this retelling is proclaimed to future generations. “This is written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name” (Jn 20:31).

I believe that these early Christian communities, which faced challenges not unlike our own, have something to teach us by the approach they took in passing on the faith. Three things are noteworthy. First, they were faithful to the past. Second, they knew the importance of their own witness. Finally, they took up this challenge with a deep faith that the generations following them would be gifted with the Spirit to respond to the perennial truth of the Gospel and be able to make it their own for their time.

These three attributes should mark our efforts as we take up the task of passing on the faith in our time. We should never underestimate the importance of having a firm grasp of our tradition and the basics of our faith. If we do not want our youth to be theologically illiterate, then the adult community must prize and value its own ongoing learning. Also, the adult community must be able to demonstrate to young people not only that they have a grasp of the faith but that they are grasped by it. This means giving witness to our youth that our faith is the point of reference for the decisions we make and the kind of life we live.

Finally, we need to take up the work of forming young people in the faith with the confidence that God’s grace is active in them calling for a response. Practically, that means teaching in a way that shows that we value them as partners in passing on the faith in our time. In sum, they both receive and have something to offer.

I wish that I would have had a chance to tell that young Muslim man how much my friends and I admired him for the witness he gave by practicing his faith in an alien land and culture. I even think it may have encouraged him. While that opportunity has passed, it does prompt me to suggest that all of us involved in passing on the faith should not overlook the importance of letting our youth know that their own practice of the faith is inspiring to their elders. By letting them know that they have much to offer as well as to receive, we plant a seed in their hearts about their future responsibility in handing on the faith. We create in them a thirst for Christ that can only be satisfied by doing the same for others. That seems to me to be at the heart of an inter-generational approach to faith formation and the hope it offers all of us in a moment of great challenge.

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Afterword

Continuing the Conversation

JOHN C. CAVADINI

It is difficult to find oneself in the position of commenting on such a distinguished set of papers and on the learned and truly clarifying discussion among all of the participants — leaders in scholarship, education, and publishing. I learned so much from listening to the reflections of fellow members of our symposium that it seems otiose to add anything further! I will begin, then, by naming two areas of major contribution — areas of such strong agreement among participants that they seem to offer recommendations for the future. I will then turn to one area where I believe the conference participants did not fully address all that is implied in the topic “Handing on Catholic Faith.” I will conclude with some observations on the role of beauty in the practice of handing on the faith.

In Handing on the Faith, What Is Primary Is Practice

The “catechumenate of culture,” as Paul Griffiths puts it, is really a catechumenate of particular practices more than anything else. The culture of commodification inculcates a way of being, a habitus that can only be countered by a set of practices which proceed from an essentially different inspiration from that of the culture at large. William Dinges’s paper specifies one dimension of this cultural catechumenate as a formation in “individualism” and recommends the primacy of the practice of Church, one might say, as the only suitable principle of formation to the contrary. Mary Johnson’s paper demonstrates the extent to which a certain kind of practice of the faith has been eroded. The case seems effectively made
that handing on the faith means first and foremost handing on the practice of the faith in its sacramental and liturgical dimensions and in the virtues that they form. In other words, the “context” is such that only the primacy of a different “practice” as a way of life will offer an alternative catechesis to the one culture offers now.

Terrence Tilley, in a particularly attractive way of putting it, suggests the category of “witness” as the primary category for “communication” of the faith. “Witness” is essentially a set of practices drawing its inspiration from faith and from commitment to living out one’s faith in communion with the Church. It shows the world a different way of constructing the self, in a way, a different “self” altogether, than the self defined by the consumerist economy of choice (echoing Griffith’s way of putting it here). Thomas Groome reminds us that it is time to “reclaim the whole Church as catechist educator”: “Let us imagine that the whole Church is catechetical more than does catechesis as one thing among many.” This is very much the sort of holistic counterpractice, if I may put it that way, which Griffiths and Tilley and others are calling for as primary in the face of a culture that does not share the Church’s primary assumptions about God and human beings. The essential in communicating the faith is ultimately the communication of an attitude, the humility of Christ, and the struggle is essentially “one of imagination and heart,” as the Ruddys say of the controversy over abortion. Michael Himes’s emphasis on hilaritas or “joy” as the “absolutely necessary requirement for all successful preaching and teaching” reaffirms the idea that what is essential is the passing on of an attitude or, broadly speaking, a “way of being.”

The papers on “content” support this basic insight. Robert Wilken’s persuasive essay on the primacy of the language of faith is another way of putting the primacy of practice. “The faith . . . is handed on embedded in language. It is not a set of abstract beliefs or ideas, but a world of shared associations and allusions . . . . The Church’s way of speaking is a map of the experience of those who have known God and the beliefs it carries cannot be abstracted from the words, nor the words uprooted from the persons that used them.” The Church’s language broadly conceived comprises in itself a “culture,” the practice and propagation of which is the primary means of handing on the faith. Luke Timothy Johnson’s essay on the Creed can be easily related to Wilken’s observations. The Creed is, one might say, a speech-act. When recited liturgically, Johnson says, it constitutes a “countercultural act.” The Creed can “shape Christian communities in accordance with the truth of revelation,” that is, in accordance with what Johnson calls “the Christian myth.”

Robert Barron’s paper provides a sense of what one might call the proper intellectual attitude which should inform any articulations of the content of faith, namely, an ontology that does not construe God as a competitor with human goods, and which therefore provides adequate basis for a self-correcting intellectual principle within Christianity, an intellectual space from which to judge our own conformity to the Christ of Chalcedonian orthodoxy, who embodies the principle of God’s noncompeting status in the hypostatic union. Strictly speaking such an attitude is not a “practice,” but it takes the same starting point as the other papers. What we are handing on is something at least logically and conceptually not dependent on the non-Christian cultures around us, not dependent, that is, upon their fundamental attitudes as these find embodiment in speech and practice.

Relation of Church and “World”

Within this broad area of agreement, there was some disagreement on what the Church, as a community of practice, itself a culture or at least formative of cultures, can learn from the “world.” Some of the papers present such a negative picture of the “world” surrounding the Church that it seems that there would be very little good influence. Other papers (in addition to comments made orally) were more positive.

Paul Griffiths suggested in the discussion that the ancient trope of taking the “gold of the Egyptians” was the proper way for the Church to appropriate elements of truth in the surrounding culture. Does this include anything that can be thought of as a practice, determinative of identity? Bishop Cupich suggested that in the sex-abuse scandal, part of what we had learned, or should have learned, was that the Church had not caught up to the culture at large in certain attitudes or practices, one of them being accountability. It was precisely the wrong move, he suggested, for Catholics, and especially the hierarchy, to retreat into the Church conceived as a self-contained culture that had the ability of self-correction apart from any contribution, as it were, from the surrounding culture. In reply to the observation that the problem is that the
A Recommendation

From the foregoing reflections one might suggest that the first step in handing on the faith is to strengthen the distinctive practices, liturgies, and language that create Christian identity and the virtues these practices are meant to form. One should do so remembering that those virtues are susceptible to good example from anyone, including non-Christians, even if their definitive value and meaning are established by the Christian story. Formation in Christian virtue means attentiveness both to the distinctive Christian witness in revelation and example, as well as humility before the virtue of any person of goodwill.

Intellectual Trends and Practical Consequences

A second, though perhaps less explicit, area of agreement is that what happens in the “elite” element in Christian culture eventually affects all levels. Strong intellectual trends, no matter how seemingly limited to educated elites at first, can ultimately become formative of Christian practice and belief on every level. Wilken’s paper alerts us to the example of translations, based on various intellectual agendas, which caused the English text of the Bible to lose concreteness and distinctiveness. Luke Johnson’s paper shows that the loss of ontology and the consequent ascendancy of Christologies from below have resulted in an impoverished sense of the central truths proclaimed by the Creed, including the Resurrection of Jesus.

However, if the culture teaches a “meta-narrative” of choice as absolute, then even the Church itself comes to be understood against a voluntarist paradigm that makes it essentially a function of mutually elected association (a Lockean understanding of church). Put this way, the issue seems to be the loss of a meta-narrative of the Church’s own, the loss of an integrated view of knowledge in which the Church makes sense not as a voluntary association or club, but as the ongoing presence of Christ in the world. The loss of the overarching intellectual integration of faith and reason that Neo-Thomism represented resulted in default to the prevailing cultural paradigm, such that the Church and all its practice and teaching is understood against a Lockean epistemology which in effect secularizes even the Church itself by making all meaning and
association a function of arbitrary choice. This is not really integration but the aggressive refusal of it.

**Loss of the Neo-Thomist Synthesis**

Within this broader consensus about the role of intellectual trends, there was also some disagreement. It seemed true to most present that with the loss of the Neo-Thomist synthesis, Catholic education on all levels seems to have lost its balance, because it lost a unity of discourse that had penetrated all educational levels and made them cohere. As some participants noted, as times and cultures change, this loss was inevitable, and theological renewal will not come about by trying to revive something anachronistic. Nor will it come about, other participants reminded us, by forgetting the achievements of the past or the ideals which inspired the syntheses of the past.

I wonder whether, in abandoning the Neo-Thomist synthesis, we also abandoned the ideal of integration of knowledge and the dialectic between faith and reason it presupposes because we had a hard time thinking of that ideal of integration separately from the Neo-Thomist example of it. Bishop Kicanas, for one, commented on the pessimistic tone of some of the observations regarding the contemporary fragmentation of knowledge. Perhaps we have projected some of the pessimism out of our own lack of imagination. We imagine a situation in which it is all or nothing—an effective, presently accomplished integration or nothing.

But that is not the standard that John Paul II holds us to, for example, in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. No one argues more strongly than John Paul II for the integration of knowledge:

> It is necessary to work towards a higher synthesis of knowledge, in which alone lies the possibility of satisfying that thirst for truth which is profoundly inscribed on the heart of the human person. Aided by the specific contributions of philosophy and theology, university scholars will be engaged in a constant effort to determine the relative place and meaning of each of the various disciplines within the context of a vision of the human person and the world that is enlightened by the Gospel, and therefore by a faith in Christ, the *Logos*, as the center of creation and of human history.

And yet he points out that this integration is never fully and finally realizable:

> Integration of knowledge is a process, one which will always remain incomplete.  

*Ex Corde* presents an ideal best characterized as one of seeking and partial attainment. I think it is easier to go forward if we realize that it is this quest for integration that is the standard, not necessarily an already fully accomplished integration. Holding out for the latter as a *sine qua non* for progress is bound to make the situation in which we find ourselves bleaker than it really is (admitting that it is in many ways bleak). But engaging in the quest for integration, and in some ways thinking of that quest as integrating, is already to offer a great witness in the midst of a secular intellectual culture that has aggressively abandoned this ideal altogether.

**The Quest for an Integral Vision**

One implication of Robert Wilken’s paper is that the Christian language embodies within it an implicit integration or synthetic view of all of reality. Our job is to use this language and actualize its implicit capacities and potentials for integration and for serving as the basis for integrative reflection. The “speaking” that results should have the “openness” that Luke Johnson’s paper enjoins, for the dialectic between faith and reason is a search for integration in the face of, and *because of*, constant questioning from “reason” or the disciplines. We have to relearn the reflex of using the language of revelation, i.e., of Scripture and Tradition, in a confident way, and yet in a way that is nevertheless open to dialogue and discussion of what that language implies in answer to questions from the secular disciplines. If we set this tone at the highest levels of education, it will ultimately promote its use at all other levels.

I think that people are not confident using the language of the tradition because they are afraid they will be perceived as too closed, too narrow, not open. And, if in fact we use this language thinking that by using it we will be resuscitating anachronistically an integration from the past, we will continue to feel this lack of confidence. But if we learn to use Scriptural and Traditional language in an intellectually open way, challenging others by our use of it but also open to feeling the challenge
their intellectual questions and moral example may bring, we will infuse life into the whole fabric of Catholic intellectual culture. Then, it will be able to offer an alternative between what seems like the only two options available: the ugly polarity between aggressive secularization and anti-intellectual fideism. HANDING ON THE FAITH MEANS RECOVERING THE QUEST FOR INTEGRATION AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF EDUCATION.

A Further Recommendation

In light of the above analysis one hazards a recommendation to those charged with leading Catholic universities and colleges. Promote the language of integration of knowledge. The language of integration has been largely eclipsed by the language of "interdisciplinarity," a kind of secularized version of the true ideal. Re-energize the vocabulary of "integration" based on the dialectic between faith and reason and encourage creative work flowing from the commitment to integration of knowledge.

A Crucial Concern

I found myself worrying throughout the conference about one fairly consistent omission. Virtually absent from the papers and the discussions, apart from a few comments made by a couple of the participants, was any consideration of "Handing on Catholic Faith" as handing on the faith, that is the teachings of the faith, the doctrines which express and elaborate the mysteries of the faith as summarized in the Creed. All present seemed to agree on the primacy of language and practice as the most essential element in handing on the faith, and disagreements centered on how corrosive the ambient culture has been toward the practice of the faith, how much Catholics themselves had permitted their own language and practice to be eroded, and how optimistic one might be about contemporary pedagogies of language and practice. But only Bishop Cupich's paper (prepared after the conference) made more than glancing reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church or its emphasis on "the exposition of doctrine" intended "to help deepen understanding of the faith."

If we were to judge from these papers, which represent a good range of liberal to conservative opinion, one might conclude that we have discovered an unexpected consensus among liberals and conservatives, namely, that doctrinal catechesis is of such little importance or significance in the life of the Church that it is not even worthy of mention in papers considering how Catholic faith is to be handed on in the twenty-first century. Yet, Mary Johnson's paper indicates that the younger people in her study are interested in more substantial catechesis. Why didn't even one of the scholars assembled here mention it as a desideratum in their papers—an omission noted by John Garvey in his comments as facilitator, seconded by Scott Appleby in response?

My worry is that this omission may reflect a pessimism about what is possible in the Church and possibly even what is ultimately possible for human nature, in particular its capacity for understanding. Moreover, if my intuition is correct, such pessimism would stand in stark contrast to the spirit of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and of papal documents on catechesis such as John Paul II's Catechesi Tradendae. It is certainly contrary to the spirit of St. Augustine, whose preaching was strongly fixed on the one idea of bringing his congregation to "understanding" of the difficult quaestiones which Scripture raises for us. One of Augustine's most persistent homiletic themes is that of leading his listeners to an understanding of the mysteries of faith and his preaching, while not indulging in technical jargon or allusions, was not "dumbed down" in the way that homiletic rhetoric often is today. The attitude that understanding is not important seems more a concession to the background culture of dumbing down political and other forms of rhetoric, and to the consumerist culture that gives rise to this cynical treatment of the public.

I believe that we need to recover a sense of the organic connection between doctrinal catechesis and formation in the Mysteries the doctrines represent in order to recover the confidence necessary for "handing on the faith" in a way which encourages a culture of "understanding." Such understanding, always derivative from practice, is also almost always fragmentary and in need of continual revision. But that does not mean there is not a thirst for it. People are always wanting to know from us why disasters happen, why bother praying, why bother remaining faithful in marriage, why Catholics venerate Mary, why we are not in favor of "choice" when it comes to abortion, and so forth.

Practice may, indeed, be primary, but it is a very short distance from a particular practice (e.g., receiving Communion) and being asked by someone to explain what it means. Language may be primary, but again
it is a very short step from use of language to the need to answer questions about that language. To separate practice from understanding too easily is to forget, as Robert Imbelli pointed out in conversation, that practices are “theory laden,” and, as Michael Himes pointed out, that people are genuinely moved when they have a sense that what they believe (or are asked to believe) all fits together into a harmonious whole. To construe language as primary and doctrine as secondary is to forget, too, that doctrine represents a rule for speaking. In worrying about how to pass on that rule for speaking, how to hand on doctrine, we are at the same time worrying about how to pass on a way of understanding, a way of naming and articulating teachings which are ultimately mysteries.6

Support for Catechesis and Catechists

Hand-in-hand with the omission of any mention of doctrinal catechesis, there was also no mention of the fact that the Church supports parish catechesis so poorly and erratically in terms of funding qualified catechetical leaders. The Church does not have a culture that supports informed catechesis at the parish level. Does the lack of mention of this mean we have given up on fixing that? Is handing on the faith so difficult, and the results so minimal, that we should just not bother? Again, there is a streak of pessimism here that does not correspond with the message of John Paul II, who says that the office of catechist is of primary importance in the Church and deserves the utmost support:

As the twentieth century draws to a close, the Church is bidden by God and by events — each of them a call from him — to renew her trust in catechetical activity as a prime aspect of her mission. She is bidden to offer catechesis her best resources in people and energy, without sparing efforts or material means, in order to organize it better and to train qualified personnel. This is no mere human calculation; it is an attitude of faith.7

It may be true that our understanding is mostly woefully lacking, that our teaching may fall on mostly deaf ears, but it is not our job to assume it will or it will not — “this is no mere human calculation; it is an attitude of faith.” Effectiveness is ultimately the job of God’s grace, and we have no right to second-guess God’s grace by a pessimism that leads us not even to try. And, in any event, as Augustine points out in the prologue to the De Doctrina Christiana, God wants human beings to have the honor of teaching other human beings about divine matters, and such teaching and learning engenders the bond of charity whether or not it is successful in increasing understanding. The primacy of practice and language does not mean the abandonment of teaching and learning derivative from that practice and language.

Proclamation

I would propose, then, that just as “witness” seemed to be an appropriate category for understanding how “practice” hands on the faith, so “proclamation” is an appropriate category for understanding the way in which handing on the teachings of the faith is itself a kind of practice and witness. Engendering understanding is an element of proclamation. Good preaching aims at understanding, and so does good teaching. The good teaching of the doctrines of the faith is not one that understands itself simply to be handing on mere information, but rather a continuing proclamation of the Good News in the very depths of its mysterious enactment.

Why do we believe that there are two natures in one person in Christ? Not because we are worried to get our “facts” right, just as we want to be accurate about how many molecules of hydrogen are in a water molecule, but rather because this doctrine carries within it the proclamation of the unfathomable mystery of the love of God who declared utter solidarity with us in our suffering and even — without himself being sinful — in our sin, to the extent of living under the consequences of our sin. If we think of handing on the faith under the category of “proclamation,” we will include a focus at once on better preaching and on better teaching of the doctrines of the faith, even as we look as well at fostering parish structures and support that make this more effective. In so doing, we will nurture not only a culture of understanding, but that culture of charity that resists the paralysis engendered by pessimism, lest pessimism shade ever so imperceptibly into its closely neighboring attitude, despair.

The Importance of Beauty

Many of the papers emphasized the role of the beautiful in handing on the faith, and this point was taken up even more forcefully in discussion,
including the beauty of the language of the Bible and the Church, of religious art, of a system of doctrine in which everything fits together, the beauty of literature carrying religious themes, of religious music, and so forth. As Christopher Ruddy pointed out to the agreement of most in the group, religious themes evoked in film can provide excellent access to themes presented more conceptually in other sources. Awakening people to the beauty of the tradition, a beauty they had not expected to find, is a way of inculcating warmth towards Catholic tradition, a receptiveness that entails, among other things, a new appreciation for mystery that cannot ever fully be put into words. Simone Weil once characterized the beauty of religious ceremony as one of the “implicit forms of the love of God.”

In connection with this insight, I would mention Bishop Ramírez’s proposal, in discussion, of one ceremony in particular, the religious procession, as exemplifying the appeal of the beautiful in handing on the faith. In its beauty, a religious procession invites participation and reflection. A procession puts our faith on display, and in a festive, proclamatory way. It begins and ends with the language of the Church. But it takes it out to where anyone can watch. One doesn’t have to enter the nave of the Church to see it. Anyone can watch, anyone can wonder, anyone can ask whatever question comes to them, Catholic or not, and can begin to seek the sort of understanding which will enable them to draw nearer. The procession implies both a confidence in our way of speaking, and an openness which will permit us to try to “give an account of the hope that is in us” to any person of goodwill who asks. The beauty of the religious procession invites a deeper look, without a hard sell or even, at first, much explanation. Whatever explanation follows will always have as its first reference point the procession itself and its beauty, which, like the mystery it celebrates, cannot be exhausted by words even as the words can afford some access to its inner reality and as such offer understanding.

**The Witness and Practice of St. Augustine**

If we are now willing to relocate temporarily to sometime after 396, at an Easter Vigil celebration, perhaps in a rural area near Hippo, we will find another example — and further specification — of the value of beauty in handing on the faith, and it will also help us tie together these reflections as a whole. We find Bishop Augustine preaching at the Vigil. As he seems to have done every Easter Vigil he preached (if the surviving sermons are any indication), he finds himself exhorting the faithful, and perhaps himself, to stay awake. Instead of sleeping, Augustine advises his listeners to imitate inwardly the action they have liturgically enacted outwardly:

> And so may God, who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, shine in our hearts (2 Cor. 4.6), so that within ourselves we may do something similar to what we have done in this house of prayer by lighting all these lamps. Let us adorn God’s true dwelling place, our consciences, with the lights of justice. Or rather not us, but God’s grace with us, of which we have the promise in the words of the prophet, He will bring forth your justice like the light (Ps. 37.6). And keeping watch in this way, we shall not be afraid of the fear by night, and the busy thing prowl in the dark (Ps. 91.5–6).

In this passage, Augustine uses three scriptural texts to articulate some spiritual advice. More precisely, he has picked scriptural texts because of the images of light and darkness and night they carry, and he has picked these texts, in turn, because of the actions of the liturgy. Augustine is commenting not only on the scriptural text, but on the beautiful images evoked by Scripture as those images are vividly presented in the actions and circumstances of the Easter Vigil. The “darkness” of Psalm 91:6, and whatever may be prowling in it, are all around the watchers, gathered in the reassuring space of the house of prayer. The “light” shining in the darkness of 2 Corinthians 4:6 is also all around them, in the lamps they have lit and are holding. Each person has literally become a “light,” has become, in their own person, the scriptural image.

> “And so,” Augustine advises in another sermon, “with the aid of all these lamps shining during this night, let us stave off the sleep of the body in this solemn vigil; but against the sleep of the heart, we ourselves ought to be lamps shining in this age of the world as in a night.”

Augustine had explained in another sermon that the sleep of the heart is the darkness of the heart bereft of charity. Augustine compares love or charity to the watchful sleeplessness of the vigil of the Resurrection. The life of charity is a life of watchful mindfulness of the Resurrection of Christ and as such a life of hope for our own resurrection. At the Easter
Vigil our flesh is awake, bearing lights to commemorate the solemnity of Easter, so we have in that wakefulness an image of what charity is. The believer whose life is lived in love is a watchful witness to hope, enlightening the world with its witness. The dramatic images in the liturgy capture and embody scriptural images. The catechist, in this case the preacher, unfolds the teachings of Scripture by knitting them together in accordance with the Rule of Faith, which teaches the resurrection of the flesh, but does so as an explanation and elaboration of the beautiful liturgical ceremony that he is celebrating with the faithful. In the end, the beauty of the textual and liturgical imagery is meant to be relocated, so to speak, transferred, one might say, to the life of the Christian believer.

Notes

Foreword / Robert P. Imbelli

1. The Initiative, originally planned as a two-year response to the crisis afflicting the Catholic Church in Boston, has recently been established as a permanent Center at Boston College. Information about its activities may be found at www.bc.edu/church21.


3. Archbishop Sean O’Malley, O.F.M. Cap., “Handing on the Faith.” The Archbishop’s talk may be viewed at www.bc.edu/church21/resources/webcast. A print copy may also be obtained from the Church in the 21st Century at Boston College.

Introduction / Robert P. Imbelli


For a rich study of the central importance of discernment in the Christian theological and spiritual tradition, see Mark A. McIntosh, Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge (New York: Crossroad, 2004).


4. For a fine development of this theme, deftly employing both theological and literary resources, see Robert Barron, And Now I See: A Theology of Transformation (New York: Crossroad, 1998).


**Chapter 1 / Religious Education, Mary Johnson, SNDdeN**


2. Dean R. Hoge, William D. Dinges, Mary Johnson SNDdeN, and Juan L. Gonzales Jr., *Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001).

**Chapter 2 / Faith, Hope, and (Excessive) Individualism, William D. Dinges**


23. Roof, Spiritual Marketplace, 121.


25. The weakening commitment to institutional religion is not, therefore, unique to Catholicism, nor is it exclusively a failure of church leadership — although the problem has been tragically exaggerated by failed leadership in the current sex abuse scandal. The crisis of hierarchical malfeasance in the Church today came at a time of widespread scandals in other institutional sectors of American life, notably the corporate ones. While there are obvious and important differences in these domains, malfeasance in both contexts involved the abuse of authority and the exercise of deception (whatever the motive or rationale). Both, in turn, have fed the loss of confidence in institutional structures. Catholics can readily draw analogues of executive malfeasance from the corporate world to highlight what has happened in the ecclesiastical one — and vice versa.


31. Wuthnow, After Heaven.

32. Miller, Consuming Religion, 82; Roof, Spiritual Marketplace; Fuller, Spiritual but Not; Wuthnow, After Heaven. It should be noted that the relationship between “being religious” and “being spiritual” is not a zero-sum game. Marler and Hadaway, after reviewing the literature, argue that “being religious” and “being spiritual” are interdependent concepts. Most Americans see themselves as both. However, the overall pattern is toward less religiousness and less spirituality, especially among the younger and more religiously marginal. See Penny L. Marler and Kirk Hadaway, “‘Being Religious’ or ‘Being Spiritual’ in America: A Zero-Sum Proposition?” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 41 (2002): 289–300.

33. While some Catholics may take solace in this phenomenon out of the conviction that God reaches for humans at all times and in all ways, there is a disquieting and not-so-subtle message here that institutional religion is not essential to this encounter — a view seriously at variance with Catholicism’s communal sensibilities.


42. Likewise, Dillon et al. observe that the expectation that spirituality should lead to an increase in generative interests (an individual’s concern with the goal of providing for the next generation) fits well with diverse psychological and adult development theories that link spiritual growth to higher levels of cognitive development and/or self-actualization associated with the maturational processes. Their study rejected the idea that institutionally autonomous spirituality exacerbates the increased cultural tendency toward social withdrawal or indifference toward the welfare of others. See Dillon et al., “Is Spirituality Detrimental to Generativity?” Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion 42 (2003): 427–42.


44. William V. D’Antonio et al., American Catholics: Gender, Generation, and Commitment (Wheaton, Calif.: Alta Mira Press, 2001), 28.

45. Dean R. Hoge, William D. Dinges, Mary Johnson, SNDdeN, and Juan L. Gonzales Jr., Young Adult Catholics: Religion in the Culture of Choice (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 226.

45. See, for example, the comments by Dr. Carol Guardo, president of the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn., in “Crisis’ Complexities Explored at Saint Mary’s Dialogue,” Initiative Report 8, no. 1 (April 2004): 2.


47. Hoge et al., Young Adults, 54.


49. Davidson, The Search; Hoge et al., Young Adult.

50. D’Antonio, American Catholics, 22, 28, 36.


52. Hoge et al., Young Adult, 51. Thirty-one percent were not registered in Davidson’s study, The Search, 178–80.

53. D’Antonio et al., American Catholics, 47.

54. Only 15 percent of Catholic children attend Catholic elementary schools (see M. T. Reidy, “Needed: The Vision Thing—Rethinking the Mission of Catholic Primary Schools,” Commonweal 131, no. 7 [April 9, 2004]: 15–18), and approximately two out of every three Catholics attending college are at a non-Catholic institution. See Bryan T. Froehle and Mary L. Gautier, A Portrait of the Catholic Church in the United States (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000), 85.

55. Hoge et al., Young Adult, 42–43.


58. In the case of Latinos, however, research has shown that with each passing generation, Latinos are leaving the Catholic Church for Protestant denominations and other religions, even where many retain a Catholic sensibility in regard to moral and social issues (death penalty, abortion, immigration) and Democratic Party affiliation. See Ariela Keysar, Barry A. Kosmin, and Egon Mayer, The PARAL Study: Religious Identification among Hispanics in the United States (New York: Graduate Center for the City University of New York and Brooklyn College, 2001). In addition, the number of Latinos who now self-identify as professing no religion, or as atheist, agnostic, or secular, has doubled (from 6 to 13 percent [see Keysar, 5]) over the last decade. The sons and daughters of many Latino immigrants consider themselves less religious than their parents and children. See also “Latinos Slip Away from Catholicism,” Washington Post, May 12, 2001.


60. J. Korkin and T. Tseng, “Happy to Mix It All Up,” Washington Post, June 8, 2003, B.

Even here, however, there are hints of changing religiosity in the face of ethnic assimilation. For example, our study of young adult Catholics indicates that, national origin variations notwithstanding, Latino Catholics in the United States tend to become like other Catholics in the belief and practice of their Catholicism over time. See Hoge, et al. Young Adult, 113–30. Arlene M. Sanchez Walsh’s recent study also shows how evangelical groups encourage the severing of ethnic ties in favor of spiritual community. See Arlene M. Sanchez Walsh, Latino Pentecostal Identity (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).


63. Portier, “Here Come,“ 46.

64. Portier, “Here Come,” 56.


68. As noted, more positive assessments of religious individualism (or “reflexive spirituality”) can be found in Roof, Spiritual Marketplace (1999); Dillon, Wink, and Fay, “Is Spirituality Detrimental?”; Fuller, Spiritual but Not Religious; and Besenke, “Speaking of,” 365–81.

69. Michele Dillon, Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith, and Power (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and Paul Lakeland, The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church (New York: Continuum, 2003). Most of these points are made by Michele Dillon in her analysis of lay Catholic groups in opposition to official church teaching. The difficulty with Dillon’s position from my point of view — following a critique by John Coleman, S.J. (see John Coleman, “Dissenting in Place,” America [May 6, 2000]: 18–20) — is that Catholicism is not just a “culture system,” a definition Dillon emphasizes as a way of accentuating the pliability and socially constructed nature of its symbol system. Catholicism is also a set of beliefs and doctrines that are bounded and, from the perspective of faith, rooted in revelation. As Coleman points out, there is a long history of rejecting as inimical to the received faith individuals and groups who held beliefs that overlapped with core ones, but who also held beliefs that were eventually deemed deviant by the Church’s duly constituted authority. While Catholicism cannot be reduced solely to official Magisterial teachings, neither can it be divorced — implicitly or otherwise — from that teaching office as though “doctrinal engagement means that one reasoned opinion about the tradition is essentially as good as another” (Dillon). As Coleman notes, the historical conditioning of religious language, symbolism and meaning notwithstanding, “doctrinal engagement” is not an unbounded process.

Chapter 3 / Culture’s Catechumens and the Church’s Task, Paul J. Griffiths

2. The scriptural basis for this typology of malformed desire is 1 John 2:16. For an interesting — indeed, riveting — analysis of the three kinds of malformed desire, see Augustine, Confessions, Book 10, which is largely structured around them.
7. The distinctively American form of this drive for remaking has recently (and too sympathetically) been depicted by David Brooks in On Paradise Drive: How We Live Now (And Always Have) in the Future Tense (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004). But it is no new theme in descriptions of America, surfacing as early as Tocqueville.
8. On consumerism, choice, and plasticity, see Terri Kapsalis, “Making Babies the American Girl® Way,” The Baffler 15 (2002): 29–33. This essay is a classic of analytical anthropology and deserves to be much better known.
9. On the stimulus of desire, the niche market, and Lacan’s analysis of “objects” which stimulate desire but are incapable of proving satisfaction and thus provoke further desire, see the many works of Slavoj Žižek, especially (with regard to the connections with Christianity) The Fragile Absolute — Or, Why Is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For? (London: Verso, 2000), and The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 2003).
11. 1 Corinthians 2:9: “...no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him...” (Revised Standard Version); see also Isaiah 64:4.

Chapter 4 / On Taking the Creed Seriously, Luke Timothy Johnson

1. These opening remarks recast the classic distinction between fides quae and fides qua.
4. On both sides we see the signs of the loss of critical thinking, in the best sense of that term. The refusal to acknowledge the hierarchy of truths is the surest sign that theology has devolved to a form of ideology.
17. From among a vast literature, a few important works: E. Cassirer, An Essay on Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944); M. Eliade, Myth and Reality,


21. The Da Vinci Code: A Novel (New York: Doubleday, 2003) has gone from being a publishing phenomenon to becoming a significant cultural indicator.

22. Indeed, there has been relatively little real opposition to forms of historical Jesus research and revisionist accounts of early Christianity from scholars, either because so much of it appeared in popular rather than academic publications.


Chapter 5 / The Metaphysics of Co-Inherence, Robert Barron


7. Hic solus verus Deus bonitate sua et omnipotenti virtute non ad augendam suam beatitudinem, nec ad acquendam, sed ad manifestandam perfectionem suam per bona ... liberim consilio ... de nihil condidit creaturam ... Decretals of the First Vatican Council Dei Filios, chapter 1, in Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils vol. 2, ed. Norman Tanner, S.J. (Georgetown: Sheed and Ward, 1990), 805.


Notes to Pages 230–231


10. Aquinas, De Potentia Dei, q. 3, art. 3, ad 3.


Chapter 6 / The Church’s Way of Speaking, Robert Louis Wilken


3. Augustine, City of God, 10.21.


Chapter 7 / Communicating the Faith, Michael J. Himes

2. Aquinas, Summa, II-II, q. 6, a. 1: Et ideo fides quantum ad assensum, qui est principalis actus fidei, est a Deo interius movente per gratiam.
3. Aquinas, Summa, I, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2: Unde theologia quae ad sacram doctrinam pertinent, differt secundum genus ab illa theologiae quae pars philosophiae ponitur.
9. Augustine, De catechizandis rudibus 8. Since the best date for De catechizandis rudibus is around 400, it should be noted that questions which the older Augustine, embroiled in his anti-Pelagian struggle, would have certainly raised in describing the work of the teacher of faith, e.g., the gratuity of the grace of faith, go unmentioned.
11. Augustine, De doctrina christiana 4, 27; in Hill’s excellent translation, Teaching Christianity, 215. The reference is to Cicero’s De oratore 21, 69.
12. Augustine, De doctrina Christiana 4, 29; Teaching Christianity, 217.

Chapter 8 / Handing on the Faith to the “New Athenians,” Christopher and Deborah Ruddy

5. “Which of these comes closest to your view? Abortion should be generally available to those who want it. Abortion should be available, but under stricter limits than it is now. OR, Abortion should not be permitted.”

Chapter 7 / Communicating the Faith, Michael J. Himes

8. Antoine Dumas, a member of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, cited by Pristas.
11. Augustine, Confessions, 9.4.8.

Chapter 7 / Communicating the Faith, Michael J. Himes

2. Aquinas, Summa, II-II, q. 6, a. 1: Et ideo fides quantum ad assensum, qui est principalis actus fidei, est a Deo interius movente per gratiam.
3. Aquinas, Summa, I, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2: Unde theologia quae ad sacram doctrinam pertinent, differt secundum genus ab illa theologiae quae pars philosophiae ponitur.
9. Augustine, De catechizandis rudibus 8. Since the best date for De catechizandis rudibus is around 400, it should be noted that questions which the older Augustine, embroiled in his anti-Pelagian struggle, would have certainly raised in describing the work of the teacher of faith, e.g., the gratuity of the grace of faith, go unmentioned.
11. Augustine, De doctrina christiana 4, 27; in Hill’s excellent translation, Teaching Christianity, 215. The reference is to Cicero’s De oratore 21, 69.
12. Augustine, De doctrina Christiana 4, 29; Teaching Christianity, 217.
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Poll results are available at www.pollingreport.com/abortion.

5. See the contrast, for example, between the two following quotes:

"Perhaps there is no single teaching position articulated by the bishops that is better known throughout our country than this one: 'The Catholic Church opposes abortion.'" See Donald W. Wuerl, "Faith, Personal Conviction and Political Life," Loebig Lecture, May 25, 2004, www.dioptt.org/addresses_loebig.pdf.

And, "Catholics, by contrast [to evangelical white Protestants], look like the public at large in their views on abortion, despite the opposition from their church. Fifty-five percent of Catholics say abortion should be generally legal, and 28 percent say their religion is the main factor in their opinion on the subject — in both cases about the same as the population at large." — 2001 ABCNEWS/Beliefnet poll in Gary Langer, "Support for Legal Abortion Wobbles," July 2, 2001, abcnws.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/poll010702.html.


10. These four types are presented in Gallagher, Clashing Symbols, 113–16; all quotes in the remainder of this section are drawn from these pages.

11. It should be noted, though, that what Johann Baptist Metz has called — in a phrase that could come only from a German theologian — "productive noncontemporaneity" remains essential if the church is not to be wholly assimilated by its age. He sees such noncontemporaneity positively as (1) resistance to what is deformed in one's time and place, and (2) trust in one's heritage. J. Matthew Ashley writes, "As much as [Metz] criticizes nineteenth-century Catholic theology for sealing itself off from the intellectual and cultural debates raging in Europe, it is not because it failed to 'keep up with the times,' but because it demonstrated a failure of nerve, a failure to trust that the substance of tradition was up to a thorough confrontation with modernity." See J. Matthew Ashley, "Introduction: Reading Metz," in Johann Baptist Metz, A Passion for God: The Mystical-Political Dimension of Christianity, ed. and trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 1998), 10.

12. N. T. Wright, "Transforming the Culture: Main Address at the AFFIRM conference at Waikanae [New Zealand] in July 1999," online at www.latimer.org.nz/morecomment.asp?ColId=85. All subsequent quotations from Wright will come from this article.


15. Gallagher, Clashing Symbols, 123.


17. Gallagher, Clashing Symbols, 130.


19. This phrase is from #83, Pope John Paul II, Evangelium vitae (Boston: Pauline Books, 1995).


23. See also Anthony Kenny, "The Quiet Virtue," The Tablet 258 (January 3, 2004), 12, especially the following: "Humility is the virtue that counters this prejudice [of self-love]. It does so, by making the presumption that others' talents are greater, others' opinions more likely to be right. But only by approaching each conflict of interest and opinion with this presumption can one hope to escape the myopia that magnifies everything to do with oneself by comparison with everything to do with others."


30. Radcliffe takes this insight from Joseph Pieper, who writes: "Fortitude presupposes vulnerability; without vulnerability there is no possibility of fortitude. An angel cannot be brave, because he is not vulnerable. To be brave means actually to be able to suffer injury." See Joseph Pieper, The Four Cardinal Virtues (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 117. Radcliffe takes Pieper a step further when he then comments that it is easy for angels to say, "Do not be afraid," since they cannot be hurt themselves!

31. Radcliffe refers here to II-II q. 136, a. 4 of St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologicae.

32. Paul VI, Evangelii nuntiandi, #41. See also #21; "Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in something that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine. Through this wordless witness these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst? Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelization."


35. See also Louis Dupré, "The Joys and Responsibilities of Being a Catholic Teacher," in *Faith and the Intellectual Life: Marianist Award Lectures*, ed. James L. Heft (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 67–68: "Indeed, religion ought to teach the student to raise questions before it presents definite answers. In no case should it remain satisfied with providing 'information' about sacred history, theology, or morals, without rendering that information meaningful, that is, fit to order the theory as well as practice of one's life and to expand their limits. In presenting the human encounter with transcendence, the educator must evoke the universal wonder that hides behind all reality, before attempting to define mystery in doctrine (which he also must do, and with all the rigor demanded by an academic discipline!).

"But religious education will not succeed in its task, neither the general nor the specific, unless it lays in the student the foundations of an interior life, the beginnings of a contemplative attitude. For this purpose some appreciation of silence appears indispensable. Without it the student will be incapable of creating the emptiness needed to be open to faith or, for that matter, to wonder. In silence we learn to take our distance from our surroundings, temporarily suspending the constant summons of the immediate. Perhaps the most valuable contribution of Quaker schools consists in the few minutes of silence that inaugurate each day. Only in silence does genuine prayer originate. I harbor no illusions about the use to which the child or adolescent puts this silence. As one pupil of a Quaker school whom I questioned about the matter, candidly informed me: 'We just look around and wait for it to stop.' Quite so, but during that short period of mostly boring emptiness everyday meanings cease to be taken for granted. That is why the student feels slightly embarrassed and resists this sudden leave-taking from the familiar world. In silence the student becomes capable of surprise and thus acquires a fundamental openness toward all aspects of life. And, to repeat it, creating such an openness should, I believe, be our most immediate objective in Catholic education. Without it we must abandon all hope of establishing any authentically religious or selflessly moral attitude."

36. E. e. cummings, "Pity this Busy Monster, Manunkind." This poem can be found at www.americanpoems.com/poets/ee acumings/328.


Chapter 9 / Communicating in Handing on the Faith, Terrence W. Tilley

In writing this essay, I depend on ideas (and occasionally adapt some prose) from some of my other work, including *The Evils of Theodicy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1991; chapters 1–3 on language); *Inventing Catholic Tradition* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000; the central notion of a religious tradition as a practice or set of practices); *History, Theology, and Faith: Dissolving the Modern Problematic* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004; the practices of communicating the faith); *Story Theology* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1985; narrative as central and doctrine as derivative), and "Narrative and Communication Theology in a Postliterate Culture" (with Angela Ann Zukowski, M.H.S.H.), *Catholic International* 12, no. 4 (November 2001): 5–11 (the effects of media). Thanks to Maureen Tilley, Dennis Doyle and Dermot Lane who read an early version of this essay and helped make it clearer and to my colleagues in the "Handing on the Faith Conference" who offered useful comments and criticism in a supportive atmosphere.


9. Nicholas Lash, “Authors, Authority and Authorization,” in *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church: Theory and Practice*, ed. Bernard Hoose (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 60–61. One of Lash’s points is to reject the equation of “authority” with “governance” in the Church. Governance is an aspect of teaching authority. And when authorities do not teach people how to live in and live out the tradition, but use their governing power to impose certain beliefs and practices on the community, they fail to educate the community in how to live as Christians in holiness and friendship.

10. I do not intend to ignore the concern for truth here or to support solipsistic or fideistic positions. My own view on this is that “true” is properly an appraisal
terns, typical wisdom, i.e., phronesis, having

It seems to be especially apt if “faith” is construed as a supernaturally infused virtue. Avery Dulles, S.J., makes a similar point. He describes evangelization as follows: “Evangelization...should not be seen primarily as the communication of doctrine or even of a ‘message.’ It means introducing people to a blessed and liberating union with the Lord Jesus, who lives on in the community that cherishes his memory and invokes his Spirit. To evangelize...is never a matter of mere words. It is an invitation to others to enter the community of the disciples and to participate in the new consciousness that discipleship alone can bring. Evangelization is too often seen by Catholics as the responsibility of a small body of ‘professionals,’ who alone are presumed to be competent to unravel the complexities of ‘Catholic doctrine.’...”

Every Christian can be called in some way to become a missionary,...Wherever they go, convinced Christians will seek to extend the way of life revealed by God in Jesus and thus to gain new disciples for the Lord.” See Avery Dulles, *A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 17.

This “know-how” is not merely technical knowledge, but wisdom or *phronesis*. *Phronesis* without technical ability may be merely dreaming rather than real wisdom, but the burden of chapter 4 of *Inventing Catholic Tradition* was to show that such knowing how to live in and live out a tradition cannot be rote skill or mere technique.

I do not mean to say that we do not teach. Certainly theologians’ tasks include teaching, as the first two paragraphs of this essay suggested. However, when the knowledge to be communicated is fundamentally “know how” rather than “know that,” coaching should be the primary pattern in which other forms of teaching are subsisted.

Brad Kallenberg, “The Gospel We Proclaim” (paper presented to the Billy Graham Center 2004 Evangelism Roundtable, April 22–24, 2004), 13. This is, of course, not merely technical training, but training meant to develop Christian wisdom, i.e., *phronesis*, having God’s ways in mind/practice, rather than humans’.


Miller, *Consuming Religion*, 106.

William A. Clebsch, *Christianity in European History* (New York: Oxford, 1979), 233. Clebsch’s provocative work focuses on Christian lifestyles in some sense typical of various eras. Clebsch’s work suggests that in every era, the multiple patterns of being Christian fall into two distinct categories: those that seek more to redeem the good in the ambient culture and those that seek to oppose what is evil in the culture. Both patterns are good ways to be Christian, even if they are not perfectly congruent with each other. This duality of pattern types also can be discerned in our consumer culture as well, as the next paragraphs seek to show.

22. For elaboration of the relations between institutions, traditions, beliefs, and communities, see Tilley, *The Wisdom of Religious Commitment*, chapter 2.


25. Dulles, *A Church to Believe In*, 16.


28. Clebsch, *Christianity in European History*, 76.


Chapter 10 / Handing on the Faith, Thomas Groome


2. For further elaboration see my essay, “Religious Education and Catechesis: No Divorce for the Children’s Sake,” *The Furrow* 53, no. 11 (November 2002).


4. Robert Barron’s essay in this collection offers a powerful argument that a “communitarian manner of knowing” that is “thoroughly participative” is demanded by the classic Catholic sense of God’s relationality and ours.


7. As Luke Timothy Johnson writes in this collection, “if faith is not a faithful life, then it is nothing.” See also Terrence Tilley’s essay for this emphasis on faith as its practices, including the “practice of believing.”

8. Luke Timothy Johnson’s essay is refreshing about the centrality of the Creed. However, since the patristic era, the Church has had a strong sense that the “content” of its faith is a tripod of creed, cult, and code — its central beliefs and convictions, its sacraments and worship, and its morality and virtues. This threefold mosaic of “the content” of Christian faith has been reflected in all the great catechisms over the Church’s history, including the most recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994).
10. Here I touch on one of my reservations about the “generations of faith” approach as I understand it; it tends to downplay the need for formal programs of instruction, and ties its scope and sequence unduly to the liturgical season and the Sunday lectionary. Lectionary-based catechesis can be a great complement to catechetical education but is not likely to give access to “the whole Christian Story.”
16. “Constitution on the Church,” #37, in Documents, Abbott, 64.
23. Though the GDC uses the language of “correlation” between “life” and “the Faith,” I prefer “integration” as a stronger and more adequate term for what is needed.
26. Quoted in Robert Schreiter, “Faith and Cultures: Challenges to a World Church,” Theological Studies 50, no. 4 (December 1989): 752. The essay by Christopher and Deborah Ruddick in this collection has a similar quote from Pope John Paul II and his homily at Baltimore, 1995.

Chapter 11 / Handing on the Faith through Community-Based Faith Formation, Bishop Blase Cupich

2. As our diocese opted for Generations of Faith authored by the Center for Ministry Development, my description of an inter-generational model will be based on the materials they provided me in preparing my text. See “Generations of Faith,” Center for Ministry Development, www.cndnet.org.

Afterword / John C. Cavadini

1. Martyrdom is, of course, the supreme witness, and provides the extreme example of where Christians can be edified from persons of other cultures: “Martyrs and in general all saints light up every period of human history by reawakening its moral sense. Martyrdom represents the high point of the witness all Christians must daily be ready to give. Faced with the many difficulties that fidelity to the moral order can demand even in the most ordinary circumstances, the Christian is called, with the grace of God invoked in prayer, to a sometimes heroic commitment. Christians are not alone in this. They are supported by the moral sense in peoples and the great religious and sapiental traditions of East and West, from which the mysterious workings of the Holy Spirit are not absent.” See John Paul II, Veritatis Splendor 93–94, from John Paul II, The Encyclicals in Everyday Language, ed. by Joseph G. Donders (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2001), 234–35.
4. “Catechesis aims . . . at developing understanding of the mystery of Christ in the light of God’s word, so that the whole of a person’s humanity is impregnated by that word.” See John Paul II, Catechesi Tradendae 20, from John Paul II, On Catechesis in Our Time (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1979), 29. On the balance between practice and understanding, see, for example, in section 23: “ . . . sacramental life is impoverished and very, very soon turns into hollow ritualism if it is not based on serious knowledge of the meaning of the sacraments, and catechesis becomes intellectualized if it fails to come alive in sacramental practice” (33). Also, at section 19, “The specific character of catechesis, as distinct from the initial conversion-bringing proclamation of the Gospel, has the twofold objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ” (27). Again, at section 25, “Thus through catechesis the Gospel kerygma . . . is gradually deepened, developed in its implicit consequences, explained in language that includes an appeal to reason, and channeled towards Christian practice in the Church and the world” (34).
5. “The sermons [of Augustine] consistently present faith as the sine qua non for understanding, but even more importantly they style the faith of the hearers as a posture of inquiry or seeking. Not everyone may understand at present, but the sermons direct everyone’s faith, preacher as well as hearers, toward understanding.” I am quoting myself here, from an article that treats this topic in Augustine’s sermons in more detail: John C. Cavadini, “Simplifying Augustine,” in Educating People of Faith, ed. John Van Engen, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004).
6. From this point of view, I cannot accept Luke Timothy Johnson’s call to recover the category of “myth” as in the phrase, “the Christian myth,” referring to such central stories as the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ. For one thing, it would be difficult to disentangle Johnson’s understanding of the word “myth” in this context from that represented by those who have spoken of the “myth of God Incarnate” precisely in order to promote christologies from below as based on the “historical” Jesus free of mythological language, and those who use the word “myth”
with reference to Christian doctrines in order to separate the essential meaning of the doctrines from their supposed mythological form.

Further, one should reflect on how much the Old Testament is invested in distinguishing its teaching from what is commonly called myth. Are we to speak of Genesis 1:1–2:3 as a “creation myth” when it seems so heavily invested in polemic against a Babylonian mythic epic of the origin of the world? Not only the Bible but the Church Fathers engage in critique both of classical Greek and Roman myths as well as of philosophical readings of those myths. Christian and Jewish discourse does not seem to present an alternative myth so much as to be seeking another kind of narrative, related to history in an interesting and complex way, admittedly, but not a-historical. This is also what Johnson is after, and I am not sure why the traditional language of “mystery” and “doctrine” is not adequate instead of “myth.” “Handing on the Christian myth” leaves one with an agenda of endless qualification over the term “myth” before any actual handing on can occur.

Finally, distinguishing Christian doctrine from “myth” might be an especially important task in places such as Africa where Christianity is experiencing massive growth and where the relationship between Christianity and native religions is recognized as an interestingly complex challenge.

7. See John Paul II, Catechesi Tradendae 15.
10. Augustine, Sermon 223J.
11. Augustine, Sermon 223K.
12. Augustine, Sermon 223J.

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