty, which is God.”<sup>63</sup>

The religious art of Marc Chagall is an example of a European Modernist who devoted his life to the expression of transcendence and spiritual beauty. Like Rothko, Chagall confronted the horrors inflicted on the Jewish people during the Second World War. His *White Crucifixion* testifies to this. Yet following the war and up to his death his work became decidedly more religious and more spiritual. Consider his monumental stained glass masterpieces such as his meditation on Psalm 150 entitled *The Arts to the Glory of God* for the Chichester Cathedral in Sussex, England and his windows for the cathedrals in Metz and Rheims. What he said in 1973 during the dedication of his *The Museum of the Biblical Message*, is especially appropriate now: “The Bible is like a resonance of nature and that is the secret I have tried to pass on.... Without this spirit, the mechanism of logic and construction in Art and in life will not bear fruit.”<sup>64</sup> Chagall in his theme for the Chichester Cathedral and in numerous paintings points a way for the rediscovery of ways to communicate spiritual and sacred realities.

Although Christianity and culture are obviously different realities,<sup>65</sup> they nevertheless seek to encompass “the *whole way of life of a people*” and in this way may be both complementary and competitive.<sup>66</sup> This was evident in the encounter of Christianity with classical culture. The parallels between the challenges encountered by Christians living in pagan culture and those encountered today in secular culture (especially regarding family life) are too obvious to require explication. As to Ratzinger’s question about what Christ brings new into the world, Christians and pagans certainly disagreed as to what that newness was, but there was no mistaking that something was indeed different. Today, the question is again presented. But is a “whole way of life” among Catholics discernable—a way of life that can be distinguished from those who live as though God does not exist?” The Church is not only engaged with

culture in every epoch—it also *has* a culture.<sup>67</sup> Here T.S. Eliot’s analysis is helpful. He observes, “The term *culture* has different associations according to whether we have in mind the development of an *individual*, of a *group* ... or of a *whole society*. It is a part of my thesis,” he continues, “that the culture of the individual is dependent upon the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of the group or class is dependent upon the culture of the whole society.”<sup>68</sup> So we may appropriately consider the encounter of Christianity with secular culture on at least three distinct but interconnected levels: the encounter with secular culture of the individual Catholic, of the localized Catholic community and finally, of the Church as an institution. All three of these forms of Catholic culture are to varying extents a point of encounter with the secular culture within which they exist; all three are to varying extents influenced by the secular culture and all three are to varying extents at war with that secular culture. It cannot but be otherwise. But in what ways may we say that Christian culture at each of these levels exhibits a discernable way of life. And further, “Is there a way of life that the Church today asks its people to follow either as individuals or in community?” And, if there is such a discernable way of life, “What culture *within* the Church as an institution today supports that way of life?” From the earliest days of Christianity, Christians have understood that they are journeying together as members of a *pilgrim Church*. This idea of a pilgrim church reflects that our Catholic life is not something we possess as an entirety, but rather is something towards which we continually strive—and not only on our own but as part of a community. It means that each believer as well as the community of believers has a responsibility for renewal and reform. Gerhard Ladner reminds us that “in collective as well as in personal history renewal must come from the innermost center of souls.”<sup>69</sup> And he continues, “It can never be emphasized too strongly that ... every Christian concept of reform... is primarily individual (and) personal.”<sup>70</sup> The witness of the early Church may guide us still as to individual responsibility as well as the touchpoints of encounter between Christians and the larger culture.

Taylor concludes his study of secularism with hope, citing a new generation more open to transcendence. He writes, “Many young people are following their own spiritual instincts ... looking for a more direct experience of the sacred, for greater immediacy, spontaneity, and spiritual depth” and that they are profoundly dissatisfied “with a life encased entirely in the immanent order.”<sup>71</sup> He says that “we are just at the beginning of a new age of religious searching.”<sup>72</sup> I would suggest that we are indeed at the end of an age, that secularism is a spent force intellectually and artistically, that it offers no way out of our present cultural dilemmas. What Taylor observes regarding young people reflects the sterility and self-defeatism of secularism as a way of life. There is no justification for the exclusion of Christian witness from the experience of the twentieth century’s tragic history—a history which we see repeated today before our eyes. Christian witness provides a profound response to these horrors and can offer a way forward by Catholic communities that bear witness to Christ through a truly Christian life. We are a pilgrim Church, and the implications of this reality are many. But surely one implication is that we remain faithful to our fellow pilgrims along the way—to keep faith especially with those who have given their lives in places like Auschwitz, Aleppo, Nineveh and now Kiev. This recognizes that Catholic belief as a lived experience is what will speak most directly to people, or as Pope Francis put it recently, “no theory here, I’m speaking about what I lived.”<sup>73</sup> And “there’s the rub” as Hamlet might say. Some have argued that “unless the faith can be lived in its fullness, it cannot really be lived at all, at least not as a form of living that gives credible witness.”<sup>74</sup> Larry Chapp argues that “the Church in the West has made a ‘settlement’ with bourgeois, liberal modernity, creating a form of Catholicism that is boring (and) does not attract.”<sup>75</sup> He contends that only a radical living of the Gospel, as seen in the life of individuals such as Dorothy Day, for example, “will

suffice as a response to the unique challenges of liberal modernity.”<sup>76</sup> My experience in leading more than 2 million members of the Knights of Columbus and their families tells me that regarding a life of Christian witness the harvest may be more plentiful than we know. The problem may not be so much that the workers are few but that we have called so few to come forward to lead such lives. I have seen firsthand the witness of thousands of Catholic men throughout Asia, Europe and North America who live lives of credible witness and authentic Christian charity. I see them today doing remarkable work in Poland and Ukraine. I have found it is a matter of providing structure, formation, guidance, empowerment and opportunity to the laity, especially at the parish level. And most importantly calling our fellow Catholics a better understanding of the Christian state of life, the vocation of the laity and the call to discipleship.

In this regard, I would also recall the witness of Blessed Franz Jagerstatter, the Austrian martyr who was executed in 1943 by the Nazis for refusing military service.<sup>77</sup> A farmer, parish sacristan, and Third Order Franciscan, Jagerstatter had numerous opportunities to avoid martyrdom, yet he refused to participate in military service for the Third Reich that required him to take the oath of allegiance to Hitler—all of which he considered a modern form of paganism. Some months before his execution Jagerstatter wrote, “What is demanded of us Christians today? We are expected not only to offer sacrifices but also to attack, rob, and even murder people so that a National Socialist world empire [*Reich*] will come about. Nevertheless, people who decide not to obey the state’s commands are accused of doing something seriously sinful. Wouldn’t it be worthwhile to learn from the lives of the saints so that we would know how the first Christians would have responded to today’s evil commands?”<sup>78</sup> Jagerstatter’s life and death is the subject of the American film director, Terrence Malick’s exceptionally beautiful film, *A Hidden Life*. Because of films such as *A Hidden Life*, *To the Wonder*, and *The Tree of Life*, Malick has been described as “an ontological and transcendent filmmaker;” as a director whose films convey the theme of human love as a participation in Divine love not only in a film’s script, but also through the film’s imagery and music.<sup>79</sup> Sometimes in a Malick film such as *To the Wonder* it is as simple as the closing line: “Love that loves us ... Thank you.” Like Chagall, Malick has succeeded in introducing a spiritual and transcendent style into a contemporary artistic medium that opens an access to mystery and the sacred. Both are great artists who have created a new style in their own medium. During his 1979 visit to Auschwitz, Pope John Paul II spoke of the witness of Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein and called Kolbe “the patron of our difficult century.”<sup>80</sup> Several years later, John Paul II would declare Saints Benedict, Cyril and Methodius the Patron Saints of Europe. Following this example, I would like to suggest Kolbe, Stein and Jagerstatter—a Polish priest and Franciscan friar, an ethnically Jewish philosopher and Carmelite nun, and an Austrian married layman as patrons of Christian witness in our century. There is no doubt many others who could be included as patrons, but going back to George Steiner’s contention that Christianity should have little to say about our future because of its so-called “ambiguous” relation to the holocaust, I would say that the lives of these three Christians provide not only a more than adequate response, but call us to a deep reflection on the demands of discipleship in our own day.

Earlier, I mentioned the challenge presented by St. John Paul II at the beginning of his pontifical ministry still pertains: “Open wide the doors for Christ.” He devoted his entire pontificate to this endeavor. Yet one of the most extraordinary moments in his long pontificate occurred during the last hours of his life as thousands of young people gathered to pray in St. Peter’s Square. When told of their presence, he reportedly said, “I have looked for you. Now you have come to me, and I thank you.” In reflecting on this during his homily for the inauguration of his own pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI, said, “it became wonderfully evident to us that the Church is alive. And the Church is young. She holds within herself the

future of the world and therefore shows each of us the way towards the future.” This final encounter between young Christians and John Paul II as well as the remarkable history of World Youth Days testifies to the expectation of a new generation’s desire for experience of the sacred and spiritual depth, but also for the opportunity of Christian witness. The Church does indeed hold within herself the future of the world and that future depends in so many ways on the degree to which each of us can build an authentic culture of Christian witness.

Thank you very much.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/247496/pope-francis-a-truly-christian-life-bears-witness-to-christ>

<sup>2</sup> Mario Vargas Llosa, *Notes on the Death of Culture: Essays on Spectacle and Society* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> George Steiner, *In Bluebeard’s Castle: Some Notes Towards the Redefinition of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> Llosa, *op.cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Steiner, *op.cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Notes toward the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1949).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pps. 140-41.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>9</sup> Steiner, p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 373.

<sup>11</sup> Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), p. 75.

<sup>12</sup> Henri De Lubac, *The Drama of Atheist Humanism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, “Homily for the Inauguration of his Pontificate,” October 22, 1978.

<sup>14</sup> I am thinking here especially of such testimonies as Kazimierz Majdanski’s *You Shall Be My Witnesses: Lessons Beyond Dachau* (New York: Square One Publishers, 2008) and also Christopher Zugger’s *The Forgotten: Catholics of the Soviet Empire from Lenin through Stalin* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> Halina Slojewska-Kolodziej, *Your Way Through the Labyrinths of Marian Kolodziej* (Gdansk-Harmeze: Franciscan Friary, 2008), p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.nobleprize.org/prizes/literature/1970/solzhenitsyn/facts/>

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> Edith Stein, *The Science of the Cross* (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 2002), pp. 157-58.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81-82.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Luc Marion, *Believing in Order to See: On the Rationality of Revelation and the Irrationality of Some Believers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), p. 80.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>24</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 200-15.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202; quoting Cornelius Plantinga, “Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity” *The Thomist* 50:325-52, p. 352 (1986).

<sup>26</sup> Pelikan, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

<sup>27</sup> Larry Hurtado, *Destroyer of the gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2016), p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 48.

<sup>29</sup> Vergil, *The Aeneid*, bk. 1. Translation by Shadi Bartsch (New York: Random House, 2021), p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xii.

- <sup>31</sup> James Sheridan, "The Altar of Victory – Paganism's Last Battle," *L'Antiquite Classique*, 35, no. 1, pp. 186-206; the quote is on p. 200; see also, Gerhart Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 148-52.
- <sup>32</sup> Quoted in Pelikan, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- <sup>34</sup> They were: *Ingatinus, Domiducus, Domitius, Mantura, Virginensis, Subigus, Prema, Pertunda, Venus, and Priapus.*
- <sup>35</sup> For example, *Mater Matuta, Natio, Rumina, and Silvanus*
- <sup>36</sup> Wilken, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
- <sup>37</sup> Yves Congar, "Review: The Idea of Reform," *Blackfriars*, 41, no. 485, pp. 386-389, p. 386. See also, Gerhart Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, (1959).
- <sup>38</sup> Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, bk. 3, no. 87 quoted in Valerie Warrior, *Roman Religion: A Sourcebook* (Indianapolis, IN: Focus, 2002), p. 11.
- <sup>39</sup> Charles Norris Cochrane, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. vi.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.
- <sup>42</sup> Gerhart Ladner, *The Idea of Reform: Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 170.
- <sup>43</sup> Pelikan, *op. cit.*, p. 171.
- <sup>44</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1966).
- <sup>45</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *What It Means to Be a Christian* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), pp. 24-25.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- <sup>47</sup> Remi Brague, "Meaning of Art in the Modern World," <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3lhKwlaNOMsnkjLMz8kr7u?si=kV6uzDh9SsO8pO7A4BCq5Q>
- <sup>48</sup> Mark Rothko, *The Artist's Reality: Philosophies of Art*, ed. by Christopher Rothko (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
- <sup>49</sup> Frederick Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, reprinted in *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufmann ed. (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), p. 33.
- <sup>50</sup> Rothko, *op. cit.*, p. 36.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- <sup>53</sup> Simon Schama, *The Power of Art* (London: BBC Books, 2006), p. 435.
- <sup>54</sup> Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 163-64.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.
- <sup>57</sup> Hans Urs von Balthazar, *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).
- <sup>58</sup> Richard Viladesau, *The Triumph of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in Theology and the Arts from the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 55-56.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- <sup>60</sup> John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, no. 11 (1999).
- <sup>61</sup> Carl Anderson and Eduardo Chavez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of the Civilization of Love* (New York: Doubleday, 2009), pp. 15-16.
- <sup>62</sup> David C. Schindler, "Restoring Faith in Culture," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 48, no. 2 (Summer 2021) pps. 223-46 at p. 233.
- <sup>63</sup> Quoted in Ladner, *op. cit.*, p. 237.
- <sup>64</sup> Quoted in J. A. Swan, *On the Spirit and the Self: The Religious Art of Marc Chagall* (Ashville, NC: Chiron Publications, 2019), p. 172.
- <sup>65</sup> See especially, Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1948).
- <sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>68</sup> Eliot, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

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<sup>69</sup> Ladner, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

<sup>70</sup> Ladner, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-80.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 506.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 535.

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/250412/pope-francis-gives-personal-reflection-on-52-years-of-priesthood-at-vatican-theology-conference>

<sup>74</sup> Larry Chapp, "Liberalism, the Church, and the Unreality of God," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 48, no. 3 (Fall 2021) pps. 518-535, at p. 519.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 518.

<sup>77</sup> See generally, Gordon Zahn, *In Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jagerstatter* (Springfield, IL: Templegate Publishers, 1986); also, George Weigel, *Not Forgotten* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2020) pps. 97-99.

<sup>78</sup> Erna Putz, *Franz Jagerstatter: Letters and Writings from Prison* (New York: Orbis Books, 2009), p. 210.

<sup>79</sup> Alberto Fijo, "A Hidden Life: Malick's Requiem," *Church, Communication and Culture*, 2020, vol. 5, no. 2, pps. 187-209. <https://www.tandfonline.com>>doi

<sup>80</sup> Pope John Paul II, "Homily at Auschwitz-Birkenau, June 7, 1979," [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf\\_jp-hom\\_19790607\\_polonia-brzezinka.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-hom_19790607_polonia-brzezinka.html)