SEPTEMBER 2022

EMPTY TOMB PROJECT

THE MAGAZINE

Our education system needs CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

How morality is teaching the country that it needs God



Bishop Barron & President Biden







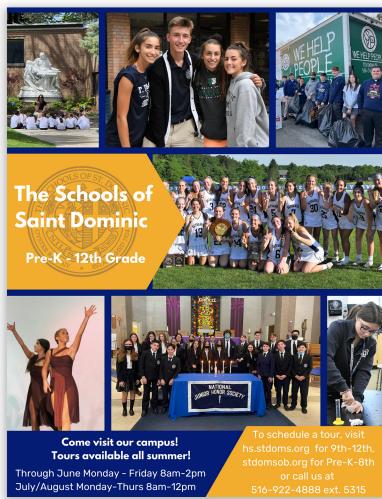
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Thomas Griffin is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project. He is the chair of the religion department at a Catholic high school on Long Island where he lives with his wife and son.

THE MISSION AND A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The Mission:

Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine exists to bring the reality and power of the empty tomb to as many people as possible. We are convinced that if practicing Catholics, and fallen away Catholics alike, encounter Jesus as a real living person their lives will be radically changed.

We are a Catholic magazine that desires to bring relevant cultural and spiritual topics to our readers in an honest and fresh manner. We dive into topics that truly matter to people, themes that are brought up in people's homes as well as in church circles. We desire to bring uniformity in message and an increase in inspiration to Catholics across Long Island.

Along with providing the most dynamic content we are committed to producing a product that is beautifully captivating to the eye. To do so we will always rely on the best Catholic designers (StartUpCatholic) so that the content can be amplified by the aesthetics of the magazine.

In order to reach as many people as possible with the critically important message of Christ we rely on donors in order to grow the mission and impact of our magazine. This will allow us to remain free and ensure that anyone who desires to meet Jesus today will have that opportunity. If you feel called to support us, please reach out to me via email: EmptyTombProject@gmail.com and join us in the mission!

Editor's Note:

This month you will notice that we bring up gender identity being taught in public schools in our Major Headline article and we devote an entire piece to a bishop's critique of President Biden's position on abortion. Both of these are sensitive topics for Catholics in particular and Americans in general.

I want to take special note of this because the Empty Tomb Project desires to bring up topics that are tough. The themes that are actually impacting the lives of people across our country and in our pews. We do so, not to be abrasive or insensitive, but because truly following Jesus means that he desires access to the difficult arenas of our life.

We cannot drop our faith at the door of our schools or at the mention of politics. God's conquering of death means that truth is triumphant. God does provide answers to these difficult questions. So we will always, "go there" when there are topics of debate out there in the culture and the Church. Because God wants in on every aspect of our life and because as J.R.R. Tolkein once said, "there is truth out there in the world, and it is worth fighting for."

Thomas Griffin is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine.

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MAJOR HEADLINE:

Our Education System Needs Catholic Schools

by Thomas Griffin

The realm of education in America has been the source of constant debate and egregious malfunction for decades. As a result of the pandemic and discussions concerning what type of morality should be taught to our youth, the conversation has escalated.

It is no secret that Catholic schools have been on the decline for decades now. School closures and decreasing enrollment have been an issue for quite some time. Recently, however, there has been an uptick in enrollment and a deeper appreciation for what these schools provide. The reasons why reside in the transparency of the public school system that COVID provided as well as a focus on truth that Catholic schools anchor themselves in.

Parents who have flocked to Catholic schools in their neighborhoods note that the structure, community and faith are top reasons for their children's success. Danyel, from Melbourne, Fl, remarked that her daughter "had struggled for many years trying to find the structure, the support, the love, the patience and the care needed to get her to not only love going to school, but feel like she can actually do it. My daughter is finally happy and succeeding."

The National Catholic Educational Association reported that 99% of Catholic high school students graduate and 88% go on for a college education. This can be attributed to smaller classroom sizes as well as the dedication of the teachers.

The ugly aspects of some selfish teachers were another sore eye of the education system throughout COVID. Teachers unions were at the center of national headlines because they were clearly prioritizing the self-centeredness of teachers over the well-being of students who needed to be in school for a variety of reasons. Catholic school teachers are invited to view their careers, not as mere jobs, but as a vocation - a calling to change lives. That difference changes everything.

Along with being cared for by teachers and being placed in the best possible position to succeed academically, Catholic education, at its finest, builds wisdom and virtue by allowing students to discover the truth. The CARA Institute at Georgetown University confirmed that the most common reason why parents send their children to Catholic school is because they desire them to have strong moral values.

A study from Duquesne University called "Why Parents Choose Catholic School: A Social Theory Understanding," confirms this as well. The number one ranked motivation for sending children to their Catholic schools was: "the school teaches values and morals." The constant debate ensuing over gender identity and sexual orientation being taught to elementary school students showcases this point. Numbers of students enrolling in Catholic schools and numbers of parents choosing to homeschool their children is increasing the more that this debate ensues.





Spiritual Outings with Dad

by David G. Bonagura, Jr.

Stadiums. Beaches. Campsites. Outings with dad conjure excitement, adventure, camaraderie. They are the stuff of summer vacations and memories that last beyond childhood. They bind father and child together in common bond and shared activity. They can generate a lifelong passion in the child for what the duo do together.

Given the success of these secular outings, it is only fitting that Catholic dads plan spiritual outings with their children as well. Trips to out-of-the-way churches, feast day Masses, holy hours, confession, engaging speakers, and relic tours are all ways to bring father and child together for a mission of faith. In addition to deepening the bond between each other, these spiritual outings have the added goal of developing the child's relationship with God. If a child can forge a lifelong passion for sports by attending games with his father, surely he can discover a similar passion for Jesus Christ by joining his father at grand religious events.

"Grand" need not mean visits to Rome or Jerusalem. For most children, any religious event beyond the required Sunday Mass at their parish is unique enough to pique their interests. If they do not "have to go," the spiritual outing takes on the quality of other secular outings – they are events that dad wants to attend. Typically, if the event excites dad, the child will be at least curious, or, even better, equally interested. The farther away the outing, the greater the mystique attached to it.

Spiritual outings also provide prized opportunities for dads to teach the faith to their children. The virtues of a commemorated saint, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the need to examine our consciences and confess our sins, and the all-powerful mercy of God are essential principles of faith that stem from attending feast day Masses, confession, and holy hours. Of course, dads use these occasions to teach in two ways. First, they explain

Confession, in particular, is an outing that, if made habitual, can help keep children on the proper spiritual course as they navigate the treacherous route to adulthood. If children regularly confront the fact that they are sinners, they will repeatedly recall that Christ is their savior, the one who sets them free from sin. A regular conscience exam, too, is beneficial, as it helps children learn to keep themselves accountable before God and helps prevent them for falling into more grave sins. Most importantly, they learn that God is always ready to welcome them into union with Him so long as they take the initiative to see Him and to admit their failures.

In addition, fathers can transform any outing, regardless of destination, into a spiritual one by incorporating prayer as part of the car ride. If the child has an early morning ride to school or practice, dads can pray the Morning Offering together with their children. At noon or 6:00 p.m., they can lead their children in the Angelus. For rides over ten minutes, they can pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet. For rides over thirty minutes, the Rosary is the perfect inspiration for in transit meditation. Praying in the car teaches children that all time belongs to God, that they can commune with God at all points of the day, and that dad is serious about prayer. When dad is serious, the odds of his children being serious about prayer dramatically increase.

Too often the world deems religion "boring" or "out of date," messaging that our children unwittingly absorb. Incorporating spiritual outings into the paternal arsenal helps children see the truth: that religion sets them up for a lifetime of adventure in Christ, whose call, unique for each one of them, commissions them as permanent soldiers in His divine army. The soldier on campaign never experiences a dull moment. So, too, does the Catholic who rises each morning awaiting his marching orders from our Lord. Each spiritual outing a child takes with his father is a step towards preparation for this mission.

David G. Bonagura, Jr. teaches at St. Joseph's Seminary, New York. He is the author of Steadfast in Faith and Staying with the Catholic Church.

IS THE CHURCH RIGHT? WHAT READING GENESIS MEANS

By Daniel McQuillan

The road to God has many obstacles. For some it's the Church's moral teachings on sex and marriage; for others it's the idea of God as father. But for many a thinking type, it's the apparent contradiction between evolution and the creation account found in Genesis.

The contradiction is only apparent.

First, a historical note. The Catholic Church has maintained from the beginning that a right reading of Genesis does not contradict any scientific findings about the intra-historical development of the world. Rather, a right reading reveals an inherent compatibility of evolutionary theory and an ordered creation.

So what is Genesis 1? I'll begin negatively. Genesis 1 is not a historical account of the world, nor is it at all a scientific explanation of the universe's unfolding. Genesis 1 is a religious myth, a poetic-metaphysical account of God giving being to the universe. Religious myth refers to the communication of metaphysical, spiritual, and religious truths about the world and the human person, truths of which that cannot be verifiable but are known intuitively and through common experience.

If one maintains that truth can extend beyond what is measurable and quantifiable, Genesis 1 most certainly communicates truths about the world, namely that it is ordered, good, and subject to man.

That Genesis 1 is a poetic-metaphysical account is revealed by the language. In Genesis 1, God "speaks" creation into being, calling it "good." This is decidedly different from all other ancient accounts of the world. The Epic of Gilgamesh, for example, contains warring conflicts between gods and man; out of violence the world is created according to that account. Genesis reveals an altogether different story. The world comes into being from one God who speaks peacefully. The term "Logos" is used for God. Logos means "word," or "reason." To understand God as "Logos" is to understand God as unified reason. "Truth" perhaps is another way of understanding Logos, so the Logos-creator of Genesis cannot contradict both Himself and anything in His created order.

But does order really lie at the heart of the cosmos? What to make of chance events? And doesn't evolutionary theory maintain that natural progress occurs primarily through chance development and mutation?

At first glance it appears that chance, not order, governs the natural world. Theologian and philosopher Rev. Thomas Joseph White, O.P. notes that chance events are really made up of "intersecting lines of ordered causation". A viral mutation, for example, is not totally random, but a naturally-occurring change in the virus' genetic makeup. That a virus can mutate in only four ways shows a certain natural order within possible mutations.

Fr. White uses the analogy of meeting someone at the grocery store. The meeting appears random because it was not intended by the individual persons. I went to shop for my groceries; my friend for his. Our meeting in the cereal aisle is a cross of my and my friend's intent to shop for groceries at the same store, at a specific time, on a specific day.

Rev. Thomas Davenport, O.P. uses a different analogy. "A construction site can be quite engrossing," says Rev. Davenport. "There are dozens of people, many using many amazing tools and machines, each with its own function and each working on a different portion of the site. At times the workers can seem completely independent and almost oblivious to one another, as if the site were a chaotic jungle of random jobs. Over time though, the coordination of these individual efforts prepare the way for that of another, whose work links up with a third. The seemingly haphazard collection of skills and tasks comes together into an ordered structure with a clear design and purpose. Of course, this emergence of order is no happy accident. Much time and effort went into the planning of the project, laying out every minute detail in diagrams and blueprints. Further, someone was responsible for knowing and understanding those blueprints and ensuring that all of those disparate workers stayed on task and contributed to the greater order of the building as a whole, namely the foreman. The foreman is a help analogy for understanding God's providence ... Just as the foreman knows about and is responsible for the whole building in its entirety, not in an abstract and general way, but down to very precise details and particulars, God's providence is over the entirety of creation, covering all places and times."

There is much more to be said and written, especially by people smarter than me. But one thing is for certain: if properly read, Genesis is not a threat to science, nor is science a threat to faith. The two work together to immerse us more deeply in God's created order.

Daniel McQuillan teaches in the Humanities Department at a boarding school in Rhode Island where he lives with his wife and son. He holds two degrees in philosophy. His main area of interest is the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas.

FAITH & POLITICS: BISHOP BARRON'S WORDS ON PRESIDENT BIDEN

By Thomas Griffin

As abortion laws continue to drive headlines across America, Bishop Robert Barron (a renowned Catholic speaker, writer, founder of Word on Fire Ministries and recently installed bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester in southern Minnesota) published one of the few written critiques by a Catholic bishop of President Biden's stance on abortion.

His article, Our Catholic President and the Most Pressing Moral Issue of Our Time, notes that Biden is among many Catholic politicians who state that they are not willing to "impose" their beliefs on other people. Barron states that the way politicians use the word "impose" is erroneous. Truth always imposes itself on us. "Laws don't suggest;" Barron says, "they impose. And behind every truly just law, there is some moral principle."

Bishop Barron also notes that Catholics are not anti-abortion because the Church says so, but it is, "rather, a conclusion drawn from moral reasoning and from the findings of objective science." It is indisputable that the life in the womb is an innocent human life. Simple moral reasoning states that it is true and good to protect innocent life from being murdered. Following scientific fact and objective morality brings one to conclude that abortion is wrong. Catholics do not solely lean on what the Church tells them about abortion, but on what is true.

The newly installed bishop states that "it is utterly incoherent to claim that one can hold to the position privately but not defend it publicly." To say that one is against abortion privately, but not publicly is like stating that a person is privately against slavery but is for Jim Crow laws, says Barron.

Catholics do not need a dogma of the Church to tell them that slavery is wrong, we simply know that it is immoral and harmful from moral reaonsing. Imagine if a politician was to say that they are privately against slavery, but publicly they will defend the right of Americans to own other individuals. This is part of the reason why the bishop finds "the President's statements and actions in regard to abortion policy so repellent."

To sum up his position, Barron ends with these words: "President Biden speaks often of his Catholic faith, attends Mass regularly, and prays the Rosary. I have absolutely no reason to doubt the sincerity of his Catholicism. But I am sorry to say that, in regard to the most pressing moral issue of our time, he stands athwart both right reason and the explicit teaching of his Church."

These words are tough from Bishop Barron. Often Catholics are told to not take a stance in politics. Church and state should be held separate. As we can see from the bishop's words, abortion is not a matter of religion, but of truth and morality. Barron is one of the very few bishops in the United States to make such a bold and public statement against the president's views.

Many Catholics are wondering what the bishops think about Biden's position which champions abortion rights in the context of his staunch stance as a practicing Catholic. Are they in agreement? Can one live in such a manner and be virtuous? When an individual has such power and influence over the lives of millions of innocent children can such a stance be seen as Christ-driven and truth-bearing?

Some might argue that Barron should not judge Biden's soul in public. However, this is not what the bishop is doing. Barron is simply showing the immorality of abortion and how the president's view is incompatible with science, fact, simple morality and Church teaching.

Jesus said, "I have come to set fire on the earth," because that is what happens when we take his word as Truth. For this reason, Bishop Barron's media company is called Word on Fire. The empty tomb impels disciples to stand up for the truth and to defend the innocent, in love, even when that can make us unpopular. Bishop Barron has done just that.

May we be enlivened to do the same in our families, at work and in our communities because following Jesus is tough, but standing with him brings holiness, true fulfillment and a light that scatters the darkness.

Thomas Griffin is the founder and editor-in-chief of Empty Tomb Project: The Magazine.

The Exaltation of the Cross

by Andrew Santos

From Fear to Freedom (Phillipians 2:5-10)

Imagine getting into the passenger seat of your best friend's car and the first thing you see dangling from the rear view mirror is a hangman's noose. Or at the annual family reunion, your cousin is sporting his newest tattoo of an electric chair on his shoulder. What would your initial reaction be?

Now picture walking into a Catholic Church, or getting into your grandma's car, and dangling from her rearview mirror is a crucifix. Why is it that in one instance, capital punishment on display is awkward and concerning, while in another instance, it is acceptable? Crucifixion is one of the most gruesome, painful, inhumane torture devices known to humanity. It was put into practice by an authoritarian and oppressive Roman Empire whose sole purpose was to keep its subjects, slaves in particular, from revolting. Yet on this day, Catholics around the world not only celebrate, but exalt in the reality of the Cross. The more we understand what the Cross stood for and how awful it actually was, the more we can find joy and peace in it. If we allow ourselves to become desensitized to the Cross, we miss out on what it means not only to identify as Catholic, but to live out the Catholic faith.

Picture yourself again as you walk into a Catholic Church. One of the most prominent features is the Crucifix above the altar. Do we even notice what is in front of us? It almost becomes part of the background like an old picture hanging in your living room. To the people who lived during the time of Christ, it was anything but that. The crucifix was a daily reminder that you were not free. It was a threat to stay in line, or else. As the subjects of the Roman empire walked the main roads, they would see the writhing figures of poor, naked, beaten victims holding onto what remained of their lives. They would smell the stench of death. They would hear the moans and gasps of a person being asphyxiated. It was as much a psychological torment for the passerby as it was for the person nailed to the cross.

To think that we get a clean version of this whenever we go to Mass! We just see an artist's depiction of Christ on the cross. At Mass, there is a mysterious reality that occurs. Mystically and sacramentally, we are transported to the foot of the cross. Mass is not a memorial of the Crucifixion, it is the Crucifixion. We become participants in the Paschal sacrifice. We become witnesses to homicide, man's murder of God. We stand at the foot of the cross as Christ says to each of us, his beloved disciples, "Behold thy mother!" (Jn 19:27) Why would we celebrate this moment? Why is there even a solemn feast dedicated to the Cross?

Because Christ defeated the whole purpose of the cross. What was once an instrument of fear is the avenue of freedom. What was once a tool of oppression is now the means to liberation. Not an idea of freedom, but the truest sense of freedom. Freedom from death. Freedom to live.

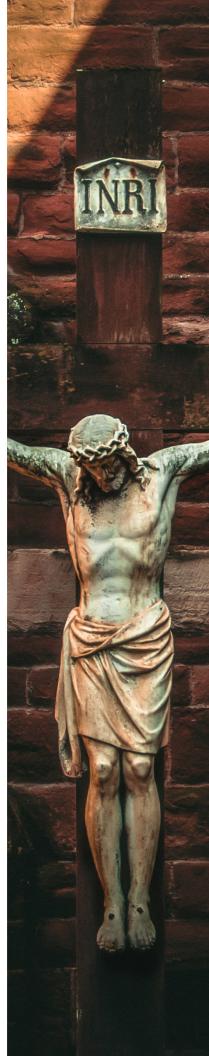
We live in a world that is constantly telling us we are defined by our income, what we wear, who we know, the car we drive, or better yet, how we feel. With all of these mixed signals and distractions, it is easy to get lost in the noise. It is no wonder that the world is in its current state of unrest and shame.

We lift high the Cross today as a reminder not only to the world, but to ourselves, that we find our identity in Christ crucified. We are no longer defined by our feelings or by others' opinions, but by sacrificial love. We lift high the Cross and invite all those around us to share in our joy, to share in our freedom.

Let us Exalt the Cross and praise God for such a tremendous gift.

Lift high the Cross: you are free.

Andrew Santos is an electrician in Rochester where he lives with his wife and two sons.





nspired by their beloved Grandpa Nunzi, keeping the traditions of the good ole days alive has become the center

of owner Michael Napolitano's vision. To sit at the dinner table to talk and laugh with friends and family, while enjoying an elevated take on old world Italian cooking, Nunzis invites you to come and experience the "New" Good Ole Days and create more memorable moments for the people in your life that you care about.

Opening last October, Nunzis is quickly becoming the hottest new restaurant in Farmingdale. With the help of Michael's father Vincent and brother Vincent Jr., they have all worked tirelessly to demonstrate that the incredible dishes made in the kitchen are only rivaled by the fantastic hospitality of Nunzis, where everybody is treated like a VIP. Traditions and respect for the good ole days,' have all been incorporated into a sleek and modern layout by renowned designer Derek Axelrod.

"In keeping our grandfather's traditions alive, you will eat with us, drink with us and laugh with us. Families and friends will all enjoy delicious food, fine drinks, good music and making memories," states Napolitano. The modern take on classic dishes, highlights a menu

that incorporates unique twists on old school Italian meals. With superb creations such as Grandmas Meatballs, Pappardelle & Lamb, Heritage Pork Chop; and desserts like Cannoli Cream with Biscotti.

Not to be missed are fascinating interpretations that will satisfy the cravings of adventurous foodies such as one-of-a-kind Limoncello Chicken Wings and a boisterous menu placement of a Philly Cheesesteak Sandwich. What Chefs Anthony LoCastro and Marc Wisehart have collaborated to produce, are memorable moments on a plate.

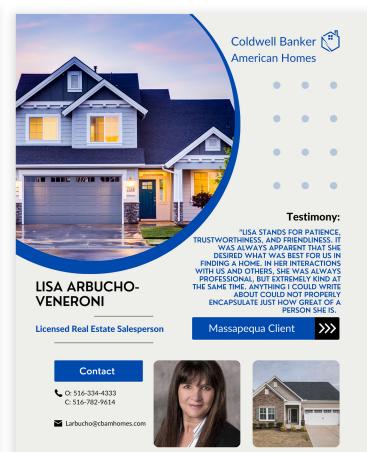
Nunzis is considered, by its loyalists as an immersive cultural experience that warmly embraces. The moment guests walk in the door they are dazzled by a lively environment that is both edgy and delightful. Both Axelrod and the Napolitano's worked harmoniously to launch what has now become a distinct trademark at Nunzis. Michael Napolitano seeks to enchant young and old alike by capturing a fresh, contemporary, and sleek look, with nods to the glamour and romance of classic Italian meals.

For more information, please visit nunzis1274.com, and on Instagram at @nunzisfarmingdale.

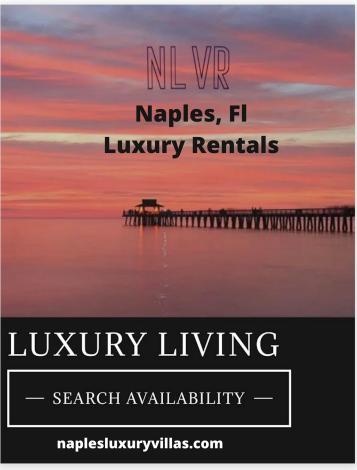
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- 2 Catholic Education Brings Hope.
- 3 Dad's: Be Intentional About Growing the Faith.
- 4. Evolution and Genesis Go Hand-in-Hand.
- 5. The Immorality of Abortion is Scientific Fact.
- 6. The Cross' Beauty.

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