

The INSTITUTE on
RELIGION and
PUBLIC LIFE

Publisher of FIRST THINGS

FIRST
THINGS

2017 Annual Report



Letter from the Editor

Dear **FIRST THINGS** Readers,

By the usual publishing metrics, 2017 was a good year. Subscriptions rose. Donations increased. The magazine and website featured sharply written, sometimes controversial, and often thought-provoking articles. Our ideas and interventions were widely discussed.

But of course 2017 was not a good year. Partisan rancor worsened. The press was awash with apocalyptic prophecies of resurgent racism, fascism, and other social diseases. The mainstream media jerked from one preoccupation to next. Over the summer it was Confederate monuments, which gave way to #MeToo. Who knows what will be the next?

Our churches are caught up in this frenzied anxiety. German bishops openly entertain the idea of blessing same-sex unions. Evangelical pastors worry that their congregations are more thoroughly catechized by Fox News than by the New Testament.

We are living in a time of dissolution. Many of the institutions that we once trusted to anchor civic life are failing. Our political parties are dysfunctional. The media is partisan beyond anything I imagined possible a generation ago. Marriage, the foundation of society, is faltering. The churches are stumbling, not sure how, or even whether, to stand up to the immoralities and depravities of our time.

I grieve for those ground down by our present distempers, but I'm not despondent. There is great opportunity before us. Over the past two generations, faith has been driven to the margins of public life by a secular regime. That regime is failing, not ours. As it fails, our voices can be heard anew.

We have a place to stand in this time of dissolution, a place of philosophical and theological integrity. Our loyalty to first things will not fail us. As a consequence, **FIRST THINGS** is well placed to shape a new future.

That future is within reach. In July 2017, I served on a grand jury in New York. We heard many cases. I was consistently impressed by the basic decency and practical intelligence of the people who testified. Few were among those whom we think of as "successful." They were not always articulate. But they cared about the difference between right and wrong—and they were loyal to the truth. They could transcend their self-concerns and self-interests. They were, in short, people capable of self-government. They need only to be nurtured spiritually and guided politically.

FIRST THINGS is committed to providing that nurture and guidance. The ordinary folks I encountered while serving on the grand jury are not well served by the blaring media or our crude popular culture. They need people like you, leaders

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who are alive to the deeper truths about the human condition, people who are animated by a concern for the common good—and who enter public life with a spirit of charity.

We have had to play defense for a long time. Today, however, the forces arrayed against us are dissolving, along with so much else. Political correctness has become feverish and desperate, a sign of its growing impotence. Let's seize the opportunity. In 2018, our job is to step forward and to lead.

Sincerely,



R. R. Reno



R. R. Reno joined **FIRST THINGS** as editor in April 2011. He has been published in many academic journals, and his essays and opinion pieces on religion, public life, contemporary culture, and current events have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Commentary*,

and *The Washington Post*, among other popular outlets. His recent books include *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible*; *Fighting the Noonday Devil*; and *Resurrecting the Idea of a Christian Society*, published in August 2016.

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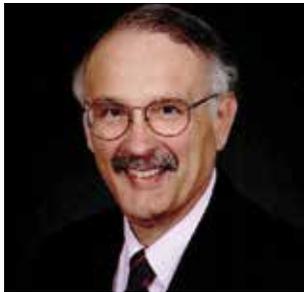
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Frederic Clark is founder of Pacific Equity Management and president of the Casillas Foundation. He is Chairman of the Berkeley Institute, founder of Inner City Scholarship, Inc., and a trustee at the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, the Institute for Family Studies, and the Witherspoon Institute, among others.



ELIZABETH COREY

Elizabeth Corey is associate professor of political science in the Honors College at Baylor University and Director of the Honors Program. She holds degrees from Oberlin College and Louisiana State University. She has published widely in journals including *National Affairs*, *First Things*, *Modern Age* and *The Atlantic*. Her book, *Michael Oakeshott on Religion, Aesthetics, and Politics*, was published by the University of Missouri Press.



MARY ANN GLENDON

Mary Ann Glendon was United States Ambassador to the Holy See and is Learned Hand Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. Her books include *Rights Talk*, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and *The Forum and the Tower*.



RUSSELL HITTINGER

Russell Hittinger is William K. Warren Professor of Catholic Studies and Research Professor of Law at the University of Tulsa. He is also a senior member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas. His books include *The First Grace: Rediscovering the Natural Law in a Post-Christian World*.



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Colin Moran is the managing partner at Abdiel Capital. He holds degrees from Duke University, Stanford Law School, and Oxford University.



DAVID NOVAK

David Novak is J. Richard and Dorothy Shiff Professor of Jewish Studies and Philosophy at the University of Toronto. His books include *In Defense of Religious Liberty* and *The Sanctity of Human Life*.



JAMES PERRY

James Perry is co-founder and managing director of the private equity firm Madison Dearborn Partners, LLC. He serves on numerous professional and philanthropic boards, including the school board of the Archdiocese of Chicago.



BRUCE R. SHAW

Bruce R. Shaw is a consultant serving the energy industry. He previously served as president of Holly Energy Partners LP and as a consultant at McKinsey & Company. He is on several boards, including those of the Covenant School Foundation in Dallas and the International Arts Movement in New York City.



LARRY A. SMITH

Larry Smith is President of ScholarLeaders International, a ministry that encourages and enables Christian theological leaders from the Majority World for the Global Church. Formerly a business strategy consultant, he also serves on the board of Fuller Theological Seminary.



GEORGE WEIGEL

George Weigel is Distinguished Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a Catholic theologian, and one of America's leading public intellectuals. His twenty-five books include the two-volume biography of Pope John Paul II, *Witness to Hope* and *The End and the Beginning*.

The 2017 Erasmus Lecture

Evangelizing the Nones



For thirty years, the Erasmus Lecture has brought world-renowned speakers to New York City to address an audience of FIRST THINGS friends and subscribers. Past speakers include Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, Archbishop Charles Chaput, Ross Douthat, and Russell D. Moore. The lecture also appears in the pages of FIRST THINGS and on *firstthings.com*, and is streamed live online.

In 2017, Bishop Robert Barron, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, delivered the 30th annual lecture to a standing-room-only crowd.

Since 2000, Bishop Barron has used Word on Fire to reach millions worldwide and share the gospel through television, radio, and social media. He is host of *CATHOLICISM*, an award-winning documentary series about the Catholic faith, which aired on PBS. He is a #1 Amazon bestselling author and has published numerous books, essays, and articles on theology and the spiritual life. He is a religion correspondent for NBC and has also appeared on FOX News, CNN, and EWTN. Bishop Barron's pioneering work in evangelizing through the new media led the late Francis Cardinal George to describe him as "one of the Church's best messengers."

In his Erasmus Lecture, "Evangelizing the Nones," Bishop Barron reflected on the best ways to bring the gospel to our contemporaries who identify as "nones"—those adhering to no religious tradition. The text of the lecture was published in the January 2018 issue of FIRST THINGS. Video of the event is available for viewing on firstthings.com/media and has been watched 21,000 times.

Save the date:

October 29, 2018

Erasmus Lecture featuring Rémi Brague

"In the latest Pew Research Center survey, fully 25 percent of the country—80 million people—say that they have no formal religion, and the growth of this cohort is nothing short of startling. In 1970, only 3 percent of the country self-identified as nones. In the last ten years, the number has gone from 16 percent to the current 25 percent. What is desperately needed, if the work of evangelization is to move forward, is a new apologetics."



The following is an excerpt from Bishop Barron's Erasmus Lecture:

By far the fastest-growing “religious” group in the United States is the “nones,” that is, those who claim no religious affiliation. In the latest Pew Research Center survey, fully 25 percent of the country—80 million people—say that they have no formal religion, and the growth of this cohort is nothing short of startling. In 1970, only 3 percent of the country self-identified as nones. In the last ten years, the number has gone from 16 percent to the current 25 percent.

What is desperately needed, if the work of evangelization is to move forward, is a new apologetics. Drawing on years of frontline engagement with a skeptical culture, I would identify five major areas of focus: the doctrine of God, the interpretation of the Bible, theodicy, religion in relation to violence, and religion in relation to science.

I would like to concentrate first on the last issue—for in that Pew study, it was listed as the number one reason why people, especially young people, are leaving the Christian churches. It is sadly becoming axiomatic among many that religious faith is incompatible with a scientific worldview. As philosophy at the university level has degenerated into deconstruction, relativism, and nihilism, and as literary study has devolved into political correctness, trigger warnings, and the uncovering of microaggressions, the hard physical sciences remain, in the minds of many, the sole reliable bearers of truth about the world. And many have bought the critique that religion is, at best, a primitive and outmoded version of science.

The most fundamental problem in this regard is scientism, the reduction of all knowledge to the scientific form. The smashing success of the physical sciences and their attendant technologies has, understandably enough, beguiled the young into thinking that the scientific method is the only legitimate route to truth and that anything lying outside its purview is nonsense or fantasy. Scientism is, in point of fact, a rather silly position to hold. It is operationally self-refuting: In no way can it be proven through the scientific method that the scientific method is the sole route of access to truth.

I have found traction demonstrating that the modern physical sciences emerged when and where they did precisely because of a Christian thought-matrix. As a number of theorists have maintained, two assumptions are essential to the development of the sciences: that the world is not divine (and hence can be investigated and analyzed rather than worshipped), and that the universe is intelligible (and hence in correspondence with an inquiring intelligence). Both of these assumptions are corollaries of the properly theological doctrine of creation, which insists that the world is other than God and endowed in every dimension with intelligibility, since it was thought into being by a person. If this last point is true, then religion is not only compatible with science; in a real sense, it is the precondition for the possibility of science. I believe that addressing this issue should be priority one for a new apologetics. ■

The 2017 FIRST THINGS Lecture in Washington, D.C.

The Social Vision of Leo XIII in the Twenty-First Century



On March 9, 2017 William K. Warren Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Tulsa Russell Hittinger delivered the third annual FIRST THINGS Lecture in Washington, D.C. Dr. Hittinger reflected on modern threats “from above” and “from below” to family, polity, and Church, the three societies at the center of human life. He identified the responses these threats elicited from Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI in their social encyclicals, and the evolution of new threats and ideologies in the twentieth century. Dr. Hittinger then analyzed two modern threats “from below”: the cultural revolution of the 1960s and the techno-economic revolution of more recent times, both of which have presented marriage, polity, and Church as merely optional societies. He concluded with reflections on recent magisterial responses to the crisis facing family, polity, and Church today. His lecture was published in the June issue of FIRST THINGS under the title, “The Three Necessary Societies.”

“In our modern times, we can imagine polity, marriage, and Church as merely optional—not normative and formative institutions in which we live a life and achieve perfections over generations so much as instruments we can use to live a life of our own choosing. Negative anthropology construes the three great institutions of human happiness as platforms for self-revision, not for the perfection of a nature.”

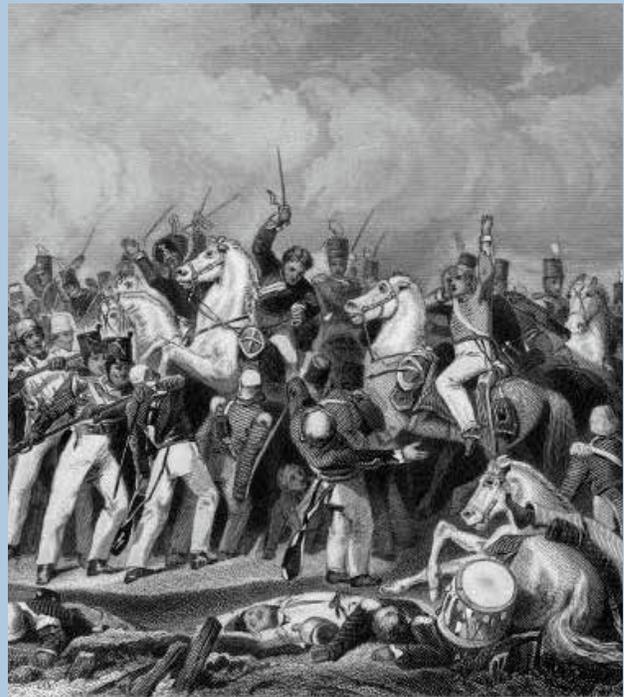


The 2017 FIRST THINGS Lecture in Dallas, TX
Between Self and Soul: On Being Both More and Less than We Think We Are

James Matthew Wilson, poet, critic, and associate professor of religion and literature at Villanova University, delivered the 2017 FIRST THINGS Dallas lecture on November 8th. In his address, he discussed modernity's unprecedented concern with the self, manifested in everything from health fads to contemporary identity politics. Our self-absorption has caused us to enter our own version of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, where the care of the self is the central concern of our lives. In our excessive focus on the self, we have lost the capacity to see what grounds the self's value or to perceive how, by nature, it fits into the world beyond itself. As a result, we have gained the self at the expense of the soul. Dr. Wilson argued that we can only understand ourselves, and the true meaning of justice, if we understand human beings as beings with souls.

The 2017 FIRST THINGS Lecture in Austin, TX
The War of All Against All: Aristocracy and the Revolt of the Masses

On September 11, 2017, Patrick J. Deneen, associate professor of political science and David A. Potenziani Chair of Constitutional Studies at the University of Notre Dame delivered the 2017 FIRST THINGS Austin lecture. In light of recent political and social realities, Deneen recalled Christopher Lasch's 1995 book, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, in which Lasch argued that the new meritocratic class no longer displays the qualities of loyal citizenship necessary for a healthy democracy. Two decades later, Deneen argued, we are facing a "revolt of the masses" toward this elite class and a further erosion of democracy. Deneen addressed some of today's most pressing questions: Are there any prospects for civic friendship and democratic renewal, or does the uncivil war between the elite and masses spell the demise of the American experiment in self-government? What role does the declining influence of, presence of, and adherence to Christian faith play in this national divide? Can its renewal transcend the limits of the two sides in effecting reconciliation and healing?



Intellectual Retreats

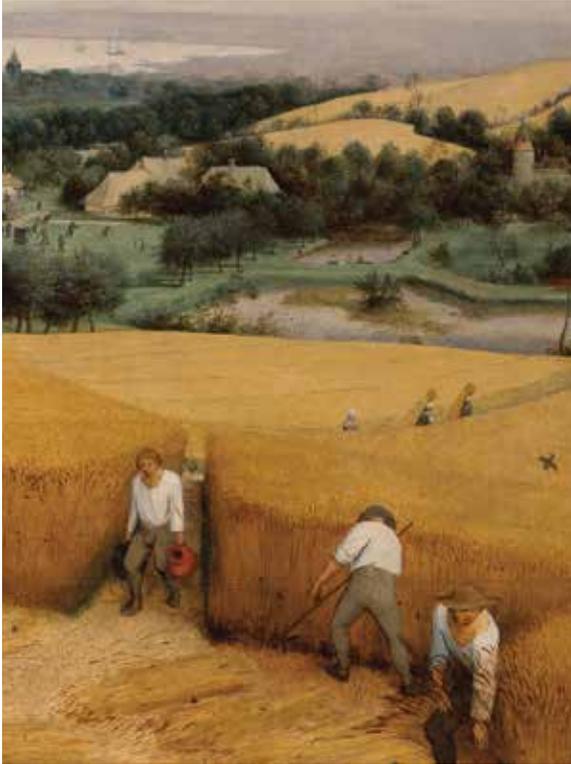
Now in their fourth year, FIRST THINGS Intellectual Retreats offer our friends and readers an opportunity to get away for a weekend to reflect more deeply on important topics in religion, politics, and culture. Each retreat centers on a series of seminars on classic texts, supplemented by lectures and artistic performances.



Waco, Texas Retreat

The Good of Marriage

In May 2017, FIRST THINGS joined with the Baylor University Honors College to host our first 2017 retreat, “The Good of Marriage.” Participants were addressed by Thomas Hibbs, dean of the Baylor University Honors College, and discussed a selection of texts on marriage compiled by Leon and Amy Kass in *Wing to Wing, Oar to Oar: Readings on Courtship and Marrying*.

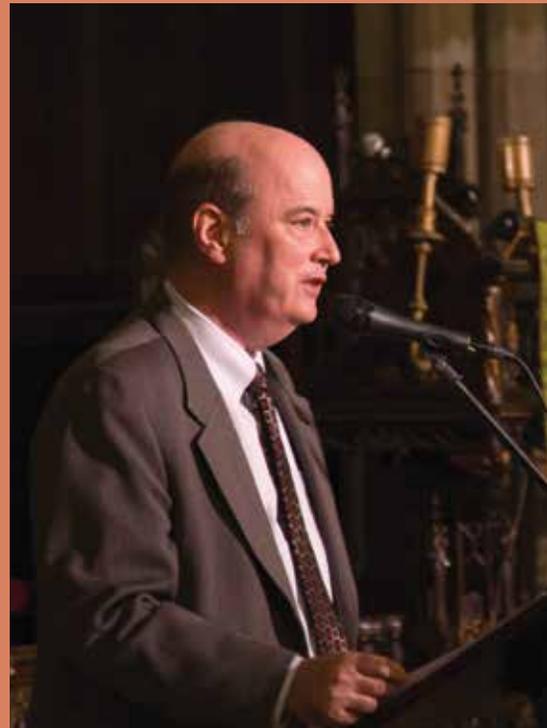


New York Retreat *The Political Life*

In August 2017, FIRST THINGS hosted its third annual New York City Intellectual Retreat on the topic of “The Political Life.” Seminar discussions were facilitated by faculty of Northeast Catholic College. In the evenings, retreat participants heard from Professor Joshua Mitchell of Georgetown University and a panel featuring R. R. Reno, Mark Bauerlein, and President of Northeast Catholic College George Harne. The retreat ended with a musical performance by world-renowned pianist Helge Antoni.

The Third Annual Poetry Reading *A Night of Poetry with A. M. Juster*

In October 2017, FIRST THINGS was pleased to host its third Annual Poetry Reading, an evening with A. M. Juster in New York City. A. M. Juster’s poetry, translations, and essays have appeared in *Poetry*, *The Paris Review*, *The Hudson Review*, *The New Criterion*, *Arion*, *North American Review*, *Rattle*, *Southwest Review*, *Barrow Street*, *Hopkins Review*, and many other publications. He has been awarded the Richard Wilbur Award, the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award, and the Barnstone Translation Prize. A graduate of Yale and Harvard with two honorary doctorates, he has been a Father Walter Ralston Fellow at the Sewanee Writers Conference and taught formal poetry at Emerson College. He is a regular reviewer for *The Claremont Review of Books*. His books include *The Secret Language of Women* (University of Evansville Press, 2003).





Events

The FIRST THINGS conversation extends beyond the pages of the magazine. Through our educational events, we provide occasions for people from all walks of life to have serious discussions. Those events enable people to think together and speak frankly about the ever-changing interplay of principles, practicalities, and politics, while remaining grounded in a shared love for the truth. Here are a few highlights from 2017:

FIRST THINGS welcomed award-winning painter **Alastair John Gordon** for an exhibition of his recent work, “Souvenirs from the Waste Land,” a series of eight paintings inspired by art collector Roberta Green Ahmanson’s extensive private postcard collection in Los Angeles. Informed by seventeenth-century Flemish *trompe l’oeil* painting, Gordon appropriates images from multiple sources to create new references in his compositions on wood panels. Gordon’s investigation of these fragments of reality questions the notion of authenticity, a reoccurring concern in the larger oeuvre of his art. The beauty of the original artifacts transcends our expectations of a travel souvenir and inspires even the most skeptical viewer. Our natural tendency is to simultaneously depend on and mistrust the visual image, but with Gordon’s paintings, we are challenged to contemplate the meaning of representation itself.

On June 12th, FIRST THINGS hosted the **Ramsey Colloquium in Washington, D.C.** on Christian Political Witness. More than twenty scholars gathered to discuss a paper by Fr. Thomas Joseph White of the Dominican House of Studies. His paper, “The Metaphysics of Democracy,” argued that our political turmoil stems from a metaphysical impoverishment. We cannot orient ourselves properly when it comes to political questions unless we have a firm grip on what it means to be human, for democratic self-governance requires attentiveness to the authority of reality. His paper was published in the February 2018 issue of FIRST THINGS.



Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P., visited the FIRST THINGS office to discuss his new book, *The Light of Christ: An Introduction to Catholicism*, at a standing-room-only event with FIRST THINGS editor R. R. Reno. Fr. White, who is the Director of the Thomistic Institute at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, D.C., described his book as attempt to show “the deep inner intelligibility and realism of Christian truth claims” for a modern audience and in a modern context, based on “the perennial teachings of the Church.”

2017 Event Highlights

March 7

“My Catholica: Mentors, Muses, and Mystery,”
an art opening by Alfonse Borysewicz

April 27

“The Problem with Liberalism—and Conservatism,”
a public lecture by J. Budziszewski

May 24

“Beach Books 2017,” a reception and panel discussion
on college summer reading with the National Association of Scholars

September 11

“A Life of Reconciliation and Justice,”
a panel discussion and reception in honor of Johann Christoph Arnold



Evangelicals and Catholics Together: “The Christian Way”

Evangelicals and Catholics Together was founded in 1994 to articulate the common ground shared by evangelical and Catholic Christians on matters of theology, social thought, and public policy. The project arose from the friendship and collaboration between our founder, Richard John Neuhaus, and Chuck Colson. ECT’s most recent statement, “The Christian Way,” appeared in the December edition of FIRST THINGS. What follows is an abridged version of the statement.

Christians freely obey Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. “Come,” he beckons, “follow me.” Being a Christian requires more than intellectual or moral agreement with Christian teachings. Christ asks for our love and loyalty.

Christianity is not a religion, if by that we mean one among many expressions of the natural human impulse to encounter the divine. It begins with God’s gracious promise to Abraham: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who

bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves” (Gen. 12:1–3).

Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house. The search for God is perennial. Religious beliefs and rites are found in all cultures. Yet Christianity does not arise out of natural human impulses, desires, or instincts, not even of a religious sort. Just as God calls Abraham out of his father’s house and homeland, so Christ calls his followers to live in accord with a new reality. We possess a natural religious sense, but the good news that God is love and desires to bring us to himself comes as an

unexpected gift and amazing grace. We cannot lift ourselves up to the divine; God comes and lifts us to himself.

To the land I will show you. When God calls Abraham out of his father's house, the patriarch's future depends upon God, not the powers of this world. Sustained by God's promises, Abraham's way of life already contains, in germinal form, freedom from the power of sin and death. Yet those who are called by God are still hobbled by sin, which, though dethroned from control over the future, remains powerful in the present. And they must face death. In this life, therefore, the earthly and heavenly cities remain intermixed. Our true home is above us, already ordered around the love of God—and it is before us as the full and final fulfillment of God's promises at the end of history. The Christian yearns to rest in the peace of the city of God.

I will make of you a great nation. Christianity is a shared, communal way, with its own institutions, rituals, and laws. It is not an idea; it is an encounter with a person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who forms a unique people: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9). The Christian way is a continuous pattern of life that can be traced back to Jesus and his first disciples, and through them to the people of Israel. Christians do not live as individual believers but as a people on a pilgrimage toward God.

Make your name great. Christianity is powerful, though not in the way the world measures power. "When I came to you," St. Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth, "I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech

and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:1–4). The wisdom of God is "secret and hidden," and "none of the rulers of this age understand this" (1 Cor. 2:7–8). But the Christian way brings this wisdom into the open, proclaiming Christ crucified.

I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you. Christians are called to be peacemakers. But the rebellion of sin turns God's peace

into a sign of contradiction. This means that until the end of this age, Christianity will be divisive. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth," Jesus warns. "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34). In Christ, God draws near, and the sword he brings comes in the form of a fundamental choice. It is not possible to stand at a distance and be a spectator. God advances and intrudes. He offers himself to us; he offers his love, mercy, humility, and truth. Will we receive him or not? Will we allow ourselves to be transformed by him?

By you all the families of the earth shall bless

themselves. At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, the risen Jesus gathers his disciples at the top of a mountain. As they overlook the world from on high, Jesus tells them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:18–19). Over the centuries, the Church has fulfilled Christ's commission, teaching men and women to worship the one, true God. This is the great gift that Christianity brings to the world—to be the voice of God calling those whom he has created in his own image to enter into the fullness of life he has prepared for them. ■

Christianity is a shared, communal way, with its own institutions, rituals, and laws. It is not an idea; it is an encounter with a person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who forms a unique people: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9).



First Church of Intersectionality

In the August 2017 issue of FIRST THINGS, Baylor University professor and FIRST THINGS board member Elizabeth Corey wrote about her experience attending a conference on the phenomenon of “intersectionality” at the University of Notre Dame. What follows is an abridgement of her essay.

I recently attended an academic conference at the University of Notre Dame called “Intersectional Inquiries and Collaborative Action: Gender and Race.” It felt like a return to my undergraduate years in the early 1990s. I saw women with shaved heads wearing ethnic print scarves, Birkenstocks, and baggy black clothes. Many of the participants smelled of curry and incense. I attended the conference because I was researching the concept of “intersectionality” as part of a year-long fellowship to study academic diversity.

Intersectionality stands in the vanguard of the progressive academy, allied with critical race studies, queer studies, women’s studies, and ethnic studies. Intersectional scholars proudly proclaim their goal: to smash the neoliberal, corporate, heteropatriarchal academy and then to reinvent it in a way that rejects traditional notions about what universities are meant to do. These scholars also want to redefine the family and to abolish the “binary” of man and woman.

Patricia Hill Collins is distinguished university professor in sociology at the University of Maryland. Collins was the keynote speaker at the Notre Dame conference I attended. Though I disagreed with almost all of the substance of her talk, she drew the audience in, made us feel like we were her friends and allies, and

effectively recruited us to her cause. She used humor and storytelling to describe her life as a black female academic in an age when she had very few peers who looked like her. (She’s currently sixty-nine years old.) As she spoke, I began to feel that I was not at an academic lecture at all, but at an Evangelical church with a charismatic pastor. She even looked the part, wearing all black with a vibrant green scarf that hung around her shoulders like a cleric’s stole. Some of her statements brought approving murmurs from the audience—“Umm hmm.” At times people broke out in spontaneous applause or acclamation, as if we were at a revival.

Soon the church-like atmosphere evolved into a political rally. Collins told us that the academy is filled with “timid people” who are afraid to challenge the status quo. She also asserted that authentic intellectual engagement requires political activism. Why should we “take up the words” if we “lose the critical edge” and the ability to put ideas into practice? “Now is not the time,” Collins asserted, for “business as usual!” The election of Donald Trump has heightened the need for intersectionality, as a way of protesting the egregious racism, sexism, and homophobia that his administration embodies. She exhorted us to be opposition-



al. Revolution cannot take place unless we overthrow the existing power structures, and intersectionality requires that all oppressed groups work together.

Intersectionality assumes without question—indeed, with pride—that the primary purpose of higher education is political indoctrination allied with progressive political activism. In her recent book, *Intellectual Activism*, Patricia Hill Collins simply asserts that “academia is activist politics.” Or as she put it more expansively in her Notre Dame lecture, “intersectionality investigates how race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, religion, and citizenship constitute intersecting systems of power that mutually construct one another” and then proposes “broader political and intellectual struggles for social justice.” Or, put differently, sociology and political science = social justice studies and political praxis.

But where in this schema is art history? Theology? Math? Philosophy? Constitutional law and literature and Romance languages and ancient Greek? Must these subjects also be reconstructed by race, gender, and all the other favored categories? What about students looking for something besides ideological conscription—for beauty, faith, humanitas, and inspiration? If identity and historical disadvantage aren’t the only subjects, then the classroom must allow for something besides activist politics—perhaps a refuge from consumer culture, a time away from the world’s pressing problems, a place to become familiar with works of genius and moral depth, an occasion to entertain a variety of ideas and values without committing (yet) to any one. Intersectionality, however, sees disinterested inquiry as an illusion fostered by those who already possess social power. They think

that such inquiry is irresponsible and useless playing with symbols, language, and meanings, entirely without purchase in the wider world.

What is more, the excessive emphasis on activism means that intersectionality implicitly assumes that young people arrive at college with fully formed, mature views about politics and social dynamics. How else can we explain the underclassmen at Oberlin who demanded last year that all semester grades below C be wiped from their transcripts so that they could feel fully supported in being absent from class to do activist work? They already know what justice requires. According to a more traditional view, the purpose of higher education is not simply to have one’s opinions and biases confirmed and strengthened, nor is it to adopt a fashionable, ready-made political identity upon arrival on campus. Instead, it often means undergoing the spiritual and moral transformation that comes with challenge, and even at times with pain and disorientation.

The youthful libertarian, for example, must realize that Ayn Rand’s philosophy is not all he thought it was, and the activist for reproductive rights must reconsider her views in light of what she can no longer ignore from her biology courses. All of this is part of the college experience. And it often goes in the other direction, too: The conservative Southern Baptist realizes she’s more liberal than her parents, or the sheltered homeschooler realizes he really wants to work for Amnesty International. The problem with intersectional scholars is that they have already made determinations about purpose not just for themselves, but for everyone. This is part of the Gnosticism inherent in the movement. Those who disagree are not potential interlocutors. They’re heretics. ■

FirstThings.com



The FIRST THINGS website complements the print edition with web articles by our editors and top writers, published daily and free to all. It also hosts an online version of the print edition—with recent issues available in their entirety for subscribers, and our twenty-five-year archive available to subscribers and non-subscribers alike. With up-to-date commentary, FIRST THINGS stays relevant and influential, addressing deeper questions of principle in the midst of current affairs.

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Twitter Followers: 48,959

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Page Views Per Article: 13,301

Pageviews Total: 13,261,171

Top 5 Web Exclusives:

1. *An Open Letter to My Liberal Friends*, Solveig Gold
2. *Rabbi Objects to Pope Francis's Anti-Jewish Rhetoric*, Matthew Schmitz
3. *Burying Benedict*, Matthew Schmitz
4. *Supreme Incoherence: Transgender Ideology and the Rule of Law*, Jeffrey Shafer
5. *A Map of the Soul*, Michael Egnor

FIRST THINGS Podcast

FirstThings.com offers more than just articles.

We host a library of video lectures from FIRST THINGS events, video interviews, and a web store where readers can purchase back issues and FIRST THINGS merchandise. Our increasingly popular podcasts feature editors and guests discussing a variety of topics—from politics and primetime drama to poetry and theology. The podcast is a great way for friends of FIRST THINGS to meet the personalities behind the magazine. Senior Editors Mark Bauerlein and Julia Yost each host their own show. Below we list their most popular podcasts for 2017:

Mark Bauerlein's Top 5 Podcasts

1. Decline and Fall of Catholic Schools
2. Failure of Fatherhood
3. The Revolt Against the Masses
4. Supreme Court Round-up
5. Religion on the College Campus

Julia Yost's Top 5 Podcasts

1. Conservatism's New Terms
2. A Toast to Silence
3. Fall of Gender Neutrality
4. Welcome to Post-Christian Society
5. Suburban Decline

Top 5 Most Viewed Videos:

1. *The Social Vision of Leo XIII*
Russell Hittinger
2. *The Light of Christ: A Conversation with Fr. Thomas Joseph White*
3. *Evangelizing the Nones*
Bishop Robert Barron
4. *Tocqueville and the Democratic Age*
Joshua Mitchell
5. *Between Self and Soul*
James Matthew Wilson



Top 5 Print Articles

American Carnage
Christopher Caldwell

Dress Up
Bruce Boyer

Waiting for a Young Pope
Matthew Schmitz

Can the Religious Right Be Saved?
Russell D. Moore

The Death of Eros
Mark Regnerus



Editor's Circle

Since 2011, FIRST THINGS has recognized members of the Editor's Circle for their investment in FIRST THINGS and has provided them with opportunities to participate more intimately in the FIRST THINGS community of scholars, writers, and readers. Editor's Circle members are the Institute's core supporters and make annual gifts of \$1,000 or more. The following list also includes those Editor's Circle members who contributed pledge payments to the FIRST THINGS 25 Fund.

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The Richard John Neuhaus Society

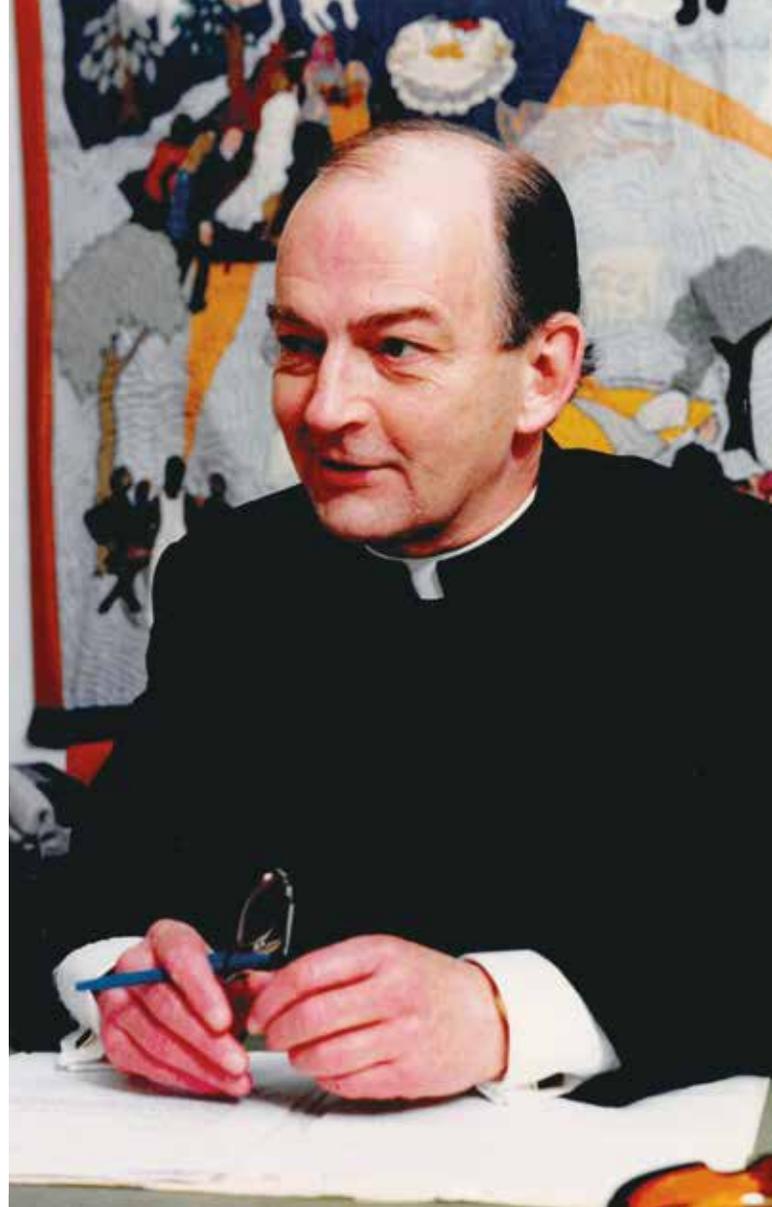
When he died in 2009, Richard John Neuhaus, founder of the Institute on Religion and Public Life and FIRST THINGS magazine, left not only a great intellectual legacy, but also a generous bequest.

The Richard John Neuhaus Society honors his memory and recognizes those who remember FIRST THINGS in their retirement plans or wills. Their planned gifts ensure a bright future for FIRST THINGS, enhancing the Institute's ability to plan and expand future programs and publications that promote the vital role of faith in the public square. Society membership is open to those who make a bequest or charitable gift annuity to the Institute on Religion and Public Life, or who designate the Institute as a beneficiary in their wills, life insurance policies, or retirement accounts

If you have already made FIRST THINGS part of your retirement or estate plans, please let us know. If you or your advisor have any questions, contact Eduardo Andino, Director of Development, at 212-627-1985 or eandino@firstthings.com so we can welcome you as a new member of the Richard John Neuhaus Society.

We are very grateful to acknowledge the following members of the Richard John Neuhaus Society:

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“We’re always having to go back to the drawing board, which is to say, to first things. Even when, especially when, we are most intensely engaged in the battle, first things must be kept first in mind. It is not easy but it is imperative. It profits us nothing if we win all the political battles while losing our own souls.”

Richard John Neuhaus

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You can use any number of tax-advantaged financial tools to support the Institute on Religion and Public Life and advance its work, while at the same time returning benefits to you and your family. It is important to obtain the advice and assistance of your financial adviser and/or attorney. Please consult with a trusted professional to work out the details and to learn about other planned-giving vehicles. If you or your adviser have any questions, contact Eduardo Andino, Director of Development, at 212-627-1985 or eandino@firstthings.com.

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■ Make the Institute on Religion and Public Life a beneficiary of your will, revocable trust, or retirement plan—costing you nothing during your lifetime. Those who remember the Institute in their wills become members of the Richard John Neuhaus Society.



Featured Philanthropic Partner

Joe Armes



As a lifelong Baptist businessman from Texas, I may not be the typical reader of *FIRST THINGS*. However, ever since Father Neuhaus spoke at my alma mater, Baylor University, in 1995, I have been an admirer and an avid reader of his works. Through the journal, as well as through events such as the annual Erasmus lecture, *FIRST THINGS* provides a periodic opportunity for me to refocus my view of the prevailing culture through the lens of biblical truth. Consistently well-written, *FIRST THINGS* has become an important part of my efforts to follow Christ's admonition to love the Lord with my mind. I am grateful for the influence of *FIRST THINGS* not only on the broader culture, but also on me.



New Staff



DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT
Eduardo Andino

I started as Director of Development for FIRST THINGS in August 2017. I became familiar with FIRST THINGS as an undergraduate at Yale. My cohort of friends knew it as a source of trusted commentary on questions theological, political, and historical. FIRST THINGS offered a satisfying alternative to mainstream thought on campus. I am delighted now, several years later, to be part of the team at FIRST THINGS.

In just a few months, I have met dozens of FIRST THINGS readers and supporters. I am often humbled to meet supporters who have been reading FIRST THINGS since I was a child. Among all those I meet and converse with there are a few common themes. Whether they have been reading FIRST THINGS since 1990 or 2017, whether they read the magazine cover to cover or select a few articles, readers often mention how formative FIRST THINGS has been for their faith or intellectual life.

FIRST THINGS readers are cheerful. Though sometimes headlines or longer-term societal trends discourage us, I suspect that most FIRST THINGS readers remain hopeful because they view contemporary things in light of the highest things. Finally, FIRST THINGS readers are good company. I enjoy my work first and foremost because of the opportunities it provides to meet and converse with others who care about faith and our shared political project. It is a privilege to help advance the mission of FIRST THINGS as Director of Development.



MARKETING MANAGER
Andrew Summitt

I started at the magazine in January 2018. I am immensely grateful for the privilege and honor to work at FIRST THINGS because of its intellectual rigor and the influence it has had on my formative undergraduate years. I have taken over Intellectual Retreat planning, marketing, and technical support for the office. I anticipate a great year ahead. My colleagues are incredibly helpful, warm, and generous.

I discovered FIRST THINGS while an undergraduate at Oklahoma State University. I had the benefit of knowing intellectually honest, rigorous Christians who prized the magazine for its defense of religion in public life. The magazine's articles were constantly referenced, discussed, and debated. I don't always agree with everything in the magazine, but I think that's for the best. It publishes such a wide array of thinkers and writers with a common commitment to religion in public life. As a result, the magazine serves as a forum for engaged, respectful disagreement. What is the place of markets in political life? How should religious people engage the culture? How can we understand our problems in the context of the past? The magazine has poked, prodded, and published many different answers to these and other questions.

I'm happy to be here in New York City working alongside such insightful and interesting people to help a venerable magazine become even greater.

A Word from Our Junior Fellows

When R. R. Reno first offered me the position of junior fellow at FIRST THINGS, I couldn't believe my luck—and I remain overjoyed that I was given this opportunity. As a junior fellow, even my smallest tasks support the magazine's work of upholding truth in our secular society and defending religion's place in the public square. The routine tasks of publishing—proofreading, fact-checking, writing copy—become joys when done in the service of a noble cause.

One of the greatest pleasures of this job is witnessing firsthand the blessing FIRST THINGS is to so many. On the phone, on the Internet, and at FIRST THINGS' intellectual retreats, in-house receptions, and public lectures, I've been able to meet the loyal members of the community that has sprung up around the magazine over the years. In many ways, this community is more crucial than ever before. Amid the loneliness of modern secular life, a world in which human beings are increasingly alienated from one another, FIRST THINGS provides a gathering place and a reminder that it is not good for man to be alone.

The magazine's distinct position at the intersection of academics and journalism—this via media between the sphere of scholarship and the sphere of news—affords constant chances to broaden my knowledge of our contemporary theological and political debates and to hone my writing skills. And I get to do it all in an environment of brilliant, likeminded people, each of them striving to answer the most pressing questions of our day by keeping the higher things—the truths of the faith—first in mind. I couldn't be more grateful to be a part of this enriching magazine, and I look forward to seeing how the rest of my time at FIRST THINGS will form me as a human being.

In *The City of God*, St. Augustine reminds us of God's challenge to Job when he observes that "God gives earthly dominion to both good men and to evil. And he does this not at random or fortuitously . . . [but] in accordance with the order of events in history, an order completely hidden from us, but perfectly known to God himself."

In our spiritual lives, of course, this truth should lead us to humility and self-abnegation in deference to the wisdom of Providence. But it also has manifold implications for politics, of which Richard John Neuhaus was keenly aware when he founded FIRST THINGS. We do not really know how God is using earthly kingdoms for his purposes, not even now, in our own American Babylon. And so we must be flexible and detached, steadfast in the gospel but free in all else, as we seek the good of the city of our exile.

My two years as a junior fellow and assistant editor at FIRST THINGS happened to coincide with one of the most politically tumultuous periods in recent memory. No one adapts easily to the unexpected twists and turns of history. But as I prepare to leave my post at the magazine and return to academia, I can think of no better place than FIRST THINGS in which to have ridden out this storm. The Augustinian method of political engagement—cling to nature and revelation, all else is prudence—still steers the magazine, steadying the ship for whatever uncharted waters lie ahead. I'm proud to lend a hand where I can.

JUNIOR FELLOW

Ramona Tausz



ASSISTANT EDITOR

Connor Grubaugh



Year In Review

The Institute on Religion and Public Life continued its strong trajectory of growth in 2017. We reached nearly 30,000 FIRST THINGS subscribers and had a very successful fall fundraising campaign. We welcomed two new full-time staff members, organized seminars and lectures at home and abroad, continued to host our popular podcast, and expanded our lineup of intellectual retreats. In 2018, we will continue to expand the FIRST THINGS community through our educational events and publish thoughtful, incisive commentary in the pages of FIRST THINGS and *firstthings.com*.

	2017 ACTUAL	2018 PROJECTED
Sales & Program Revenue	\$ 1,132,949	\$ 1,043,300
Individual Contributions	1,834,140	1,607,600
Foundation Grants	505,000	503,680
Interest & Investment Income	2,528	200
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 3,474,616	\$ 3,154,780
	2017 ACTUAL	2018 PROJECTED
Magazine Publication	\$ 933,939	\$ 876,070
Authors & Editorial Staff	786,668	817,057
Seminars & Events	318,475	290,000
Other Program Costs	277,006	257,011
Fundraising	320,496	291,390
Salaries & Benefits	385,750	401,262
Management & General	124,669	108,841
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 3,147,004	\$ 3,041,630
NET INCOME	\$ 327,613	\$ 113,150



A Look Ahead with the Editors



SENIOR EDITOR

Mark Bauerlein

I edit the opinion section of *FIRST THINGS*, and as I look ahead at 2018, I begin with the same premise that we began with last year and the year before: We love good writing. Yes, we want to publish people who have “horse sense and a cool head and a keen eye,” as Professor Harold Hill says. We cherish opinion writers who have on-the-ground experience and the wisdom to cull episodes of lasting significance from the ephemera of current events. We honor staunch defenders of biblical understanding and religious freedom.

But to render those virtues in lively prose, through vivid images and memorable anecdotes and pointed wit . . . that adds charm to intelligence. When the editors receive a submission that has crisp syntax and sparkling metaphors, we rejoice. An author who can turn a phrase is a pleasure and a standard bearer. When

I read an eloquent essay, I almost lose my critical sense and go with the flow of the verbiage. A good writer can get away with a lot.

My job as an editor of the magazine is to bring those writers together with our readers. I might run across an incisive article in one of the scholarly quarterlies and contact the author to see if he has anything that might fit the *FIRST THINGS* profile, something in a less academic mode. Or it could be a submission from an unknown person that has moments of genuine flash, but needs some trimming and sharpening and cultivating. It might even be a familiar name to *FIRST THINGS* readers who needs to be prodded gently in a certain direction.

Success happens only at the end, with the reader, who gets to the last sentence and walks away with a situation clarified, an idea understood, inspired or edified or simply pleased by, once again, the verbal style. This is why we don't foresee a strong and set direction for the opinion section in the coming year. We have our topics, of course, but the contents of each issue remain largely contributor driven. If we receive a powerful piece on an unusual subject, we give it a hard look. If we disagree with some of the contentions, well, we pride ourselves on our willingness to engage with other sides.

Most important, we encourage readers to write to us and give us their opinions of our opinions. We have a small editorial staff, and we're ever aware of the dangers of insularity, along with the value of our faithful subscribers.



SENIOR EDITOR

Matthew Schmitz

We live in a time of change. The election of Donald Trump, the success of Brexit, and the rise of populist parties across Europe have shocked the world. In the Catholic Church, the post-conciliar synthesis of John Paul II—faithful in doctrine but open to the world—is cracking up. *FIRST THINGS* has not been content merely to decry these events. Instead, we have attempted to offer a positive vision that is both suited to new times and in conformity with our unchanging principles. This has been and always will be our mission: to act with prudence in fidelity to our sovereign God.



SENIOR EDITOR

Julia Yost

My goal as editor of *FirstThings.com* is to carry the mission of our magazine farther than our subscriber base. To this end, I edit and publish some forty or more opinion-length web essays per month and produce and host the *FIRST THINGS* Podcast.

Within the past year, I have expanded our columnist rotation to include Peter Hitchens, Dan Hitchens, Francesca Murphy, and John Waters, among others. The results, in prose and pageviews, are encouraging, as the quality and consistency of our web-exclusive offerings have markedly increased. I look to continue this expansion, with similar results, in 2018.

I also hope to increase the frequency of the *FIRST THINGS* Podcast, ideally to twice a month. Any friend of the magazine who wished to earmark a generous donation “For podcast assistance for Julia” would facilitate this effort and put our growing audience in his debt.

