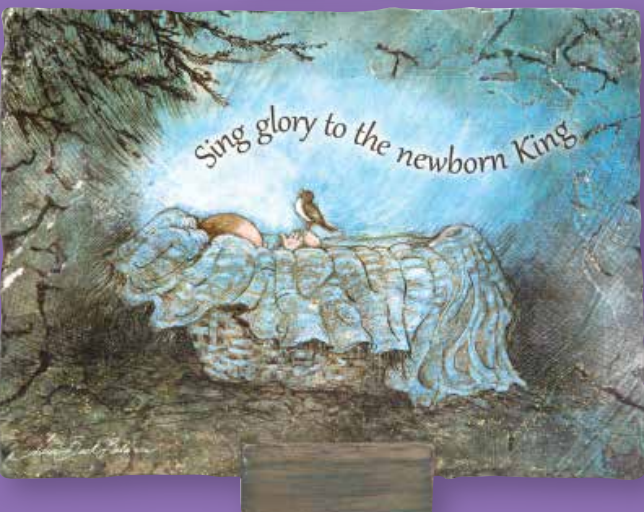


Christmas Gift Guide 2017



PHOTO BY GARETH HARPER ON UNSPLASH

In anticipation of Christmas, we offer our readers a selection of gift ideas that honor Jesus — the first and best Christmas gift. (Prices subject to change.)
Unless otherwise noted, to order: Visit EWTNRC.com or call (800) 854-6316.



SCENIC CHRISTMAS PLAQUES: SING GLORY & AWAY IN THE MANGER
 From the Sherri Buck Baldwin Christmas Collection, this plaque features a beautiful Christmas scene of Baby Jesus in the manger. The verse reads: "Sing glory to the newborn King" and "Away in the Manger." The plaque is made of resin and designed to look like stone; it comes with a base for tabletop display and a hang tag on the back for hanging. Measures 5 1/4 inches tall x 7 1/4 inches wide. Glory, Item: 3134B; Manger, Item: 3134C. Each \$15.



BLUE AND WHITE NATIVITY
 This contemporary Nativity set consists of 10 individual pieces each created with the look of stamped concrete. Each hand-painted piece is a combination of smooth clean lines and textured patterns in mostly blue/gray and neutral colors, with shiny gold accents. The larger figures also bear a message pressed into their garments: on Mary, "the perfect LIGHT"; Joseph, "star of WONDER"; King No. 1, "gift of FAITH"; King No. 2, "gift of HOPE"; and King No. 3, "gift of LOVE." Made of dolomite resin, the tallest piece is 7 1/4 inches tall. Remaining pieces include: Baby Jesus, donkey, ox and two sheep. Item: 13824, \$88.



FATIMA 100TH ANNIVERSARY BLOWN-GLASS ORNAMENT
 This beautiful mouth-blown glass ornament represents the 100th anniversary of Our Lady's apparition in Fatima to the three shepherd children, Lucia and her cousins, Sts. Jacinta and Francisco. It is custom made and detailed by hand with gold and glitter accents. This heirloom-quality piece is made in Poland exclusively for the Classics by Kurtis® collection. It measures 6 inches high x 3 1/2 inches wide. Item: K2356, \$52.



JESU, JOY OF MAN'S DESIRING CD

The Dominican Sisters of Mary, whose debut CD topped the *Billboard* "Classical" chart, round out their 20th-anniversary year with a glorious new Christmas album. Recorded in the ethereal surroundings of their motherhouse in Ann Arbor, Michigan, this is a collection of 16 of the sisters' favorite carols including: *Christmas Proclamation*; *Wake, Awake, for Night Is Flying*; *Sleep, Little Jesus*; *Carol of the Bells*; *Emmanuel*; *Snowflakes*; *Away in a Manger*; *Angels We Have Heard on High*; *Adeste Fideles*; *Joy to the World*; *Gaudete*; *Of the Father's Love Begotten*; *Madonna's Lullaby*; *Gabriel's Message* and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*. Item: 4125C, \$17.

Carols With the Dominican Sisters

Alongside a life of contemplative prayer and apostolic service in education, the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist have been known to appear on game shows and to chat with Oprah Winfrey on television.

This year, the **Dominican Sisters of Mary** are being recognized for their angelic voices, climbing the charts with their new Christmas album, *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*.

"We had been asked many times over the years for a CD to share our Christmas songs," said Dominican Sister Joseph Andrew Bogdanowicz, co-foundress of the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist.

"Because we can't be with everyone during Christmas and not everyone can come here to the motherhouse, we wanted to invite people into our special celebrations and traditions for honoring Our Lord's birth through this music,

which is certainly a beautiful manner of doing so," she told CNA.

Founded 20 years ago in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist have grown from four sisters to more than 138. They serve as educators for students from preschool through college, as well as librarians at the North American Seminary in Rome.

With an average age of 30, this young community of sisters is proclaiming Christmas tidings this year through *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. The Christmas CD, which was recorded by De Montfort Music at the Ann Arbor Motherhouse Chapel, features classic tunes such as *Carol of the Bells* and *Away in a Manger*. However, it also includes songs from 10 different countries, mixing the classics with contemporary tunes.

Sister Joseph Andrew noted that her favorite song on the album is *Sleep, Little Jesus*, which

'WE HOPE TO BE PART OF MANY FAMILY CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS BY OUR CAROLING IN THE BACKGROUND.'

— DOMINICAN SISTER JOSEPH ANDREW BOGDANOWICZ

is a Polish lullaby.

"It is a dear song to our community and already seems to be getting much feedback from those who have the CD," she said, pointing to the community's founding under the beloved Polish pontiff Pope St. John Paul II.

"This is our third recording, and so the process was more familiar to us," she added, noting that recording the holiday album during the summer gave them some room to be more creative

with the process.

"It is always a lot of fun, but this time we were able to decorate portions of the motherhouse for the Christmas recording, which was in June. In this manner, it became all the more fun and spirited so that we would be at our very best in prayer and song for the recording," she continued.

Moving forward, Sister Joseph Andrew noted that many young sisters who are joining the community "have many musical treasures to bring to us." As far as another album, she said that "only God in his infinite wisdom" knows.

"There are so many lovely ways to celebrate Christmas, and we hope to be part of many family Christmas celebrations by our caroling in the background," she said.

"Our sisters want to be there with others during prayer, song, cooking, decorating the tree and family dinners."

CNA

A Look at Karol Wojtyla the Writer

BOOK PICK

BY JOHN M. GRONDELSKI

They say that the Spanish cardinals who showed up for the second conclave of 1978 had copies of *Amor y Responsabilidad* (Love and Responsibility) in their suitcases. I don't know if that's true, but I certainly agree with Krzysztof Dybciak who, in this book's epilogue, writes:

"Chronologically, Karol Wojtyla was first a writer, then a Catholic priest, and finally the pope. Without his writings in a variety of literary forms and styles, from poetry and drama to sermons and philosophical and theological treatises, he would not have become the head of the Catholic Church."

Karol Wojtyla's pre-papal corpus is huge, but it is also neglected. Part of the reason is that it's hard: One story has it that confessors in Krakow would assign reading *The Acting Person* as penance for the most obdurate sinners. But the reward of wrestling with Karol Wojtyla is that you encounter no ordinary thinker, content to pen aphorisms that would fit in a self-help book. Chapter 9 provides an overview of Wojtyla's major books, like *Love and Responsibility*,



WIND FROM HEAVEN
John Paul II — The Poet Who Became Pope
 By Monika Jablonska
 Angelico Press, 2017
 202 pages, \$17.95
 To order: angelicopress.org

'CHRONOLOGICALLY, KAROL WOJTYLA WAS FIRST A WRITER, THEN A CATHOLIC PRIEST, AND FINALLY THE POPE.'

— EPILOGUE

ity, Sources of Renewal, and Person and Act. A very special dimension of Wojtyla's body of work is his poetry and drama.

The future pope was a poet and playwright, although his subjects and genres were — like him — not well understood

because he was so ahead of his time. That dimension is also the most valuable part of Monika Jablonska's book: Parts III and IV delve into Wojtyla's poems and plays in individual chapters like "Thinking My Country," "Our God's Brother," "The Jeweler's Shop" and "Radiation of Fatherhood." She strikes a good balance, preserving the style of a popular introduction to Wojtyla's literary output, neither superficial nor going into extreme depth. Consider these thoughts about Wojtyla's poem *The Quarry*:

"Wojtyla presents the harshness and murderous pace of a worker's life, the dignity and drama, and shows the toll hard physical labor takes on a worker's body. For the poet sees labor for what it really is: an exhausted human frame drenched in sweat; unending human effort underpinning the entire civilization. Exploding rocks become a metaphor for the eternal struggle between the inexorable force of nature and the willpower and labor of man. In Wojtyla's poem, man matures through labor. Work acquires a redemptive, sacred quality which no one can take away from man. The unique dignity of human labor stems from the fact that it is a part of creation. Its greatness resides entirely inside man. Labor is

born in his heart. Through the strain of work, man draws closer to God."

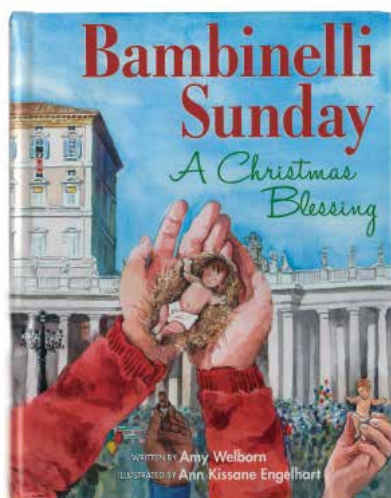
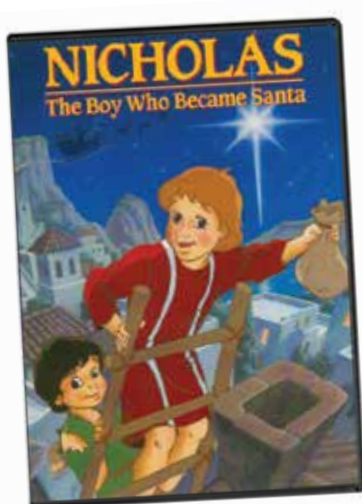
I'd even recommend reading Jablonska's introductions before tackling the original work: She'll help you better understand the writing. Parts I and II provide background: the Polish background of the Pope and how it shaped who Karol Wojtyla was and his thought. She is especially interested in pointing out the sources of Polish history and literature that shaped the poet-turned-priest.

One criticism: Jablonska talks about Romanticism as a movement in Polish literature, but she never really introduces it as a subject on its own, which would have benefited readers less familiar with it. The book includes a foreword by Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, the Pope's former secretary, and a chapter paying tribute to the friendship and collaboration of Pope John Paul II and Ronald Reagan.

Karol Wojtyla's writings, born of his background and experience, are not just books to be read. They are the grist of rich meditations.

Jablonska helps open those meditations for the reader.

John M. Grondelski, Ph.D., writes from Falls Church, Virginia.



CHILDREN'S FELT NATIVITY SET

Young children will delight in the anticipation of Christmas as they re-enact the story of Jesus' birth with this six-piece plush Nativity set. What a wonderful way to keep the focus of festivities on the real reason for Christmas joy. Set includes St. Joseph, Mary, Baby Jesus, lamb, ox and zippered carrying case. Item: 20967, \$23.

CHILD'S NATIVITY 11-PIECE SET

This youthful Nativity includes Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus, as well as an angel, the Wise Men, a shepherd, a lamb, a donkey and a stable. The stable measures 8 inches tall. Made of resin. Suggested for display only. Item: 36144, \$39.50.

WOOD CHILDREN'S NATIVITY SET

This 11-piece set is made of solid wood pieces designed to be handled, played with and enjoyed as a young child's first Nativity set. The brightly colored, fun and whimsical pieces are designed to fit easily in a child's hands and will spark their imagination as they re-enact the Christmas story again and again. The high-quality construction and nontoxic paint make this a safe and durable set that will last for years of Advent and Christmas fun. Stable measures 9 1/2 inches tall, and the standing figures measure 3 inches tall. Item: RLN95, \$15.

BAMBINELLI SUNDAY: A CHRISTMAS BLESSING BOOK

Amy Welborn tells the story of one little boy, Alessandro, and what he learns about family, faith and love one special day. Written for children ages 7-10, this is a wonderful story about sharing, comfort, generosity and forgiveness, told through the lens of a long-standing Italian tradition. The charming tale and beautiful illustrations will make this a treasured tradition for every Advent and Christmas season. Glossy hardcover. 32 pages. Item: 36649, \$16.

NICHOLAS: THE BOY WHO BECAME SANTA DVD

This cartoon introduces children to St. Nicholas as a young child as he discovers the gift of giving. Includes English, Spanish and French audio. One disc. 30 minutes. Item: A03D, \$15.

BABY IN A MANGER ADVENT CALENDAR

This devotional Advent calendar measures 8 1/4 inches x 12 inches and features a friendly Nativity scene with glitter accents. There are 24 numbered windows, with Bible text on the back flaps. Count down the days until Christmas with this fun family tradition. Beginning Dec. 1, open window No. 1, and then another each day, to reveal a special picture and also read the Bible text that tells a part of the Nativity story. Item: BB823, \$4.



JESSE TREE ORNAMENT KIT

Help children come to understand the lineage of Christ and the most important prophesied events that led up to his birth this Advent season with these 3-D ornaments to color and decorate. Each kit contains an explanation of what the Jesse Tree represents, 12 different black-and-white symbolic ornaments to color, biblical verses for each, fully illustrated instructions, sequins and strings. Each completed ornament measures approximately 3 inches x 3 inches x 2 inches. Kit provides hours of holiday fun for ages 5 and up. Item: JT91, \$7.50.



Join the Catholic Counter-Revolution!

Since the 1960s much of Catholicism has veered off in a revolutionary direction — its Marxism deriving as much from Groucho as from Karl — and the results are in: Two out of three Catholics no longer believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Weekly Mass attendance has dropped from 70 percent to 30 percent. The number of priests, brothers, sisters, Catholic schools and parishes, marriages, baptisms, and confirmations has declined — dramatically in many cases. According to the Pew Forum, former Catholics outnumber converts by a ratio of nearly 6-1.

The Catholic revolution, like Lenin's and Castro's revolutions, has been a monumental flop. But the pompous pooh-bahs and radical apparatchiks refuse to recognize the obvious — they think the '60s never ended. Still trying to be cool cats, they're so cool they're frozen in a time warp.

Mercifully, God's frozen people are thawing out. Where's the fire and dynamism in the Church today? Among *orthodox* Catholics! Polls show that the Catholics *most* committed to the Church are orthodox Catholics. The dioceses that have no vocations shortage, the religious orders that are growing, and the seminaries that are packed are predominantly the orthodox ones. The only massive grassroots movement in the Church is the pro-life movement, led by orthodox Catholics. The only significant Catholic presence on TV and radio is that of orthodox Catholics.

In Catholic journalism, guess what's coming at you *hot* off the presses? Orthodoxy! And who blazed that trail? We at the **NEW OXFORD REVIEW** did. Founded in 1977 as an

Anglo-Catholic magazine, we took our name from the 19th-century Oxford Movement. We immediately championed Pope St. John Paul II when he cracked down on dissenting theologian Hans Küng, although no leading *Roman Catholic* magazine was willing to do so. The novelty of Anglicans supporting a muscular pope attracted the attention of *Newsweek*, which predicted that we would, like Bl. John Henry Newman, become Roman Catholic, which we did in 1983. And a wave of converts followed.

The converts of today are likewise attracted, not by a capricious cafeteria Catholicism, but by a Catholicism steeped in history and tradition. They relish a religion that's bold and articulate, one that doesn't bow down before passing fads. In a word, they want *orthodoxy*. And that's where the **NEW OXFORD REVIEW** comes in.

We don't shy away from the "hard" teachings of Christ and His Church. We know why we're Catholic, and we're not afraid to tell a doubting and skeptical world all about it. We discuss the *full range* of ideas found at the intersection of faith and culture, and we address *all* the challenges facing the Church — and we do it with "attitude," as Karl Keating, founder of Catholic Answers, has said, and "cheek," as *Newsweek* noted.

The Catholic counter-revolution is well underway. As Fr. Joseph Fessio, founder of Ignatius Press, has said, the **NEW OXFORD REVIEW** "belongs in every loyal Catholic's arsenal." Rediscover the romance of orthodoxy and your zeal for Christ's Holy Church by subscribing today!



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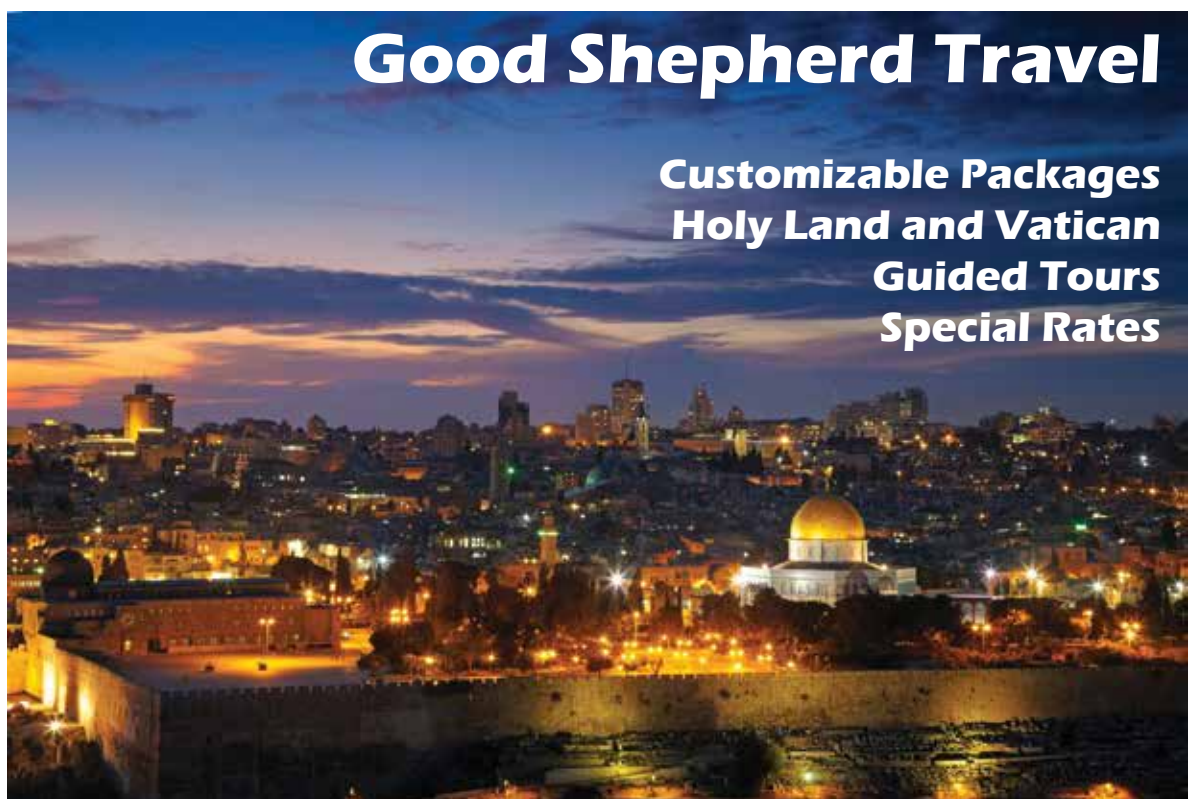
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Musical Selections for Your Gift List

BY TRENT BEATTIE

Latin Mass Priests Release *Requiem*

The Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter's *Requiem* album topped the *Billboard* "Classical" charts earlier this year by finding a home among those seeking to make sense of the end of life. Far from being a morbid or desperate search for meaning beyond the grave, *Requiem* invites listeners to peacefully approach God with humility and hope.

The album, which is the first the fraternity has done with De Montfort Music, contains the sung prayers for the traditional Latin Mass and burial of the dead, along with two motets at the end — one from Giovanni Battista Martini and the other from Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina. These motets help to set it apart from a similarly named album released in 2011 by the Norbertines of St. Michael's Abbey in Silverado, California.

Listening to *Requiem* will mean not just resting up, but resting *upward*, since death for the faithful Catholic is a transition, not simply for his body to the ground, but for his soul to heaven.

There is no better time to practice the transition than now, and no handier way to do so than with *Requiem*, which, in a sense, enables listeners to take the liturgy with them wherever they go.

To order: ewtnrc.com or (800) 854-6316; Item: 524C, \$15.

'Ordinary' Singing in an Extraordinary Way

Most people listening to Cantores in Ecclesia for the first time would probably assume the group was part of the traditional Latin Mass. While their singing is extraordinary as far as quality (strong, flowing and uplifting) and numbers (not many parishes sing Gregorian chant today), it is actually meant to be quite ordinary in the sense that it should find a home in every parish.

Blessed Pope Paul VI intended the *Novus Ordo* Mass (also referred to as the ordinary form of the Roman rite) to include a chant repertoire very similar to that of the traditional Latin Mass.

In order to help make the Holy Father's wishes a reality, Cantores in Ecclesia has recorded three albums (*O Lux Beatissima*, *Inclina Domine*, and *Cantemus Domino*).

All are highly useful for the average parish choir, as they include faithful renderings of the "ordinary" of the Mass (the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, and *Agnus Dei*) and many other tracks meant to be in today's liturgy (the *Pater Noster*, *Veni Sancte*



Spiritus, *Pange Lingua*, *Salve Regina*, and so forth). One of the most amazing things about the trilogy is that it includes a CD (*Inclina Domine*) with all the chants for the Mass of the 21st Sunday in Ordinary Time. From the *Introit* (entrance chant) after which the CD is named to the *Dimissio* (dismissal) and even beyond, *Inclina Domine* will give a "holy shock" to listeners when told its beautiful tracks are merely an ordinary way of singing the ordinary form of the Mass in Ordinary Time. Yes, our "average" Sunday Mass is supposed to sound that ethereal.

To order: amazon.com.

Paraclete Press has a set of CDs similar to Cantores in Ecclesia's, and it comes at a discounted price. The recordings (*Gregorian Melodies I* and *Gregorian Melodies II*) are from the monks of St. Peter's Abbey

in Solesmes, France, and are similar to those of Cantores in Ecclesia.

The chief differences, other than the set discount, are that the Solesmes CDs have all male voices and do not include a CD with the complete chants of a specific *Novus Ordo* Mass. However, both sets can be purchased with their own accompanying book containing musical notation for many of the recorded chants — *Laus Tibi Christe* for Cantores in Ecclesia and *Liber Cantualis* for the monks of Solesmes. (The latter can be obtained as part of a discounted three-item set.)

To order: paracletepress.com.

Our Lady of Fatima

The St. Cecilia Choir at St. John Cantius Church in Chicago, under the direction of Father Scott Haynes, of the Canons Regular of St. John Cantius, recently released an album of Renaissance polyphony written by Portuguese composers. It is called *Renaissance Polyphony of Portugal for Our Lady of Fatima*. Francisco Guerrero (technically a Spaniard but associated with Portugal) is probably the best known of the album's composers, and four of its 12 tracks belong to him.

Listeners will be pleased with Guerrero's rendition of *Dulcissima Maria*, as well as those of other lesser-known Marian songs. The better-known songs, by contrast, are mostly taken care of by such composers as Duarte Lobo, Diogo Dias Melgas, and Manuel Rodrigues Coelho. Their versions of *Regina Caeli* (or *Coeli*), *Salve Regina*, and *Ave Maris Stella* will encourage listeners to think of the Queen of Heaven, who is also the Star of the Sea for the praying Christian.

Prayer is what most of this album is about, since sacred polyphony is unmistakably a heavenly art. Added to this art are instrumental interludes from organist Corrado Cavalli, which also evoke heavenly themes. The listener is drawn by the album's music from his ordinary surroundings to reflect upon the eternal destiny he is called to.

Track 8 (*Virgen Bendita Sin Par*) is a short folk song accompanied by hand drums. One might expect some (monophonic) chant among the preponderant polyphony, which the album has, but a folk song is another matter.

However, the vast majority of the album is apropos for many occasions, perhaps most notably as background music for the recitation of the Rosary. Its topic and timing (a little over an hour) make it ideal for praying three sets of mysteries, one of the things most recommended by Our Lady of Fatima. To order: demontfortmusic.com.

Trent Beattie writes from Seattle.

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Retirement Fund for Religious

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"My sister was to be a nun, and I was to be a mother," says Notre Dame Sister Mary Ann Hanson (*foreground*), 79, "but God had other plans." Throughout 61 years of religious life, she has joyfully followed those plans. Along with the senior religious shown here—and 32,000 more across the United States—Sister Mary Ann benefits from the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection. Your gift helps provide medications, nursing care, and other necessities. Please be generous.

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Make check payable to Retirement Fund for Religious.
Or give at your local parish.

www.retiredreligious.org

Photo (from left): Sister Gloria Rodriguez, MCGS, 80; Father Albert Bunsic, OCD, 81; Sister Alфонина Sanchez, OCD, 96; Sister Mary Ann Hanson, SND, 79. ©2017 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC. All rights reserved. Photographer: Jim Judkis.



THREE-PIECE WOOD-LOOK NATIVITY

Designed to look like these pieces were actually carved out of wood, this beautiful three-piece Nativity is hand-painted in soft blue and brown hues. Mary and Joseph's garments have an outlined landscape of Bethlehem etched on them with trees, sheep and a dove of peace carrying an olive branch, as if to announce the arrival of the King of Peace in our world. The creative detailing makes for a lovely meditation. Made of a resin and wollastonite powder mix, St. Joseph measures 9 1/2 inches tall, Mary measures 6 inches tall, and Baby Jesus measures 2 1/2 inches tall. Item: 66033, \$58.

HOLY FAMILY WITH MESSAGE

In this beautiful Nativity statue, St. Joseph and Mary gaze lovingly upon the Christ Child as Mary wraps him in a swaddling blanket that reads: "For unto us, this day, a child is born, which is Christ the Lord." This statue is made of fine resin and hand-painted to look like it was carved out of wood. Measures 10 inches tall. Item: 66087, \$35.

LIGHTED HOLY FAMILY NATIVITY SHRINE

This beautiful set includes two pieces: a small statue of the Holy Family, with a decorative Nativity scene cutout of natural wood facade with the word "Peace" engraved at the bottom, and a shrine for the statue to be showcased in. The shrine has a thatch roof with a star at the apex; it also has a laser-cut filigree front and is lit from the top by a single LED bulb that casts a warm glow around the Holy Family. The statue and shrine are made of polyresin and wood and measure 6 1/2 inches tall and 9 3/4 inches tall, respectively. (Requires three AAA batteries; not included.) Item: 13834, \$29.





GOLD AND IVORY CHRISTMAS ANGEL NATIVITY
This stunning statue features the Holy Family enveloped in the golden wings of an adoring angel. This piece wonderfully draws attention to the true meaning of the Christmas season: Jesus. Made of resin, it measures 10 1/2 inches tall x 8 inches wide x 5 inches deep. Item: 66248, \$43.

BABY JESUS PORCELAIN ORNAMENT
With its glossy smooth surfaces and soft colors, this delicate Christmas ornament depicts Baby Jesus swaddled in a blue cloth lying in the manger suspended by silver twine from a large star with a sparkling rhinestone in the center. Crib measures 2 inches tall x 2 1/2 inches long x 1 1/2 inches wide; from star to base, it measures 5 inches. Includes ribbon for hanging and comes in a gift box with this beautiful sentiment on the box: "Jesus is the light of our Christmas, the joy of our hearts, the hope of our world." Item: 30530, \$12.

PEACE, HOPE AND LOVE ORNAMENT SET
This set of three porcelain Christmas ornaments includes a dove, a heart and a star. Each has a lace texture on the front painted in a bluish-green tint and trimmed in gold. Written in a glossy finish across each is the sentiment the shape symbolizes: peace (dove), love (heart) and hope (star). Ornaments measure approximately 3 1/2 inches each. Item: 33821X, \$19.50.



SHUTTERSTOCK

Sistine Chapel Choir's Advent And Christmas Offerings

For the third year in a row, the Sistine Chapel Choir has released a new CD, which this year is dedicated to Advent and Christmas and features unique scores based on historic manuscripts from the Vatican Library.

Created in partnership with the classical music label Deutsche Grammophon, the album is titled *Veni Domine: Advent and Christmas at the Sistine Chapel*.

Music featured in the album includes a repertoire of scores from several Renaissance manuscripts from the Sistine Chapel reserve of the Vatican Library.

It also features Perotin's *Beata Viscera Mariae Virginis*. Perotin, also known as "Perotin the Great," was a European composer, likely French, who lived from around 1160-1230 and became one of the most well-known composers of his time.

The 16-track album also features the voice of Cecilia Bartoli, an Italian mezzo-soprano opera singer and recitalist, who is the first woman to have ever recorded with the choir.

Like previous albums, the CD includes several scores written by Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, an Italian Renaissance sacred-music composer who lived from 1525-1594 and is perhaps one of the most well-known composers of sacred polyphony.

The CD was presented Oct. 24 inside the Vatican Press Office by Archbishop Georg Gänswein, prefect of the Pontifical Household; Mirko Gratton, director of the Classical and Jazz Division of Universal



Music Italia; and Msgr. Massimo Palombella, director of the Sistine Chapel Choir.

In his comments during the presentation, Archbishop Gänswein said that when the choir first decided to record CDs three years ago, he never imagined they would enjoy so much success.

The selection of songs included on the new disc, he said, "inspire an intimate joy and immerse us in a horizon of rare beauty that expresses, as St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori says, the joy of creation and of man for the birth of the Savior."

What is especially unique about the Christmas album, he said, is that it is based on "translating into music the manuscripts present in the Sistine Chapel reserve of the Vatican Library."

Archbishop Gänswein noted that the Sistine Chapel reserve is "one of the largest archives of Renaissance music in the world," with manuscripts from the greatest composers of this era.

However, apart from shedding

light on the historical significance of the music featured, Archbishop Gänswein said the deeper reason for the CD is the "ecclesial service" the choir, like the rest of the Church, is called to undertake.

"A record production of this type is, in fact, an announcement of the Good News, which acts through art, specifically music," he said, adding that it hopes to inspire "a growth in the spiritual path and even a first questioning about He who is the origin of every beauty."

It is also through music that the Church is able to go to the existential "peripheries" of the world and "offer to all a concrete possibility of encounter with a God who loves, forgives and wants for each one of us a life in abundance," he said.

In comments to CNA, Palombella said this year's CD is important specifically because it uses the ancient manuscripts from the archive of the Vatican Library.

Noting how retired Pope Benedict XVI has a strong appreciation for music, Palombella said Pope Francis "is absolutely in continuity" on this point and has both supported and encouraged this work because "it is directed toward evangelization."

Music, he said, echoing Archbishop Gänswein, also has the ability to reach people, "because many people would never have access to evangelization if it weren't through music and art."

As in previous years, all funds collected from sales of the CD will go directly to papal charities. To order: amazon.com. CNA

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OUR FRIENDS, COWORKERS, FELLOW PARISHIONERS . . .

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The Light of Christ Pierces the Darkness of Emotionalism

BOOK PICK

BY FATHER PAUL SCALIA

“It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds; in reality, our best work is done by keeping things out.” So observes the eponymous demon in C.S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*.

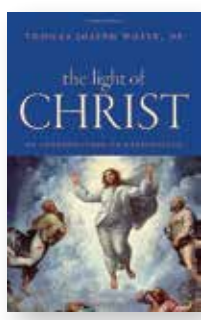
It is indeed an effective tactic: not so much to make us think bad thoughts as to keep us from any thoughts. Old Scratch knows that disciplined, honest thought is not his ally. He must delight, then, in our emotive, sentimental, distracted culture.

We seem to be perfect “patients,” only too happy to have things kept out of our minds. Much of our technology and social media seem designed for that purpose. Our most important political and cultural conversations are quickly reduced to emotions and feelings — conducted by way of sound bites, pat phrases and 140 characters.

This superficiality haunts the Church, as well. It creeps in and tempts us to reduce matters of faith and doctrine to mere experience and feeling. And when we yield to the culture, then emotion trumps the intellect, experience overrules theology and therapy replaces conversion of heart. Of course, Catholicism languishes in such shallow soil. The Church always seeks to sink her faith and life into the deep soil of thought and intellectual engagement.

Into the midst of this anti-intellectual culture comes Dominican Father Thomas Joseph White’s latest book, *The Light of Christ: An Introduction to Catholicism*. It is aptly named: Father White shines the light of serious teaching and reflection into the darkness of emotionalism.

Some have already compared the book to then-Father Joseph Ratzinger’s 1968 *Introduction to Christianity*. The comparison is fair, to an extent. Both works seek to reintroduce the faith to a skeptical culture. But, with all due respect to



THE LIGHT OF CHRIST
An Introduction to Catholicism
By Thomas Joseph White, OP
The Catholic University of
America Press, 2017
328 pages, \$19.95
To order: amazon.com

Father Ratzinger, the average reader will find *The Light of Christ* more accessible.

Still, the word *Introduction* might mislead some people. The book is indeed an introduction. But that does not mean it is simplistic or effortless reading. Perhaps we do better to consider the book an introduction not just to Catholic teaching, but to Catholic *thinking* — a *how-to* on Catholic thought.

The book is more than a catechism and more than an apologetics manual. Father White conveys not just *what* the Church believes, nor only *why* she believes, but also — and more importantly, in our culture — *how she thinks* about these things. *The Light of Christ* cultivates in the reader not just knowledge, but a habit of thought.

Father White teaches at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C. He also runs The Thomistic Institute, a great organization that seeks to engage the culture in serious conversations and bring Catholic teaching to contemporary situations.

Not surprisingly, he follows St. Thomas Aquinas’ lead. He possesses that Thomistic confidence in honest intellectual inquiry. He displays the Angelic Doctor’s willingness to engage questions — and some of the most difficult — about the faith.

Indeed, like his patron, Father

White always takes contemporary questions seriously, presenting them fairly and respectfully. At the same time, the book is also imbued with the spirit of St. Augustine and Blessed John Henry Newman — that is, with their attentiveness to the longings, intuitions and wounds of the human heart.

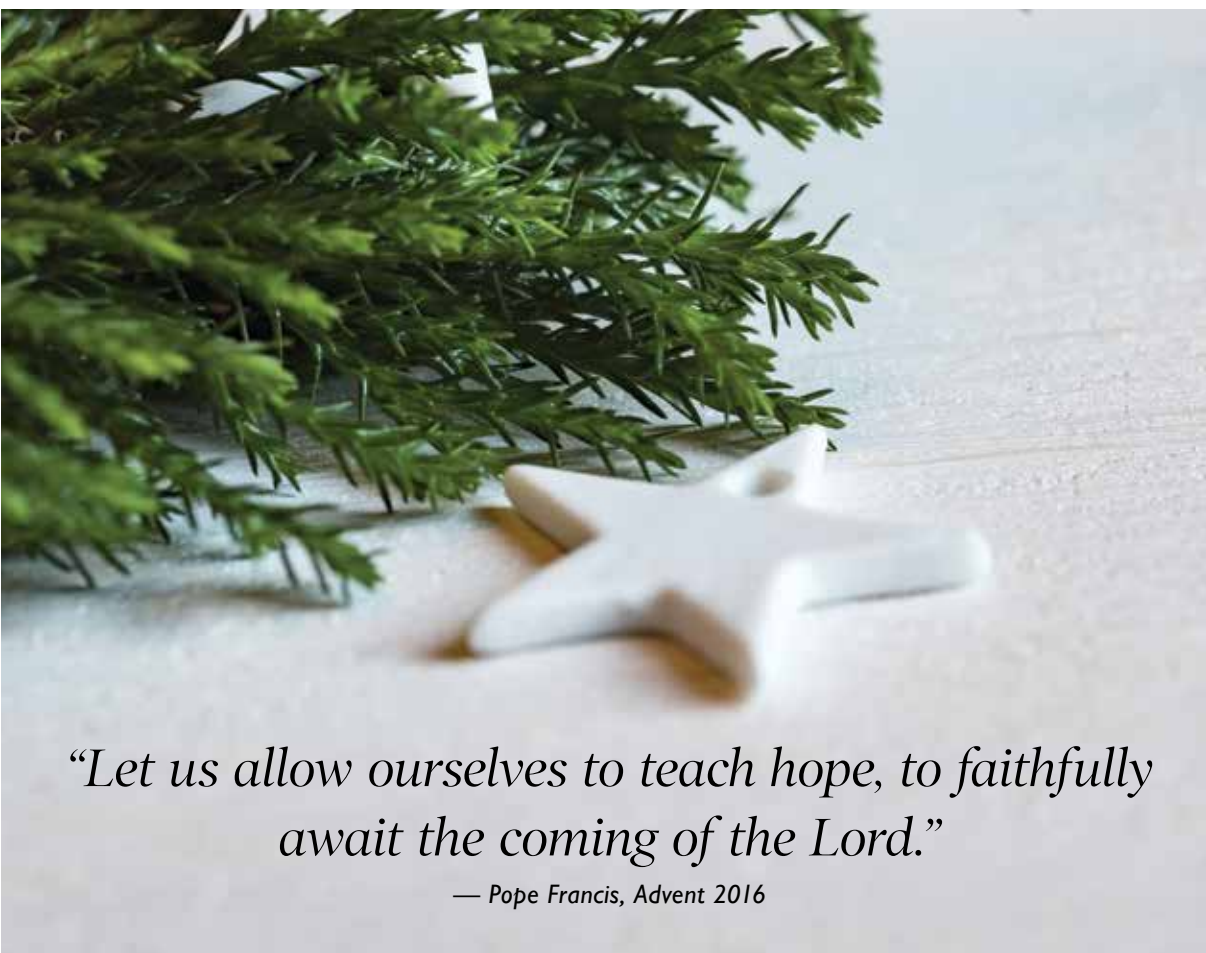
Thus Father White examines Catholic teaching from the perspective of human reason and Divine Revelation. But he also looks at it from within the human heart — from what man’s perennial desires and questions can teach us and where they point us. Which is to say that *The Light of Christ* is both thoughtful and prayerful.

This is no dry recitation of the Church’s whats and wherefores. It takes seriously how the dogmas and the spiritual life mutually support one another. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: “There is an organic connection between our spiritual life and the dogmas” (89). Father White’s writing embodies this Catholic conviction that dogma is the essential guide for the spiritual life ... and that honest spiritual striving is essential for grasping dogma.

“Father, is there a book you can recommend?” We priests hear this question fairly often. *The Light of Christ* is such a book. It can be recommended generally — but especially to those coming to the faith, to those desiring to go deeper, and to college and even high-school students needing to cultivate the habit of thinking clearly about the faith.

One final, specific recommendation. This book strikes me as particularly important for seminarians. It is the perfect introduction to genuine pastoral theology: that is, good theology done well, with reverence for the culture’s questions and with a view to living — not just knowing — the faith. It shows how a priest can explain the faith, engage contemporary questions, and impart the genuine instinct and intuition of Catholic thought.

Father Paul Scalia
is the episcopal vicar for
clergy for the Diocese of
Arlington, Virginia.



“Let us allow ourselves to teach hope, to faithfully await the coming of the Lord.”

— Pope Francis, Advent 2016

PHOTO BY JOANNA KOSINSKA ON UNSPLASH



BABY JESUS WITH ANIMALS GLITTER DOME

This Fontanini glitter dome features a sweet scene with Baby Jesus surrounded by three barn animals: two sheep and a donkey. Give it a shake, and hundreds of iridescent specks catch the light and swirl in a flurry around the scene. Wind it up and it plays *The First Noel* in the sounds of a traditional music box. The decorative 2 1/2-inch base is painted in antiqued gold and together with the 4-inch glass globe measures approximately 6 inches high. Item: 59076, \$44.



‘JESUS IS THE REASON’ CHRISTMAS MUG

This large and festive 18-ounce mug is a great way to share your faith and remind your loved ones and friends that Jesus is the reason for the season. From the Sherri Buck Baldwin Christmas collection, this mug features black writing on a glossy white mug, with jolly red berries and handle and a glossy red interior. Mug is microwave-, dishwasher-, and food-safe. Measures 4 inches tall, with a 4-inch diameter and loop handle. Item: 13419, \$10.

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Church History: Times, People and Places

BOOK PICK

BY BRIAN O'NEEL

Given that this book is co-authored by Mike Aquilina (written with his daughter Grace), one is tempted to simply write, "The book is Aquilina's work," as a sort of code for "It's great; buy it," and leave it at that. After all, every title this reporter has ever read by this author has proven not only well-written, but helpful and even deeply moving. Why would this latest work be a departure from that mold?

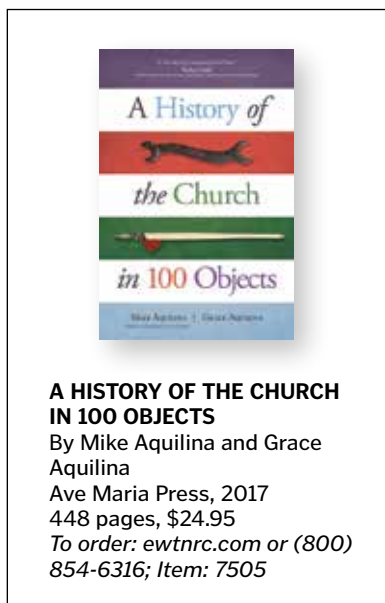
And it is not. Well-written, insightful and often surprising, this book is a treasure worth having. Aquilina and Aquilina have done a remarkable service to the Church, for they have taken a tremendous amount of research and distilled it into a greatly condensed form that anyone — whether a casual reader or harried scholar — can find useful.

The book consists of 100 very short chapters, making it perfect for quick bursts of reading that do not require a tremendous amount of attention. In each, the authors riff off a picture to give their audience an insight into Church history and how that has shaped our world.

"Riff," actually, is the appropriate word. As a jazz musician riffs off of a melody line to create a cross between the exciting and new, so the writers have done here.

Take for instance the chapter, "A Vessel for Wine in the Dark Ages." The accompanying color picture shows a large amphora, and one might expect from a glance at the title and image that the writers will describe, say, the Mass or the Wedding Feast at Cana or how the monastic orders saved the art of wine-making.

Instead, the chapter is really about how the Church rescued the West from the dimmest, most tenebrous periods of the Dark Ages. And off of that, the Aquilinas move the topic to the person of Pope St. Gregory the Great — all in the space of two and a half highly readable pages. (Some-



A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN 100 OBJECTS
By Mike Aquilina and Grace Aquilina
Ave Maria Press, 2017
448 pages, \$24.95
To order: ewtnrc.com or (800) 854-6316; Item: 7505

times the stories take just a little more than a page.)

The way they pivot from what at first glance appears to be a chapter's subject into its real purpose is seamless, and I frequently found myself admiring the skill this took.

More than once, I came away thinking, "I never knew that."

Beyond the truly interesting facts and the compelling stories is the balance the authors strike.

Take, for example, Object 56, "Alexander VI's Seal." Most writers can find nothing good to write about this Borgia pope, and justifiably so. He was a scoundrel and an embarrassment not only to the papacy and the priesthood, but to humanity itself. Yet the Aquilinas note some positive traits in the man, although it is faint praise (of the, "Well, at least he didn't murder his mother," variety).

More noteworthy is their treatment in the same chapter of Father Girolamo Savonarola. This man belonged to the Order of Preachers and ruled Florence for 15 years in the late 15th century. It is from his reign of terror that we get the enduring phrase, "Bonfire of the Vanities."

Most historians treat the megalomaniacal Dominican monk as either the most beastly person who

ever lived, a flawed yet heroic champion for their pet cause, or an unrecognized saint.

The Aquilinas cut through the clutter of such assessments to give a fair, balanced and accurate accounting of the man. He was not, they write, "a hero; he might have been ... but power drove him mad."

They also use chapters to build upon one another so readers get a fuller sense of the times, people and places discussed in the work. So the story of the Renaissance gets traced from Michelangelo through Pope Julius II's decision to tear down and rebuild St. Peter's Basilica to the glorious music of Palestrina to the papacy of Pope St. Pius V and beyond.

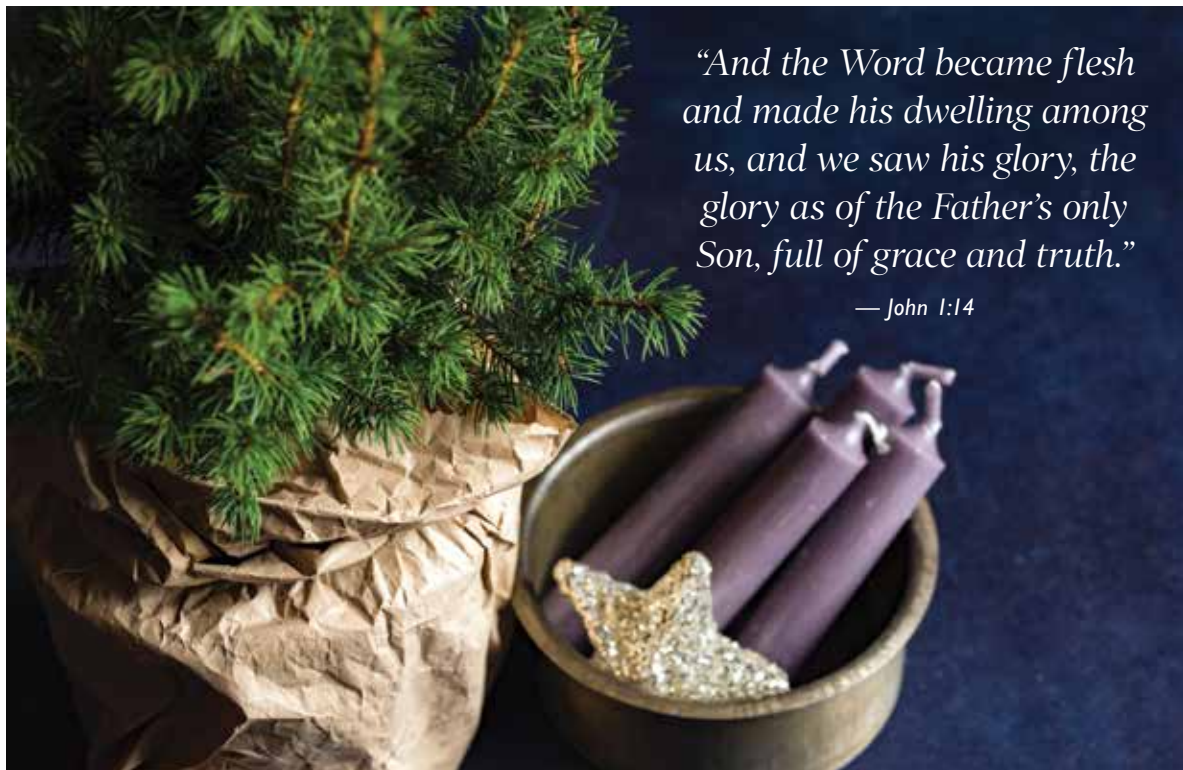
The book also tells stories that even knowledgeable readers will not know. Take, for instance, the story of Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros, a Spanish Franciscan who served as a cardinal. Several chapters on, we learn the connected story of the Dominican friar Bishop Bartolomé de las Casas. Both were agents of Church and social reform who worked to prevent the slavery so tragically employed by Spanish colonies in the New World. Most know nothing of these two figures, and yet they were two of the first prominent activists for a universal conception of human dignity.

It is not unusual to find oneself at the end of a story wanting to know more. If someone wants to gain a better understanding of a subject, each chapter concludes with two books for suggested reading.

At \$24.95, some will find the price a bit dear. Others will consider it a bargain for all of the knowledge packed inside its 448 pages.

If you like learning and value having easily accessible information at your fingertips, then this book is well worth owning.

Brian O'Neel writes from Quarryville, Pennsylvania.





"And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth."

— John 1:14

PHOTO BY JOANNA KOSINSKA ON UNSPLASH

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