

MAY-JUNE 2022

The

“Instaurare omnia in Christo”

# ANGELUS

THE VOICE OF TRADITIONAL CATHOLICISM

## CATHOLICISM AND THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION

Review of *Longing for an Absent God* by Katy Carl

Paul Guenzel on Walker Percy

Flannery O'Connor: Vulnerability and Hope by Dr. William Gonch

Andrew Latham on the Gothic Revival Movement

Andrew Childs: Charles Ives and the American Voice

# CONTENTS

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“To publish Catholic journals and place them in the hands of honest men is not enough. It is necessary to spread them as far as possible that they may be read by all, and especially by those whom Christian charity demands we should tear away from the poisonous sources of evil literature.”  
–Pope St. Pius X

## FEATURED:

- 2** FEATURED Walker Percy's Search  
Paul Guenzel
- 6** FEATURED The Redemption of Lydia Longley  
Dr. William Edmund Fahey
- 10** FEATURED Innovation & Isolation: Charles Ives and the American Voice  
Dr. Andrew Childs

## CULTURE:

- 16** CONTEXT Russell Kirk's Catholic Mind  
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Warren Davis
- 21** COMMENTARY The Cogitation of Henry Adams  
Michael Warren Davis
- 24** LITERATURE The Blood-Shot Eyes of Tradition:  
Cather's Catholic Imagination  
Jonathan Wanner
- 28** LITERATURE Flannery O'Connor: Vulnerability and Hope  
William Gonch, Ph. D.
- 32** ART Gothic Revival  
Andrew Latham
- 38** HISTORY Catholicism, the American Imagination, and the Pluralist Beast  
John Rao, D. Phil. Oxon.
- 43** SAINTS Two of America's Best  
Bridget Bryan
- 50** REVIEW Katy Carl Reviews Nick Ripatrazone's *Longing for an Absent God*  
Katy Carl

## FAITH:

- 54** FROM THE ARCHBISHOP Direct Our Hearts to Mary  
Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre
- 56** QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS Fr. Juan Carlos Iscara, SSPX
- 59** SCRIPTURAL STUDIES Meditations on St. John's Gospel: Chapter Thirteen  
Pater Inutilis
- 61** THEOLOGICAL STUDIES Who Then Can Be Saved?  
Pauper Peregrinus
- 65** THE LAST WORD  
Fr. David Sherry, SSPX



# Walker Percy's Search

Paul Guenzel

Clint Eastwood: *Well is that it, Major?*

Richard Burton: *Yes, that's it, Lieutenant.*

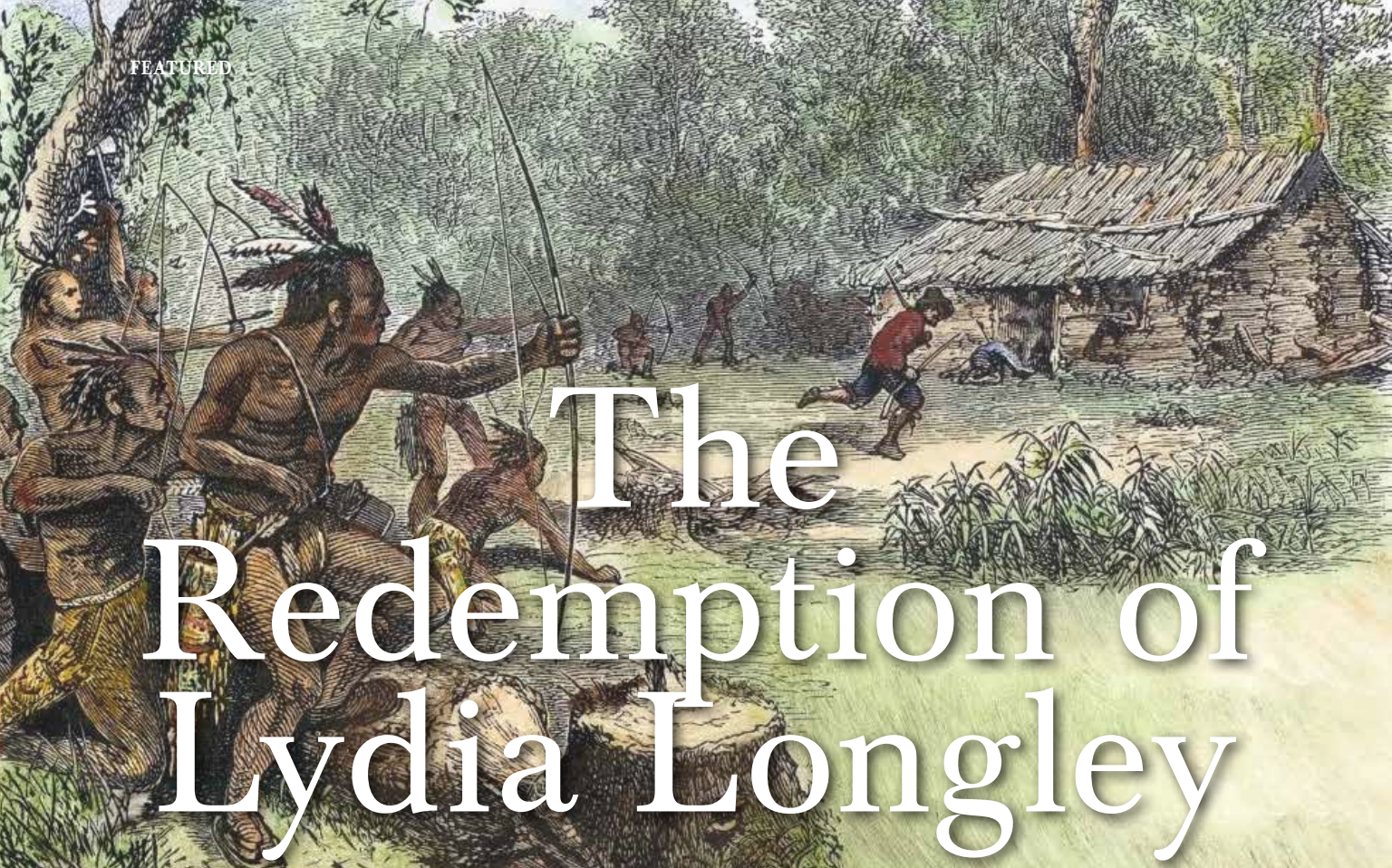
Clint Eastwood: *Do me a favor will ya? Next time you have one of these things, keep it an all British operation.*

Richard Burton: *I'll try, Lieutenant.*

So ends *Where Eagles Dare*, a blockbuster World War II movie from 1968. An impressive Allied team of agents rescue a U.S. general being held captive in a Nazi fortress in the Bavarian Alps and uncover a traitor in the process. Throughout the ordeal, tension is high, death looms around every corner, and people are united, despite the treacherous nature of the mission. With everything accomplished, the film ends happily. Or so it seems. Happy Hollywood ending or not, after reading *The Moviegoer* by Walker Percy, one wonders if these seemingly felicitous conclusions to films actually reflect reality.

They accomplished the mission, but life is more than an isolated mission. Sure, the major is a brilliant commander. He's great at his job, so it's natural that the mission ends on a high note, but his experience of the world has left him cold and cynical. The American lieutenant is a deadly soldier, but he, too, is cold, even grudging in the help he affords his British allies. Only Mary, a crack undercover agent and the major's love interest, seems rounded enough to be successful at more than a military operation. And yet even her prospects don't look great side-by-side with a man like the major. If life were nothing but a military operation, these people would win. It's not, though, and their aggregate life skills are weak.

This question of happy endings looms large in Percy's award winning novel, *The Moviegoer*. The protagonist of the novel, Binx (or Jack) Bolling, is a twenty-nine-year-old stock broker of New Orleans. He, like the heroes from movies he spends his nights watching, has had his



# The Redemption of Lydia Longley

Dr. William Edmund Fahey

**W**ithin about five minutes half of her family had been slain. Lydia Longley, aged 20, entered into the strange journey set for her by divine Providence in the quiet morning heat of July 27, 1694, a quiet broken by the lulling sound of cattle lowing as they seemed to wander free from their customary confinement. A quiet broken by the sound of the tomahawk striking down her father as he thought to move the cattle back. A quiet broken with a war cry and the sound of running as Abenaki warriors rushed through the farm and struck down the entire Longley family apart from Lydia and her two younger siblings, Betty and John. Victims and prisoners of a war for New England and the destiny of a Continent. And yet, it proved to be a quiet broken by a God who wills our good, even through the evil that men might will for one another.

The Longleys lived a little over a mile north of Groton, Massachusetts. Lydia's mother had died nearly a decade earlier, and her father William

had taken as a second wife Deliverance Crispe to assist him in raising the children; several more had been born, the youngest was a year old in 1694. Their farmstead marked the limits of British and Protestant culture, a point on a border stretching along the north east quarter of the current Commonwealth, and skirting the coastal corner of New Hampshire and southern Maine.

Since the arrival of the first Puritan Longleys half a century early, the family consistently moved away from the maritime center of the Bay Colony into the wilderness. The Longleys were staunch Congregationalists—common folk of the stock who understood their exceptional role in continuing the principles of the Reformation. They were men, in the words of Puritan historian Edward Johnson, who “for this their great enterprise counted as so many cracked brains: but Christ will make all the earth know the wisdom He hath endued them with shall overtop all the human policy of the world.” In a word, the Longleys were not simple pioneers,

# Innovation and Isolation:

## *Charles Ives and the American Voice*

Dr. Andrew Childs

In 1828, at the age of 70, Noah Webster published his *American Dictionary of the English Language*. When considering the American Imagination, and certainly the conception of a distinctly American culture, few figures loom larger than Webster.<sup>1</sup> Webster's contribution to the cause of establishing an American culture un beholden to Britain in particular and Europe by extension deserves a separate consideration, but he understood keenly that establishing a new cultural identity begins with controlling language. This profile of American composer Charles Ives (1874-1954) begins with Webster's definition of Imagination, either "the action or faculty of forming mental images or concepts of what is not actually present in the senses," or the "ability to face and resolve difficulties; resourcefulness."<sup>2</sup> While the latter of these two definitions hints at the American spirit of ingenuity and resiliency, the former highlights, as applied to cultural development, the pioneering aspect of the American mind, unafraid to consider the unknown, and unashamed simultaneously to appropriate the contents of the European cultural edifice while rejecting much of the identifiable external structure.

Though Charles Ives was one of the first American classical composers to establish a national and international reputation—he won

both a Pulitzer Prize and a Grammy award for his work—much of his music remained unknown and unperformed in his lifetime. He gained professional recognition during his career for his pioneering work not in music, but in the insurance industry. Accolades for his music, and the shamefully grudging respect from his peers came long after he had stopped writing. Now recognized for his technical boldness and innovation, another aspect of his compositional career stands out as truly remarkable—his near-total isolation, both personal and professional, from the musical establishment. Professionally, his choice to pursue finance rather than composition as a career gave him freedom to develop truly innovative and groundbreaking methods, and the means to publish and disseminate his works. Personally, his deeply conservative political and religious views and patriotic temperament—not to mention his refusal to abandon traditional techniques—alienated him from the modernist American composers who followed him, most of whom had no idea the debt they owed him. Duty and patriotism were concepts he applied to his art and his trade with equal zeal. He wrote publicly in support of the American effort in World War I, and even drafted an amendment to the Constitution. In many ways, he is the ultimate American composer, fiercely independent yet grounded in tra-



# Russell Kirk's Catholic Mind

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Warren Davis

**A**t last, in 1845, John Henry Newman swam the Tiber. It was one of those conversions that, until it happens, seemed inevitable to everyone—except the convert. Newman, who was canonized by Pope Francis in 2019, seemed to set off a chain reaction. In the following century, there was a breathtaking influx of authors, artists, and intellectuals into the Catholic Church throughout the Anglosphere.

Most of these converts were “conservative.” Like Newman, they recognized that Christendom was under siege, both from without and from within. The older Protestant sects, like the Church of England, had no interest in trying to save Western civilization. In fact, many were calling for its death. Ultimately, they were bound to agree with St. John Henry Newman: “There are but two alternatives, the way to Rome, and the way to Atheism.”

Russell Amos Kirk (1918–1994) was probably the last of these great literary converts, though

by no means the least.

Kirk rose to prominence in 1953 with the publication of his magnum opus *The Conservative Mind*. Almost overnight, Kirk became the godfather of the English-speaking Right. It’s a position he retained for the rest of his life. To this day, *The Conservative Mind* is recognized as the most important text in Anglo-American conservatism, except perhaps for Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

One of Kirk’s first disciples was a young man named William F. Buckley, Jr. Shortly after *The Conservative Mind* appeared, Buckley had the idea to found a magazine—one that might serve as a flagship for the nascent conservative movement. Such an enterprise could not be undertaken without Kirk’s support, however. So, the urbane young journalist flew to central Michigan for the blessing of the “Sage of Mecosta.”

Yet, surprisingly, Kirk wouldn’t become a Catholic until 1963, when he was forty-five. Granted, once he’d “popped,” there was no going



# The Cogitation of Henry Adams

Michael Warren Davis

**H**enry Brooks Adams (1838–1918) came from good stock. He was the grandson of our sixth president and the great-grandson of our second. His father Charles Francis served as Lincoln’s envoy to the United Kingdom, ensuring the British did not intervene in the Civil War on the side of the Confederacy. Henry himself was a distinguished historian, but is remembered today for his droll autobiography *The Education of Henry Adams*.

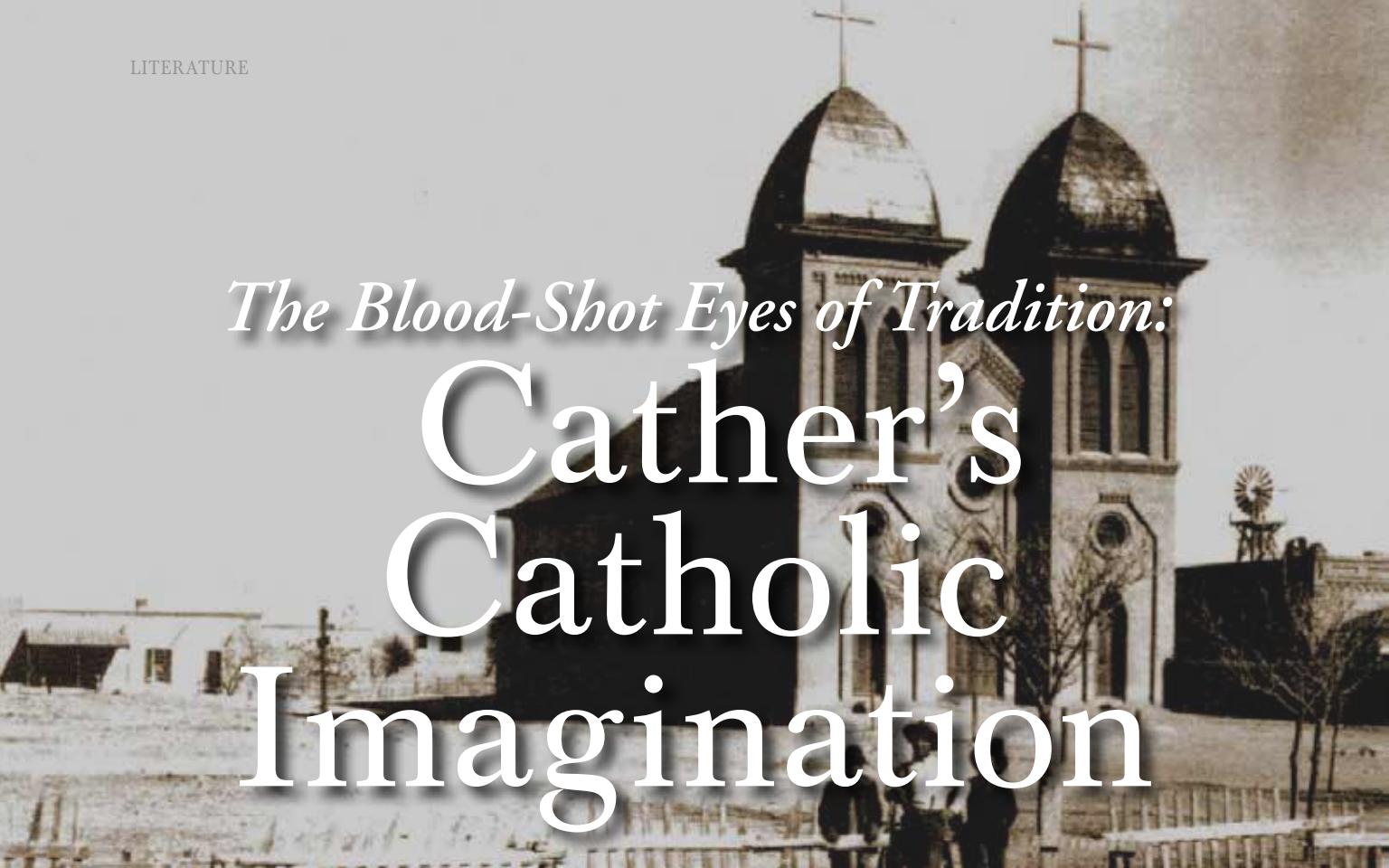
Modern Library named his *Education* the best nonfiction book of the 20th century. Albert Jay Nock called Henry the most accomplished member of his dynasty. Russell Kirk said that he “represents the zenith of American civilization.” He was the archetype of the Boston Brahmin, the Eastern Establishment, the WASP aristocrat. He was also a fanatical medievalist.

This is made abundantly clear by his second most famous work, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. The book was inspired by a pilgrimage to France, which he took with his closest friend, the artist John La Farge. Together, they opened a little rift in time. Adams—the quintessential

American, the “child of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries”—came face to face with medieval Europe. And to his amazement, he found new life. “The man who wanders into the twelfth century is lost,” he wrote, “unless he can grow prematurely young.”

By the time he arrived in France, Adams had already begun to grow somewhat disillusioned with the United States. He felt the country wasn’t living up to the promise of its Founding Fathers. He was no democrat; like his great-grandfather, he was deeply suspicious of “the popular will.” But he was too much a product of the Enlightenment to be anything else. He was a republican down to his bones. So, he became a something of a misanthrope.

In the Middle Ages, though, he found something quite different. To him, the Gothic symbolizes the ardor and passion of the Middle Ages. The Neoclassical, meanwhile, represents the narrow rationalism of the Enlightenment. The Gothic sprang up organically from the soil of Christian Europe. The Neoclassical is artificial, affected, self-conscious. So Adams writes that,



*The Blood-Shot Eyes of Tradition:*  
Cather's  
Catholic  
Imagination

Jonathan Wanner

**F**or being Episcopalian, Willa Cather has a tendency to write Catholic novels: *My Antonia* (1918) follows Catholic Bohemian pioneers on the Nebraskan frontier; *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927) stars Jesuit missionaries in New Mexico; and *Shadows on the Rock* (1931) features Catholic colonists in Quebec. These first two titles are, paradoxically enough, her most enduring and acclaimed books. Perhaps this should not surprise us: Cather was no stranger to Church practices and beliefs. When she was ten, her Virginian family wagoned westward where Nebraska's prairies fertilized her imagination. There, under the Sistine skies of the spring-plowed plains, she found herself among a diverse consort of Catholic friends and neighbors of Scandinavian, German, Bohemian, and French-Canadian descent.<sup>1</sup> These first-hand experiences of a traditional, European faith provided her "a corrective for the received vision of America as merely an extension of Puritan colonies."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this is why she described writing *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as "a happy vacation from

life, a return to childhood, to early memories."<sup>3</sup>

Even later during her Manhattan years, she often heard Mass with the Dominican Friars at St. Vincent Ferrer. When her brother (age 58) died unexpectedly, the chapel became her haven: "The Catholics," she quipped, "seem to be the only people who realize that in this world grief goes on all night, as well as all day, and they have a place for it to hide away and be quiet."<sup>4</sup> She also had a large cohort of Catholic fans. In response to *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Cather received letters "from great prelates and parish priests from all over the country who had worked with these [Jesuit missionaries] in the west, saying 'You have given us back Father Joseph,' or 'Our Blessed Bishop lives for us again.'"<sup>5</sup> Cather's editor, Roseboro, noted a particular letter in which a fan boldly declared, "They tell me you are not a Catholic. It is very strange. Pray for me."<sup>6</sup> Who could blame the sentiment? Cather, after all, so passionately praised the Church, sometimes more vehemently than its members, as when she placed "the





# Flannery O'Connor:

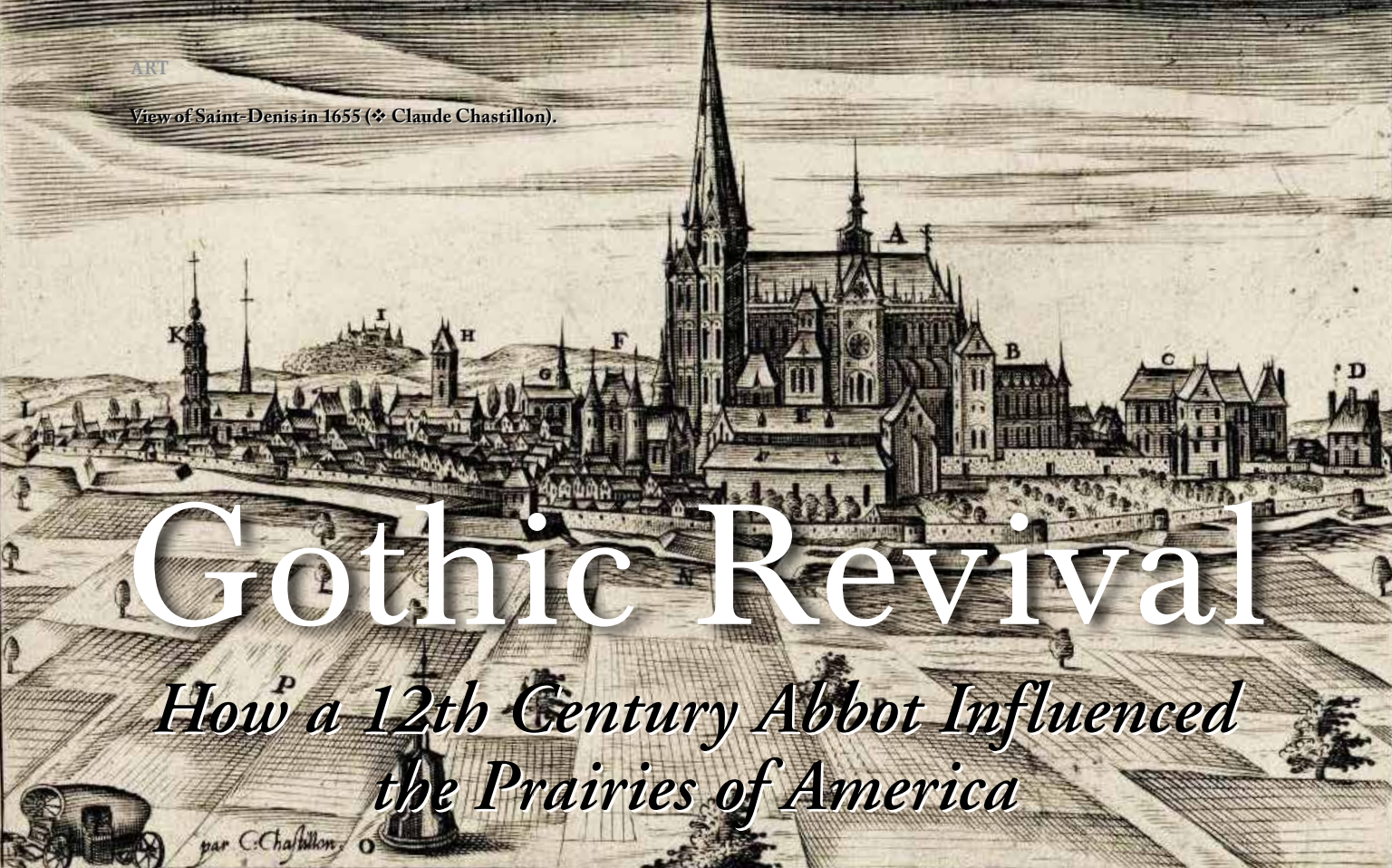
## *Vulnerability and Hope*

William Gonch, Ph.D.

Catholics are proud of Flannery O'Connor, but we don't always know what to do with her. She's just too much: too violent, too strange, too bleak. Often, we treat her as a mascot: she proves that Catholics can write great literature, even in the modern era. But when we read her fiction we are left wondering: "Where is redemption in O'Connor? Where is hope?"

If that is you, don't lose heart. Hope is perhaps O'Connor's great contribution to American literature. But she believes that hope is not to be found where we expect it. Hope is a theological virtue, which means that it comes to us through the grace of God. It cannot be seized or willed; it must first be given, and it usually comes through suffering. To see where O'Connor found hope, as well as what she contributes to the American imagination, it is worth first understanding how American literature and culture have imagined its major themes – individualism, society, and freedom.

The dominant strain of the American imagination is Protestant and individualist. Its protagonists reject tradition, history, and society, seeing them as sources of ignorance and oppression. Instead, they find freedom and goodness welling up from their individual consciences. Mark Twain articulates this vision in one of the great novels of American self-reliant individualism, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The protagonist, Huck Finn, is a frontier boy who runs away from his abusive father and the dullness of small-town life and sails down the Mississippi River with his friend Jim, an escaped slave. Huck and Jim enjoy the freedom that they find on the river, living by hunting, fishing, and enjoying untouched nature. When they visit towns on the shore, however, they find a society full of hucksters and con artists. Community and the past are sources of ignorance, superstition, and fraud, from which Huck must free himself; like many great American novels, *Huckleberry Finn* accepts Emerson's state-



# Gothic Revival

## *How a 12th Century Abbot Influenced the Prairies of America*

Andrew Latham

**A**bbot Suger of Saint-Denis was no stranger to influence and power. From unknown origins, he rose to become not only a confidant to two kings of France in the 12th century, but with the construction of the Basilica Cathedral of Saint-Denis, also started arguably the most important architectural shift of the second millennium—the Gothic style. This pedigree notwithstanding, he could have never dreamed that his vision, after falling out of style, would again take root in a yet-unknown world, some 700 years after his death.

Ecclesiastical architecture is in constant tension between new and old. Today, many Catholics rebel against any whiff of innovation in sacred design, but for centuries, innovation and experimentation was the norm, indeed, celebrated. But as with all things, design is cyclical. When one style gets pushed to its maximum, another trend takes hold, and often, this trend

will leapfrog backwards, taking cues from a previous generation's expertise.

In painting and sculpture, we see this most clearly with the Renaissance, when artists made a conscious effort to look back to Ancient Rome and Greece and reflect in their compositions those humanist, pagan roots. Architecture took a bit more time to reach back to Classicism, but it exploded on the American scene with the Neoclassical forms seen in the Lincoln Monument, White House—essentially most of the buildings surrounding the National Mall and many federal and state buildings built throughout the nation in the 19th century.

Meanwhile, Protestants, chief among them the Anglicans, after several generations of usurping Catholic churches, needed to build new churches. So where should they get their inspiration, if not Neoclassical? A Catholic would say the answer is obvious—go back to the magnificent Renaissance and Baroque cathedrals and basilicas of Rome, Spain, and



Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Washington, DC (❖ Siubol1A).



Trinity Church, NYC (❖ Donna Cheung).



Notre Dame Interior, Montreal (Author).



St. Patrick's Cathedral, NYC (❖ Jean-Christophe Benoit).



Immaculata Church, Saint Marys (KS State Historical Society).





The American Gothic House (also Dibble House) in Eldon, Iowa, designed in the Carpenter Gothic style with a distinctive upper window. Grant Wood, who observed the house only twice in his lifetime, made only an initial sketch of the house—he completed *American Gothic* at his studio in Cedar Rapids.

**A**merican Gothic is a 1930 painting by Grant Wood in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago. Wood was inspired to paint what is now known as the American Gothic House along with “the kind of people he fancied should live in that house.” It depicts a farmer standing beside his daughter—often mistakenly assumed to be his wife. The painting’s name is a word play on the house’s architectural style, Carpenter Gothic.

The figures were modeled by Wood’s sister Nan Wood Graham and their dentist Dr. Byron McKeeby. The woman is dressed in a colonial print apron evoking 20th-century rural Amer-

icana while the man is adorned in overalls covered by a suit jacket and carries a pitchfork. The plants on the porch of the house are mother-in-law’s tongue and beefsteak begonia, which also appear in Wood’s 1929 portrait of his mother, *Woman with Plants*.

*American Gothic* is one of the most familiar images of 20th-century American art and has been widely parodied in American popular culture. From 2016 to 2017, the painting was displayed in Paris at the Musée de l’Orangerie and in London at the Royal Academy of Arts in its first showings outside the United States.

# Catholicism, the American Imagination, *and the Pluralist Beast*

John Rao, D.Phil., Oxon.

Some years ago I was travelling with my wife and three children in an isolated region of Germany packed with visitors for a once-in-a-decade festival. After having hunted unsuccessfully for lodging until quite late at night we finally came upon a lovely little village isolated deep in a forest in the mountains. I charged into its one guesthouse, the Hotel Beethoven, with my desperate request for accommodation at whatever cost, to which the immensely fat German innkeeper at the reception desk responded: “I am so drunk from so much beer that I do not have the faintest idea how even to begin to shape an answer to your query.” I have to confess that, *mutatis mutandis*, my first reaction to a call from *The Angelus* to write on Catholics and the national imagination reduced me to a position similar to that of my inebriated German host. I was tempted to reply, incredulously, that my brain had been so pickled by a life spent in the alternate universe created by American pluralist society that I could not imagine how Catholics

might relate to its lunatic vision of creativity in any way whatsoever. Like Ezra Pound, asked what he thought about being released from the nuthouse to which the government had temporarily committed him, it seemed to me that “I was, after all, in America; and all of America is a mental institution.” A Catholic dialogue with the *American Imagination*? Forget about it.

But my corpulent Teutonic innkeeper did in fact find us a room, and further reflection made it clear to me that a brushoff of the *Angelus* would be a copout both insulting to Catholicism as well as to my fellow citizens. It would make America and Americans as such seem to be the problem and not the evil pluralist monster on whose back they had been forced to ride. It would thereby insinuate that the Faith could not push a “raw” nation and its inhabitants—as *natural* as any others it had dealt with in the past—off the *unnatural* beast propelling them to their perdition, so as to effect their redemption, and that of their creativity along with it. More-



# Two of America's Best

Bridget Bryan

As Americans, we love to watch the underdog raise himself up by his bootstraps and flourish: here are two American saints born into wealth who enabled this idea in paradoxical ways that only believers of the invisible world can understand. The heroines in our media and entertainment have always reached for more; these two heroines have done just that—and lived happily ever after.

(So many saintly men and women *made* America. The author hopes that the reader will understand that the heroines shared here are not so much a sign of preference, but rather a sign of great constraint. The venerated related here are those that bring a unique story and considerations to this day and age.)

## **St. Elizabeth Anne Seton: Wife, Mother, Foundress Immolated by Frequent Holocausts**

An accomplished equestrian, writer of poetry, mother and wife,<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Ann Bailey Seton was born into the highest levels of colonial New York society. Her formation from her Episcopalian well-connected family made Elizabeth Ann an extremely well-rounded valiant woman. But when her spouse died, a business friend and a trip abroad changed her life. That life change would shape America in the 19th century.

Elizabeth was born in New York City on August 28, 1774, in the era of the American Revolution. Her age witnessed the redcoats leaving and the Stars and Stripes newly flying amid fifes and drums. Loss marked life from an early age: she lost her mother and little sister at age three, but her father's spiritual life gave the family much stability. A college professor of renown at Columbia University, he was also deeply religious. From him, Elizabeth learned to love the scriptures, especially the psalms, examined her conscience daily, and developed a deep love for humanitarian work. Her father

*Katy Carl Reviews Nick Ripatrazone's*  
*Longing for an*  
*Absent God*

Katy Carl

**H**umans are storytelling creatures, blessed and cursed with the drive to narrate. We are also, even when immersed in a culture's fashionable admiration for skepticism, believing creatures. Our brains have a need to make sense of experience, a need that is not subject to critical judgment about the feasibility of the endeavor. Even the embrace of skepticism can be a reflexive bid in the direction of sense-making—sometimes a desperate bid, lunged at in self-defense against the felt incomprehensibility of experience as received: *Ah! See, life is supposed to be bewildering and destabilizing! I am right after all!*

The human mind, to retain its health, must manufacture what appears to it to be a coherent and logical worldview. Offered one we find compelling, we are likely to accept it. Lacking that, we tend to build our temples in whatever plot of dust we find convenient. This way of being in the world—obscured by sin and struggle, often circuitous, yet also full of hope and

desire for the Divine—makes for a rich history of literature, in which authentic belief and what Henry James called “the sense of felt life” can merge to compelling effect.

In choosing the contemporary era and the Catholic Church as places to pick up his study of literature and belief, Nick Ripatrazone in his recent book, *Longing for an Absent God: Faith and Doubt in Great American Fiction*, stands in a rocky, yet ultimately fruitful, patch of ground. The rockiness is well understood: Following the Second Vatican Council, seismic changes in liturgy and in the presentation of doctrine—alongside other, more widespread shifts in culture—led many to wonder if the Catholic Church truly *did* any longer present a coherent, compelling, and logical worldview. The fruitfulness, therefore, may come as a surprise, especially as academic and popular fashions in literature throughout the 1980s and 90s appeared to be all in favor of irreverence or at least of irreverence's veneer. For writers of serious religious faith, and espe-





Fr. Juan Carlos Iscara, SSPX

## How should we fulfill the precept of attending Mass?

The third commandment of the law of God requires that we “keep holy the Sabbath day” (Ex 20:8), and in the Old Testament God Himself had more exactly defined how to fulfill this obligation. In the New Law, the Church has determined that the divine precept is to be fulfilled by the attendance to Mass on Sundays and holy days. This is an obligation—under pain of mortal sin—for each and every Catholic aged seven and older, who has the habitual use of reason.

To fulfill the ecclesiastical precept of attending Mass the first condition is the physical presence there where the Mass is celebrated, in such a manner that the actions of the priest may be followed. It is not required, however,

to be inside the church, not even to see or hear the priest. It is enough to be part of those who hear the Mass (e.g., from the sacristy, or a side chapel, or behind a column, or in just outside if the church is crowded) and can follow it in some way, by the sound of the bell or the gestures of the other attendees. Thus, even outside the church building one can still assist at Mass for as long as one stays united with the group of faithful inside.

For lack of this physical presence, one who hears Mass on radio or television, or follows its online streaming, or who remains so far from the group of the attendees that he cannot be considered as being part of them does not fulfill the precept.

This presence must be **continual during the whole Mass**. The Mass must be whole and entire, that is, one must be physically present from beginning to end, from the first sign



# Meditations on St. John's Gospel

## *Chapter Thirteen*

### Pater Inutilis

**I**n chapters 13–17, St. John will give us many sublime teachings of Jesus to His apostles at the Last Supper—a part of those, as promised by Our Lord on this very occasion: “the Holy Ghost. . . will bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you” (14:26). The language introducing Christ’s farewell words are quite solemn: “Jesus, knowing that his hour was come, that he should pass out of this world to the Father. . . knowing that the Father had given him all things into his hands, and that he came from God and goeth to God. . .” (vs 1 & 3). He is about to leave them (vs 33 & 36), which does not mean that He does not love them. On the contrary, “having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end” (vs 1) to the end of His life, and to the limits of love (15:13). This whole discourse will show us that.

There are some who are troubled somewhat by the first words “Before the festival day of the Pasch” (vs 1), and especially those subsequent,<sup>1</sup> which show, according to the fourth gospel, that Jesus died on the day before the Passover. The Last Supper would not therefore have been the Passover meal. (This is the reason for the Eastern Rites using leavened bread for

the Eucharist.) But it was, as is seen very clearly from the Synoptics.<sup>2</sup> Jesus, and some of the Jews, therefore, celebrated the Passover the day before most of Jerusalem did. That is a fact we get from the gospels. We do not know exactly why; hence a number of theories.<sup>3</sup> But it is sure that He supped on the Thursday, died on the Friday, and rose on the Sunday.

At this Supper, we see Jesus “troubled in spirit” (vs 21), as He already had been, at the prospect of His passion (12:27). His passion has begun; He is wounded in heart; the cause right now is the thought and presence of one of His intimates who is about to betray Him, under the inspiration of the devil (vs 2). Our Lord knows this (vs 11) and that it is ordained of God (vs 18). But He cannot keep it to Himself, “and He testified and said: Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you shall betray me” (vs 21). The outpouring of a suffering heart, and at the same time, a further appeal, after washing his feet, to the traitor. “Friend” Jesus will call him to the end (Mt. 26:50). Now all the apostles are troubled (vs 22), except the one who should have been. Our Lord will be giving them a new commandment of love (vs 34) for which He has already prepared them more immediately by His example,



# Who Then Can Be Saved?

Pauper Peregrinus

**T**o go to heaven, we need the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. To get on well with our neighbour, on the other hand, lesser qualities will do: friendliness, sympathy, basic honesty and decency. But since we see our neighbour, and we don't see heaven, people easily imagine that these lesser qualities are "what really counts." From there it's a small step to supposing that everyone who is not an obvious scoundrel will probably get to heaven in the end.

That kind of thinking is death to evangelization. If our non-Catholic, and even our non-Christian neighbor is probably alright as he is, who will go the trouble of trying to bring him into the Church? Might it not even be kinder to leave him alone, since if he becomes Catholic, he'll discover that he has all sorts of obligations to believe and do and not do things, none of which he knew about before? Surely, it would be cruel to enlighten him!

Of course, such thinking is nonsensical. Truth sets us free: error imprisons us. The gospel is not a burden which we should want to spare our neighbors; it is the grace of God, and life eternal. And Jesus Christ is not one way among others, not even a "privileged way," as a certain American bishop recently said: He is the way to the Father, and we cannot walk that way unless we know Him.

Unfortunately, "indifferentism," despite having been condemned in round terms by various 19th century popes, seeped into the Catholic Church in the 20th, and made itself intellectually respectable. One of those who reacted most strongly against it was the Jesuit priest, Fr Leonard Feeney (1897-1978). The outline of his story is quite well known: insisting on the literal truth of the axiom, "Outside the Church there is no salvation," he became a successful chaplain to students at Harvard University. Protestant parents were annoyed to find their children going over to Rome. Cardinal Cushing, archbishop



# THE LAST WORD

**Fr. David Sherry**  
District Superior of Canada

Dear Reader,

“The Americans,” wrote a certain rotund English writer, “have established a Thanksgiving Day to celebrate the fact that the Pilgrim Fathers reached America. The English might very well establish another Thanksgiving Day to celebrate the happy fact that the Pilgrim Fathers left England.” Perhaps the English were glad to see the Puritans go because they were killjoys, I would have been glad to see the Puritans go because they were even less Catholic than the Anglicans.

People often make the claim that it doesn't really matter what religion you follow as there is much goodness to be found in differing sects. “Look, see how honest those Methodists are,” or “If only our girls dressed as modestly as the Mennonites!” or “Ah! The beauty of the Anglican liturgy!” This is to be expected. Heresy is not an apostasy from *all* truth and all goodness, but rather the elevating of a partial truth to the detriment of all others. The heretic—the Puritan in this case—says “God is all powerful.” This is true. Then comes his error. He elevates that truth above everything and concludes “Therefore, there is no free will outside of God.” This inexorably leads to “God is the cause of evil” or, as Philipp Melanchthon had it, “God is no less the cause of the treason of Judas than He is

of the vocation of Paul.” This widening error's practical conclusion was well understood by the author of this witty limerick.

At Geneva when Calvin had quitted  
A young man said “Now I have hit it  
Since I cannot do right  
I must think out tonight  
What sin to commit and commit it.”

For error to be believed, it has to be attached to truth; and for evil to be attractive it must needs be attached to good. And good there is: the Methodist is honest, and the Mennonite is modest and the Anglican liturgy? . . . well, compare it with your Roman missal and see where the good came from.

Many Catholics pray that their country returns to the Faith; the American or English Canadian can scarcely do that as his country never has been Catholic. The greatest thing he can pray for is a first and fervent conversion of his country to the true Faith of Christ and that His Church take our nations in Her maternal embrace. Now that would be cause for a Thanksgiving Day.

Fr. David Sherry

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