

JULY-AUGUST 2022

The

“Instaurare omnia in Christo”

ANGELUS

THE VOICE OF TRADITIONAL CATHOLICISM

BACK TO LAND AND HEARTH

Returning to Your Own Backyard by Robert Wyer

Fr. Jonah Garno, How the Modern Lifestyle Destroys Our Link to God

Jonathan Wanner on Wendell Berry: Farming as “Practicing Resurrection”

Pauper Peregrinus: Culture and Christianity

Jackie and Clay Smith—Farming It Ourselves

Caged and Comfortable

How the Modern Lifestyle Destroys Our Link to God

Fr. Jonah Stephen Garno, SSPX

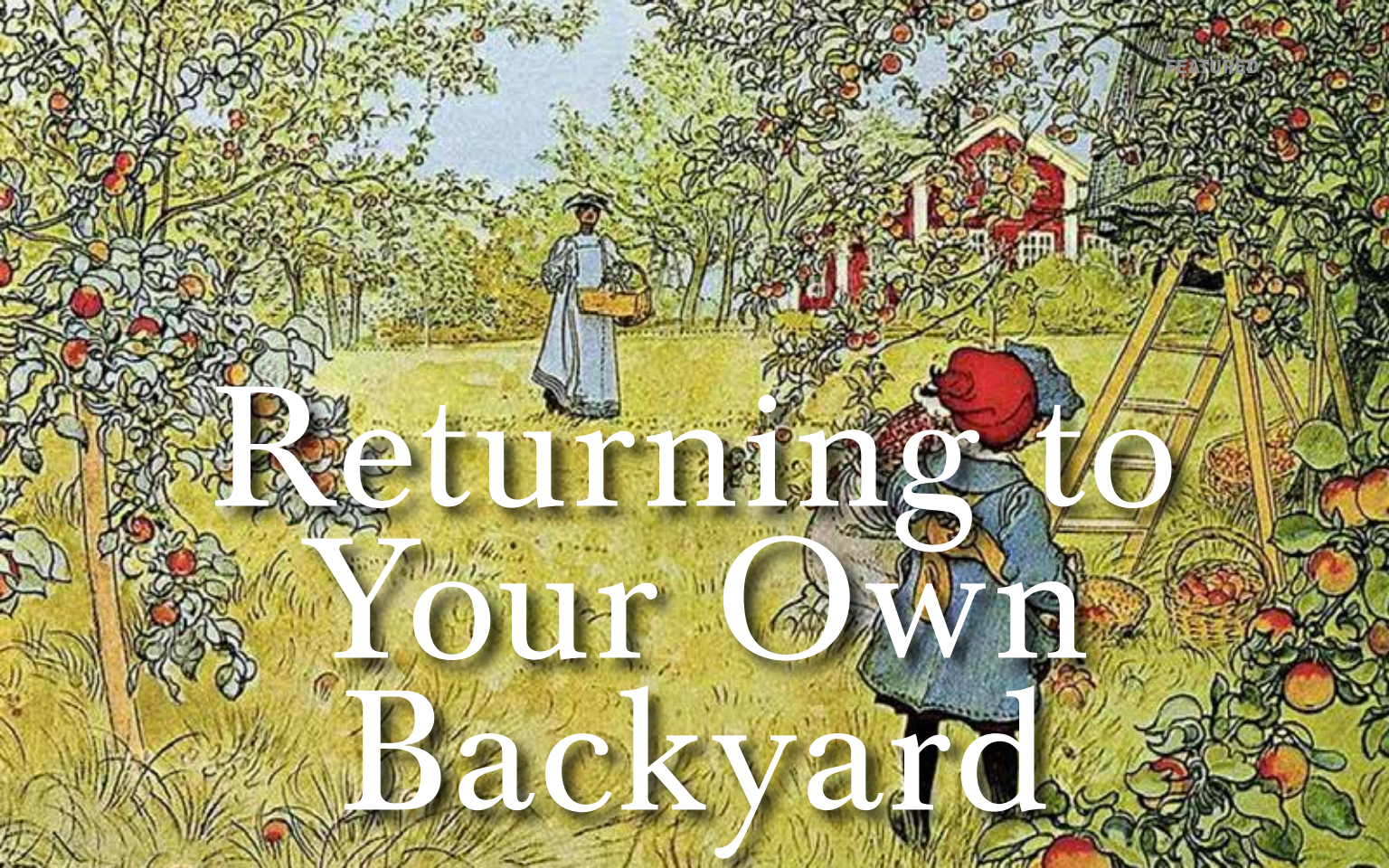
The modern age is one of unprecedented technological achievement. The number of revolutionary inventions in the past few decades boggles the mind. Gadgets and gizmos abound to solve every problem, to eliminate every inconvenience, and to put the world's knowledge at our fingertips. Scarcely a day goes by without some new upgrade or improvement to our already very advanced machines, making them still better, more efficient, more powerful, and more able to make our lives comfortable and convenient.

This proliferation of technology sets the current time apart from all other ages of human history. The lifestyle of the modern world is drastically different from that of our forefathers back to Adam. Never before in human history has man been so comfortable. Never before have we had to work so little. Never before have we had such easy access to the necessities and even the luxuries of life. With our technology, we have surpassed the eagle in flight, we have

beaten the horse at speed. The sun can no longer oppress us with her heat. The wind and the storm are powerless to hurt us. We have overcome the forces of nature, and now life is easy and pleasant, and there is little to suffer.

How different was the life of our forefathers! For them, life was hard. In a world lacking the technology we now enjoy, they had to grapple with the environment around them. Winter came with its frosty air that pierced them to the bone and drew them to the family hearth. The scarcity of light made evenings short and nights long. Food was seasonal, and their diet was drastically altered during the cold months. They had to adapt to the conditions. Survival depended on it.

Even the summertime, with its fair weather, brought its own unique set of challenges. The sun beat down upon them and the shadow of a roof or a tree shielded them from its rays if not from its heat! It was the time of growth, of light, and of life, when fruits and vegetables



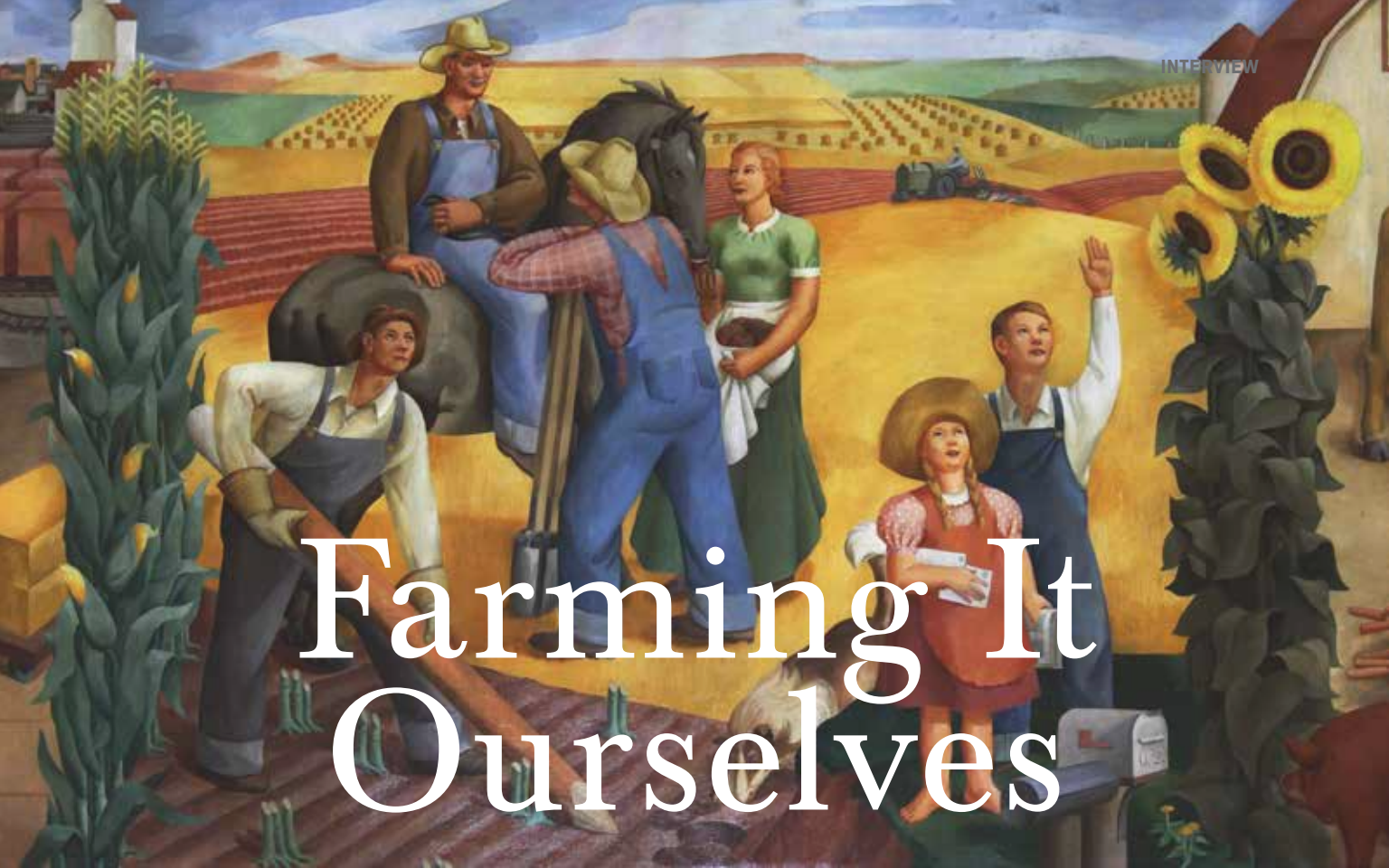
Returning to Your Own Backyard

Robert Wyer

This is the Key of the Kingdom
In that Kingdom is a city;
In that city is a town;
In that town there is a street;
In that street there winds a lane;
In that lane there is a house;
In that house there waits a room;
In that room an empty bed;
And on that bed a basket –
A Basket of Sweet Flowers:
 Of Flowers, of Flowers:
 A Basket of Sweet Flowers.
Flowers in a Basket;
Basket on the bed;
Bed in the chamber;
Chamber in the house;
House in the weedy yard;
Yard in the winding lane;
Lane in the broad street;
Street in the high town;
Town in the city;
City in the Kingdom –
This is the Key of the Kingdom.
 Of the Kingdom this is the Key.

This poem, the first and last in Walter de la Mare's *Come Hither*—a remarkable anthology containing an abundance of fine English verse, surprises us. (Some might even find the contents of the basket a bit disappointing: “All that for *flowers?*”) The poem telescopes in and out, but the focus remains the simple basket of flowers—“sweet flowers,” to be exact. The particularity of an object resting in a basket on a bed in a room in a house in a yard in a street in a town in a city in the kingdom demands our attention; the poem calls it “the key of the kingdom.” Within the broad scope of the entire realm, the item that unlocks the kingdom is, by comparison, rather small, one might almost say intimate but also insignificant. Likewise, one element of “returning to the land” (a movement that could be overwhelming to consider as a practical program) might perhaps begin with something on a more manageable scale: a return to one’s own backyard and even the flowers there.

All too often, we tend to neglect what is right in front of us, imagining that the real object of



Farming It Ourselves

Jackie and Clay Smith

1. Tell us a little bit about Smith and Smith Farms. Where are you currently located, and what kind of goods and services do you offer?

We are currently located by Meriden, Kansas, which is about 10 minutes north of Topeka on 10 acres. We offer eggs primarily, but also chicken, rabbit and soon-to-be turkey meat by special order. Additionally, we are hoping to expand with a dairy cow—first for ourselves and then added to our delivery/sales repertoire. We currently stock both Sugar Creek Country Store and Growers & Graziers in St. Mary’s proper, and we offer delivery to families in the surrounding area. We settled here in August 2020 as our wedding approached since we both had wanted to start a homestead, and everything fell into place with our upcoming marriage at Assumption Chapel in September of that year. Both of us are passionate about nutrition and personal health, and taking care of our own food supply

is one of our continual goals that we are still working towards—and we try to supply any of the bonus outputs to those nearby.

2. How long have you been in operation, and what are some of the struggles and victories that you’ve experienced since then? What has been your proudest moment or fondest memory so far?

We started selling our eggs in Spring 2021—when they got to be too many for us to eat, we started a small sales operation. Since our community is built around St. Mary’s and the church, we ended up there multiple times a week, and it only seemed natural to start selling to families in town. From there we became known as the egg people—more particularly Jackie as the “egg lady”—and we started expanding our operation.

Most of our struggles come from growing and expansion, along with maintaining supply for the future. Most animals produce goods on a yearly cycle, particularly chickens, but every-



Will Rascals Defend Our Civilization...

And What Books Will They Read?

William Edmund Fahey

Originally published February 24, 2012 in *Crisis* magazine.

He faces execution each day. Seven days a week, his jury of peers votes unanimously for capital punishment. The judge's hand is typically stayed. Mercy reigns because the accused shows signs of improvement. Perhaps, this little boy will one day also become fully human. With him and his kind rests the fate of Western Civilization.

My son Willie's peers are, as you may guess, his sisters (his younger brother bides his time and keeps a low profile). Willie's offenses are many, but on one particular morning as the jury howled for blood, the naughty five-year old could be heard dressing himself and singing this little tune:

Old Mr. B! Old Mr. B!
Hickamore, Hackamore, on the King's
Kitchen door;
All the King's horses, and all the
King's men,
Couldn't drive Hickamore, Hackamore,
Off the King's kitchen door.

Now some of you will recognize this as a riddling tune by Squirrel Nutkin. My son has not been made to memorize it. He has heard the *Tale of Squirrel Nutkin* a number of times, but it does not have the near liturgical status of a rather simple version of *Chicken Little*, whose current reading is now Vespers-like in its regularity. Somehow the songs of Squirrel Nutkin are *in* him now, perhaps because Nutkin's are songs in which he can participate and understand his own nature.

Willie's singing of "Old Mr. B!" was accompanied by a sort of twisting dance and chuckling laughter that suggested he saw something of himself in that furry *agent provocateur*, Squirrel Nutkin. If you do not have your own five-year old, let me assure you that you simply cannot mete out justice against a little fellow who knows such tunes and takes them so very seriously.



Carl Larsson: *Anna-Jobbana*, 1913.

SENIOR'S INCOMPLETE LIFE-LONG READING LIST

THE NURSERY (Ages 2 – 7)

Literary experience begins for very young children with someone reading aloud while they look at the pictures. But they can begin to read the simplest stories which they already love at an early age.

Aesop. *Aesop's Fables* (The translation by Robert L'Estrange is the classic).

Andersen, Hans Christian. *Fairy Tales*.

Arabian Nights. There are two classic translations, one expurgated for children by Andrew Lang, the other complete by Richard Burton.

Belloc, Hilaire. *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts; Cautionary Tales*.

Caldecott, Randolph. *Picture Books*, 16 little volumes (published by Frederick Warne).

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland; Through the Looking Glass*. Illustrated by Tenniel.

Collodi, Carlo. *Pinocchio*.

de la Mare, Walter. *Come Hither; Songs of Childhood*.

Edgeworth, Maria. *The Parent's Assistant; Moral Tales*.

Ewing, Juliana. *Jackanapes*.

Gesta Romanorum. Translated by Swann (scholarly facsimiles).

Grahame, Kenneth. *Wind in the Willows* (illustrated by Ernest Shepherd).

Greenaway, Kate. *Apple Pie; Birthday Book; Marigold Garden; Mother Goose; Under the Window; The Language of Flowers* (Frederick Warne).

Grimm. *Household Stories*. Illustrated by Walter Crane (Dover facsimiles).

Harris, Joel Chandler. *Uncle Remus*.

Kingsley, Charles. *Water Babies*.

Kipling, Rudyard. *Just So Stories; Jungle Book*.

Lamb, Charles. *Beauty and the Beast; Tales from Shakespeare*.

Lang, Andrew. *Blue Book of Fairies* and other colors; five volumes; best illustrated by H.J. Ford (Dover facsimile).

Lear, Edward. *Nonsense Omnibus; The Owl and the Pussycat*. Illustrated by Lear (Warne).

Lofting, Hugh. *Dr Doolittle's Circus* and others in the series.

Milne, A.A.. *Winnie the Pooh* and others in the series.

Mother Goose (Dover facsimiles – illustrated by Rackham; Viking Press).

Perrault, Charles. *Fairy Tales*. Illustrated by Dore (Dover).

Potter, Beatrix: *Peter Rabbit* and 23 little volumes; some available in French, Spanish and Latin. All illustrated by Potter (an important feature of these books is their small size, designed for a young child. Buy the individual books, not all of them collected in one big volume).

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *A Child's Garden of Verses* (Scribners).

SCHOOL DAYS (Ages 7 – 12)

Adams, Andy. *Log of a Cowboy*. Illustrated by N.C. Wyeth.

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women; Little Men*; others.

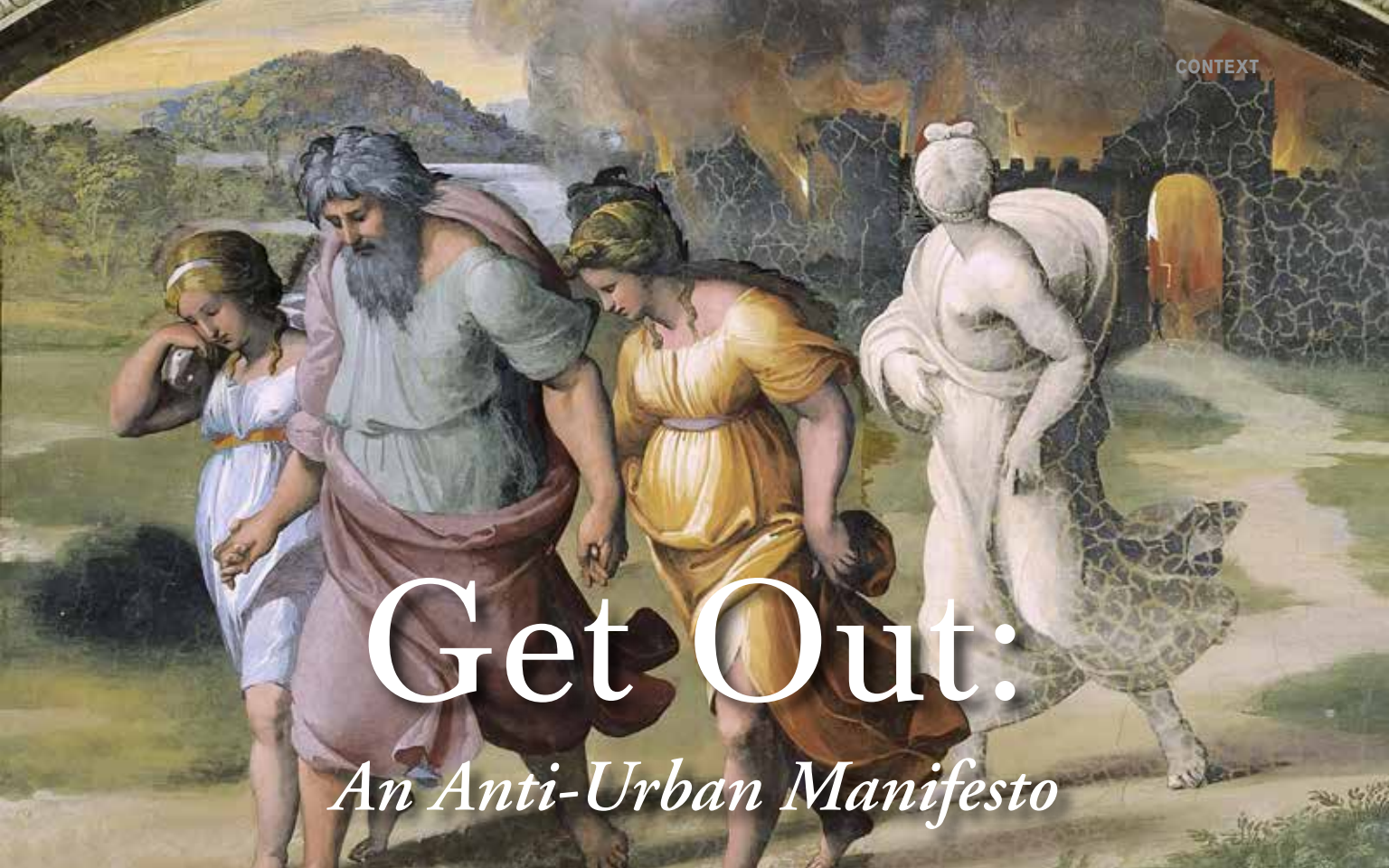
Aldrich, Thomas Bailey. *Story of a Bad Boy*.

Burroughs, Edgar Rice. *Tarzan* series.

Browning, Robert. *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Illustrated by Kate Greenaway (Warne).

Burnett, Francis Hodgson. *The Secret Garden; Little Lord Fauntleroy*.

Collins, William. *John Gilpin's Ride*. Illustrated by Caldecott (Warne).



Get Out:

An Anti-Urban Manifesto

Michael Warren Davis

The rural family needs to regain its rightful place at the heart of the social order.

— Pope Benedict XVI

Cities are a near occasion of sin. Maybe that wasn't always the case. It's possible that a man could become a saint in twelfth-century Salisbury. I don't know; I've never been. But I've spent time (too much time) in New York and Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. That's where souls go to die. Nobody who has done the same could possibly disagree. Those skyscrapers loom like headstones over mass graves—blank monuments to a billion victims of spiritual genocide, all nameless and unmourned.

We could go into the statistics about the higher rates of irreligion, depression, crime, drug use, and sexual deviancy found in cities. But that would be superfluous. You already know all that. You take it for granted—as well you should. It can't tell us *why*, though. Here are what I believe to be the four main reasons.

1. We cannot love. Our Lord commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves. That's difficult, even in the best of times.

In the best of times, cities were made up of large families who ran small family businesses. The husbands and fathers were independent craftsmen. Most of them lived above their shops. Everyone on the block patronized the same businesses. They attended the same parish. Their children played together. They were friends—even relatives—as well as neighbors.

Today, the opposite is true. Most city-dwellers now live miles away from their place of work. Many of them aren't even from the same state. Their neighbors, coworkers, family, and friends are four totally distinct groups of people. In fact, few of them even meet the folks who live in the next apartment, let alone the next building. Cities are like little kingdoms in which everyone is a resident alien.

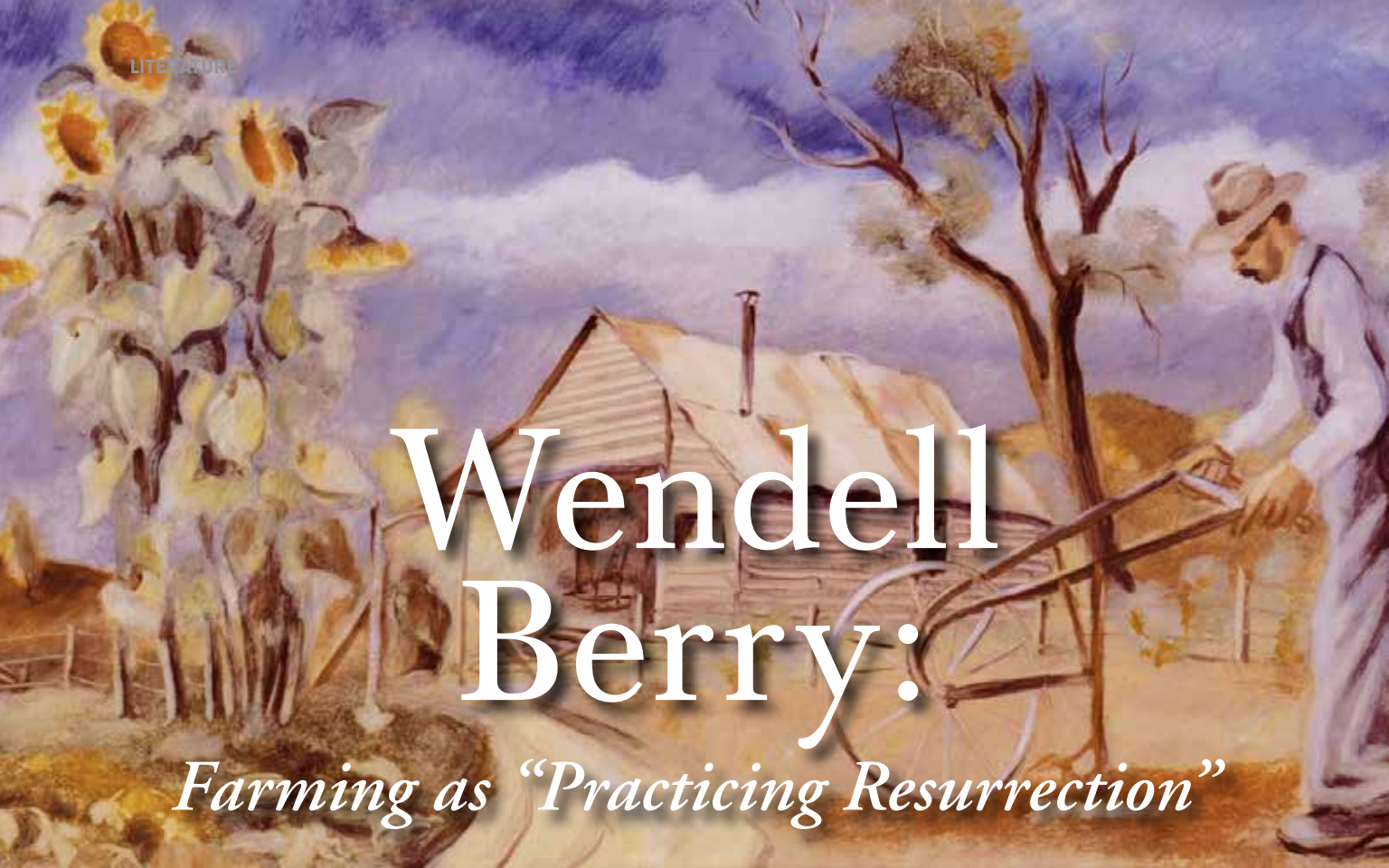
There's a fifth group of people with whom city-dwellers interact. It's a group I call the

Revealing to thee the pre-eternal Counsel
Gabriel came and stood before thee, O Virgin,
And in greeting thee, he said:
Rejoice, earth that hath not been sown!
Rejoice, burning bush that remains unconsumed!
Rejoice, unsearchable depth!
Rejoice, O bridge that leads to Heaven!
Rejoice, ladder raised on high that Jacob saw!
Rejoice, divine jar of manna!
Rejoice, deliverance from the curse!
Rejoice, restoration of Adam:
The Lord is with thee!

—*The Pre-Eternal Counsel*

Composer: Pavel Chesnokov (1877-1944)

(<https://youtu.be/XzK5YEVMHn4>)



Wendell Berry:

Farming as “Practicing Resurrection”

Jonathan Wanner

What I stand for is what I stand on.
~ Wendell Berry

in the dung heap, and rise again in the
corn.²

To most folks at most times, dirt is a dirty word. Pigsties and sinners find in it a common stain; housewives lose by it their peace of mind; and it is the very emblem of evil’s corruption (Gen 3:19). When it is not a playpit for boys, it is a harbor of the dead. For poet Wendell Berry, however, our livelier way forward is downward. To him, this grime is opposed to the grim. Dirt is anything but “cheap as dirt” since by it the farmer “practices resurrection”:¹

The grower of trees, the gardener, the man born to farming, whose hands reach into the ground and sprout, to him the soil is a divine drug. He enters into death yearly, and comes back rejoicing. He has seen the light lie down

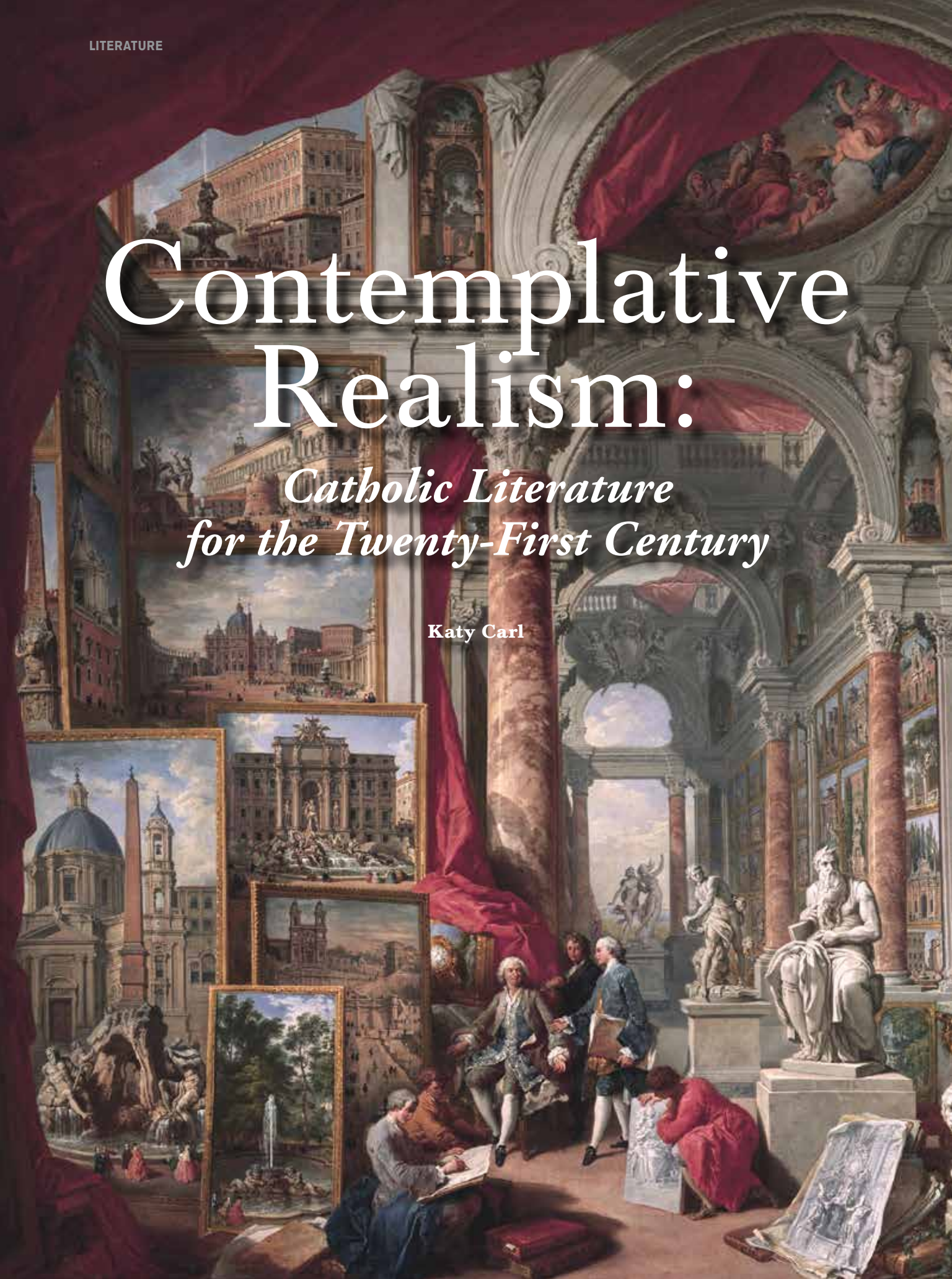
As the medium through which life and death endlessly cycle, soil is resurrective: the sun-fed corn dies to feed the livestock; the animals translate the plant decay into a “dung heap”; and by the farmer’s calloused hands, the manure fertilizes the newborn crop. Miraculously, the same solar energy that first warmed the corn from above feeds its progeny from below. Sunbeams, in this sense, figuratively “lie down in the dung heap” because life remnants remain in the decay so that plants have a light-lineage just as humans have bloodlines. Profoundly, the soil is, at once, both tomb and womb.

Yet, there is a secret buried beneath Berry’s paradox: sacrifice alone sets this death-life cycle in motion. Even before a crop dies, its life is full of many little deaths, or as Berry calls them, “breakings.” Seeds break into shoots; shoots break into flowers; flowers break into

Contemplative Realism:

*Catholic Literature
for the Twenty-First Century*

Katy Carl



Catholic experience and worldview: Phil Klay's National Book Award-winning *Redeployment*, a rawly forthright examination of moral injury done in the course of duty to those most directly responsible for protecting American interests; the initial publication of many of the stories collected in Kirstin Valdez Quade's *Night at the Fiestas*, whose treatment of conflicts with and within Catholic-influenced cultures garnered 2015's National Book Critics Circle John Leonard Prize; and Christopher Beha's *Arts & Entertainments*, a trenchant satire of contemporary celebrity culture that nevertheless posed the same deep questions about human attention, devotion, and the nature of genuine freedom, on which Beha meditated more seriously through his debut *What Happened to Sophie Wilder*.

To explore this newer generation of writers, we also should seek to comprehend the achievements of what I have come to think of as the "quiet generation" of Catholic fictionists, who according to editor and critic Gregory Wolfe largely worked in "whispers" and not "shouts" throughout the 1980s and '90s. At that time, prominently featuring questions of faith in fiction could easily lead to a writer's being seen as out of step with trends in mainstream publication, sales, and readership. Yet in this period Ron Hansen's *Mariette in Ecstasy* (1994), Alice McDermott's *Charming Billy* (1996), and Tobias Wolff's *In the Garden of the North American Martyrs* (1981) all succeeded in using fiction to explore the nature of Catholic belief and to present unironically viewed Catholic characters in serious situations that test their faith. Other exemplars of the "quiet generation" might include Fanny Howe, Paul Horgan, Don DeLillo, Richard Bausch, and Edward P. Jones, among a multitude of interesting corner cases too complex to explore here. (For example, Alice Thomas Ellis, working in this generation and bridging the divide between fictional "whisperers" and fictional "shouters" of faith, deserves her own in-depth study well beyond the scope of this essay.) That such writers' work is now meeting with a broader reception and appreciation among Catholic readers is cause for celebration, not only as it may lead to a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical moment, but as each writer's work represents its own valuable benchmark of artistic achievement.

Perhaps farther out of the mainstream, yet traveling very much in the theological and aes-



St. John the Evangelist, Miniature from the *Grandes Heures of Anne of Brittany*, 1503-1508.

thetic paths of Catholic writers of the initial Revival, there has been a recent blossoming of outlets and markets either founded specifically for, or widely open to, Catholic-influenced fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. These include Angelico Press, Chrism Press, Cluny Media, Colosseum Books, *Dappled Things* magazine, Ignatius Press, Loyola Books (an imprint of Ignatius), Paraclete Press, Slant Books, *Windhover* magazine, and (my own publisher) Wiseblood Books. I can only speak to this trend as a participant in it: I have worked on the editorial board of *Dappled Things* magazine since 2007, the same year I began in earnest to draft my own "contemplative realist" debut novel, *As Earth Without Water*.

Over many years of working directly with writers and editors who share similar interests, I have become deeply committed to establishing locales within the literary ecosystem where Catholic writers can more fully explore our identity, tradition, and relation to other literary forms and expressions. These locales are what artist and critic Makoto Fujimura in his book *Culture Care* calls "estuaries": protected, but not completely secluded, environments where writers and artists of faith can grow, gain experience, and test their powers and limitations before seeking to engage in forums where their core concerns and aspirations are less likely to be supported, valued, or even understood. In these environments, whole new approaches to a creative field can be born—as we see happening with contemplative realism, the emerging movement described by Joshua Hren in his



The King's Fool to His Lady

Patrick Murtha



lady of my laughter, the feast is killed with frost.
My king grows prim and scowls, his lords grow cold and cross.
The mirth of ancient ages is choked up in the child
Who chortled at the Mermaid when all the world was wild.

I heard primeval laughter, before both day or night,
Darting o'er the waters, echoing God's delight;
I heard a maiden's rapture, her merriment in May—
They've dwindled in the darkness, they've faded far away.

For Mayhem's fools have mellowed. Comedian and the clown
Have set aside their laughter and laid their wisdom down.
Their rapier tongues are blunted; their riddles only cloak
A hollow hint of humor—their jests are just a joke.

The humor's hushed with honors, with trophies, and with rings;
The playwright, like a puppet, is parroting the kings.
Poor Blondel longs for Richard, and Patch's wit is dull;
And Touchstone's just a statue, and Yorick's but a skull.

But though my brother-jesters lie wit-dead like a tomb,
I daily tease my monarch to teach him of his doom;
With barbs of truths in riddles and stabbing words that sting,
I dare, my dear, to be a conscience to the king.



Strangeness of the Good

A Review of the Book by J. M. Wilson

Reviewed by William Gonch, Ph.D.

Many poets think of the 20th century as the era of “free verse,” which eschews traditional rhyme, meter, and verse form. Undoubtedly, great poets such as T.S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams wrote free verse; by mid-century it was the dominant style in American poetry. Polemicists in the 1960s accused traditional verse forms of being elitist, reactionary, and out of date. But formal verse never disappeared. Major modernists used it; poets such as Richard Wilbur and W.H. Auden kept it alive when it was unpopular; and in the late 20th century, a group of poets began to revive traditional forms under the title of the “New Formalism.”

New formalists wrote in old forms such as sonnets, ballads, rhyming couplets, and blank verse, a style of poetry that uses iambic pentameter without rhyme (this is the verse form of *Paradise Lost* and much of Shakespeare’s dialogue). They argued that old forms were not exhausted—in fact, the long neglect of traditional forms

meant that a poet could achieve striking effects by combining old forms with contemporary language. The new formalists are still a minority, but they made their mark: today, traditional verse forms have a rich community of practitioners.

James Matthew Wilson is a contemporary poet in mid-career and a member of the second generation of new formalists. His work makes a strong case that traditional verse forms can still be used to write thoughtful, moving poetry. His most recent collection of poetry, *The Strangeness of the Good*, assembles several dozen lyric poems from the 2010s and early 2020; the second half of the book, his “Quarantine Notebook,” is a series of blank verse poems about the first two months of the coronavirus pandemic. These poems show that traditional forms endure because each one enables a poet to observe and create in irreplaceable ways.

One of my favorite poems in the collection, a sonnet entitled “The Teachers,” could only have



We've Got Each Other's Backs:

How Parents Can Assist Teachers (and Thus Their Own Children) at Home

Bridget Bryan

The growth of a well-formed child is like a tree, strengthened by three kinds of support: home, Church, and society (school is the preparation for society).

In an ideal world, the support from each area would be equal and each would be in harmony with the other. But we live in an imperfect world stained by original sin, so sometimes the support lacks on one side. The grace of God and determined human will can remedy the slack.

Whether we are parents, teachers, or both, we have the same end goal: to know God, to love him, serve him, and be happy with him forever in heaven. Parents of a Catholic marriage come together to make souls for God, and to love each other enough to bring each spouse and the children to heaven. This is an incredible mission. As Catholic teachers, we ultimately want the same thing for our students.

To go about raising a “tree” for this noble goal, it helps have all three realms give their best. Let us consider the following tidbits and

principles that help parents and teachers work together toward the education and ultimate sanctification of our students.

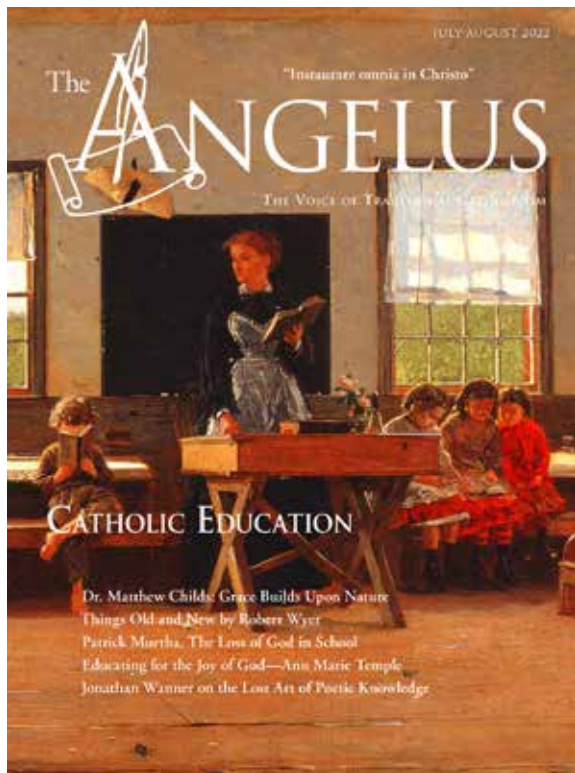
Where Knowledge Begins and the Good, the True, the Beautiful

God is the good, the true the beautiful.¹ Children (and you and I) first come to know everything through our senses, and we can only desire what we know. (Imagine someone being expected to love chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream, but they had never tasted or seen it!) So, if we want our children to desire and seek after the good, the true, and beautiful, we need them to know goodness, beauty, and truth through their senses. Below is an example of how each of the senses can inform the mind:

- **Eyes:** Surrounding a child with beauty helps form his taste. What he sees around him in his house, where he spends recreational time, what he wears, the body language he

The ANGELUS

Support the Cause of Uncompromised Traditional Catholic Media



For over three decades, *The Angelus* has stood for Catholic truth, goodness, and beauty against a world gone mad. Our goal has always been the same: to show the glories of the Catholic Faith and to bear witness to the constant teaching of the Church in the midst of the modern crisis in which we find ourselves. Each issue contains:

- A unique theme focusing on doctrinal and practical issues that matter to you, the reader
- Regular columns, from History to Family Life, Spirituality and more
- Some of the best and brightest Catholic thinkers and writers in the English-speaking world
- An intellectual formation to strengthen your faith in an increasingly hostile world

PRINT SUBSCRIPTIONS

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ Country _____
 CHECK VISA MASTERCARD AMEX DISCOVER MONEY ORDER
 Card # _____ Exp. Date _____
 Phone # _____ E-mail _____

Mail to: Angelus Press, PO Box 217, St. Marys, KS 66536, USA

PLEASE CHECK ONE

| | |
|--|----------|
| United States | |
| 1 year | \$45.00 |
| 2 years | \$85.00 |
| 3 years | \$120.00 |
| Foreign Countries (inc. Canada & Mexico) | |
| 1 year | \$65.00 |
| 2 years | \$125.00 |
| 3 years | \$180.00 |

All payments must be in US funds only.

ONLINE ONLY SUBSCRIPTIONS

To subscribe visit: www.angelusonline.org.

Everyone has FREE access to every article from issues of *The Angelus* over two years old, and selected articles from recent issues. All magazine subscribers have full access to the online version of the magazine (a \$20 Value)!



Desiderio Desideravi

Fr. Peter Scott, SSPX

Pope Francis' Desire

On June 29, 2022, Pope Francis issued an Apostolic Letter on liturgical formation, entitled from the Latin Vulgate text of the Last Supper *Desiderio desideravi*—“*With desire have I desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer*” (Lk. 22:15). It is in fact a series of reflections justifying to the laity the decision to revoke the permission for the traditional Latin Mass, given on July 16, 2021, and maintaining that the liturgical books of the liturgical reform of 1969 “*are the unique expression of the lex orandi of the Roman Rite*” and that “*those who are rooted in the previous form of celebration...need to return to the Roman Rite promulgated by Saints Paul VI and John Paul II.*” In *Traditionis custodes* he had declared that his reasons were based on the unity of the Church, affirming that traditional Catholics were causing a division, and in particular because he considered that the motive for the attachment to the traditional Mass “*is a rejection not only of the liturgical reform, but of the Vatican Council II itself.*” The recent Apostolic Letter pretends to justify

his assertion that the traditional Mass is divisive and that it is a refusal of Vatican II.

Absence of Doctrine

In order to capture our good will, this document appeals repeatedly to the experience of the Eucharist, being an encounter with Christ alive, inseparable from the Incarnation, Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, reminding us that every reception of communion is “*that surrender to this love, that letting ourselves be drawn by him*” (§8). However, the first observation that imposes itself is the total absence of Catholic doctrine concerning the Mass. Not only is the term Mass deliberately avoided, and replaced by the repeated “*celebration of the Eucharist,*” but there is no reference at all to the Church’s teaching in 65 long paragraphs that are supposed to explain the “*beauty and truth of Christian celebration*” (§1).

It is very revealing to compare this with the magisterial encyclical *Mediator Dei* of Pope Pius XII in 1947, condemning the excesses of the



Culture and Christianity

Pauper Peregrinus

What should Christians study? The question has exercised many great minds down the years. No one doubts, of course, that it is good to study sacred scripture, and what is called “divine science.” But how much time or energy should we give to human culture: for example, to philosophy, history, mathematics, and the various sciences of nature, to literature and the other fine arts? Can we justify giving them *any* of our precious time on earth?

The problem is a real one. St. Augustine expressed it with his usual acuity in his work *On Christian Doctrine*. “Suppose,” he wrote, “that we were wanderers in a strange country, and could not live happily away from our homeland, and so, wishing to put an end to our misery, we decided to return home. We find, though, that we must make use of some mode of conveyance, either by land or water, to reach that homeland where our happiness is to begin. But the beauty of the country through which we pass, and the

very pleasure of the motion, delight our minds, and so, turning these things that we ought to use into objects of enjoyment, we grow unwilling to hasten onward to our journey’s end.” Such, he adds, is in fact the state of man on earth.

In other words, by studying earthly things, and discovering their beauties, we may find our desire for heavenly ones beginning to cool. “A man is never so well,” noted the bishop of Hippo, “as when his whole life is a journey toward the unchangeable life, and his affections are entirely fixed upon that.” His older contemporary St. Jerome experienced this problem as a young man, when he felt torn between his love for Cicero and Virgil, and his love for the psalms.

Accordingly, St. Augustine is cautious about studying created things, beyond the little science and history that will help us understand the bible, and enough logic so that we may think straight. True, he does not forbid us to go further: but he is afraid that even “studious and



Fr. Juan Carlos Iscara, SSPX

What is a “rash judgment”? Is it always sinful?

Every man has the right to a good reputation, to the good opinion that is commonly held of him, for no one is to be regarded as evil until it is proved that he actually is evil. Hence, the unjust defamation of the neighbor constitutes a sin against strict justice.

Judgment is the affirmation or negation of a thing (*e.g.*, that something is good or it is not). A judgment may be true or false, depending on whether or not it is in agreement with the objective truth; true or probable, as stated or denied with certainty or only with probability; prudent or reckless, as issued with sufficient or insufficient foundation.

Taking into account these notions, we will draw the following conclusions regarding unfounded suspicions and reckless judgments.

A **reckless suspicion** exists when without sufficient foundation we begin to doubt our neighbor’s conduct or intentions, although without definitely affirming it.

It is evidently a sin against justice, by the strict right of the neighbor to his own reputation until proven otherwise. But because not having firm assent, the simple suspicion does not seriously injure the neighbor, and may be somehow excused either by some of the neighbor’s actions or by our own human weakness that makes us so prone to these suspicions.

But it could be serious in certain circumstances, for example, if the reckless suspicion (and *a fortiori* the opinion) regards a very serious and unaccustomed sin or a person of recognized virtue. In these cases there is mortal sin in the simple suspicion deliberately admitted and maintained, by the serious injury that is done to the neighbor.

St. Thomas explains the causes of these reckless suspicions: “*As Cicero says, suspicion denotes evil*



THE LAST WORD

Fr. David Sherry
District Superior of Canada

Dear Reader,

“That’s it! I’m finished! I’m never going there again. That priest! He started Mass twenty-five minutes late—again—and then, he preached for forty-five minutes! And those children—the noise! I’m back to the Indult/Sedevacantists/Novus Ordo—anything but that!”

Whoa! Hold your horses, friend! Don’t rush off so quickly. Think first. What are the reasons that you’re going to Mass here in the first place? Is it for the bells and smells? Is it the short sermons or delightful singing? No. I agree that the priest shouldn’t start Mass late when he can avoid it—it does give a haphazard feel to the Sacred Mysteries and it tests people’s patience unnecessarily. As for the sermon, I once heard a man say that his parish priest’s sermons were like a Rolls Royce. “Lucky man,” I said. “When I say that they were like a Rolls Royce,” he replied, “I meant that you couldn’t hear a thing and they went on forever!”

The thing is, the reason that you’re coming to Mass here is for the true Faith and the Mass of all time, not because the priest is a nice guy. If you go to the Indult Masses, certainly, you might have beautiful singing but the priest very likely won’t say a word about any problem in the Church—if he does, he’ll be out on his ear, they’ll say he’s got a schismatic attitude. Chances are he thinks that everything’s fundamentally all right anyway. He certainly won’t be able to

tell you to avoid the New Mass. And anyway, your indult Mass will be sandwiched between two New Masses, and they’ll wheel in the drum-kit as he’s saying the Last Gospel...

As for going to the sedevacantists, well, some things just aren’t black and white, but don’t tell them that. They judge that the pope isn’t pope but St. Paul says: “Judge not before the time.” Archbishop Lefebvre said that we’re not qualified to judge that the pope is not pope. We need to possess our souls in patience, the Church will make sense of the crisis when the calm returns. All we have to do for the moment is to use our Catholic antennae—hold fast to the Faith that was passed down from Christ.

As for going to the Novus Ordo, don’t get me started! While you’re waiting twenty-five minutes for the priest to start next Sunday, think about all the things you’re missing—guitars, altar girls, lay-ministers, sickly sermons... you’ll feel much better.

Fr. David Sherry

The Society of Saint Pius X is an international priestly society of almost 700 priests. Its main purpose is the formation and support of priests.

The goal of the Society of Saint Pius X is to preserve the Catholic Faith in its fullness and purity, not changing, adding to or subtracting from the truth that the Church has always taught, and to diffuse its virtues, especially through the Roman Catholic priesthood. Authentic spiritual life, the sacraments, and the traditional liturgy are its primary means to foster virtue and sanctity and to bring the divine life of grace to souls.

The Mission of Angelus Press

Angelus Press, in helping the whole man, tries to be an outlet for the work of the Society, helping them reach souls. We aspire to help deepen your spiritual life, nourish your studies, understand the history of Christendom, and restore the reign of Christ the King in Christian culture in every aspect.