



# The periodical of the Professional Society of Religious Educators

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## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the first issue of *Roots & Wings* for the new year. Again we offer a variety of articles, newsbytes and resources as an invitation to reflect on classroom practice and to try out new approaches.

We hope you enjoy the issue.

PAUL FALLER

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## REFLECTION

### Medieval mercies brought to life YEAR OF MERCY

The Southern Cross, December 23 to December 29, 2015, page 9

Dating back to the 1100s, the corporal and spiritual works of mercy are a means of practising a living faith. Matthew tells us "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven".

## Spiritual works of mercy

Pope Francis' voice echoed in the atrium of St Peter's basilica: "Open the gates of justice", thereby beginning the Year of Mercy. The faithful have been asked to do works of mercy during this time as we are called to become bearers of Christ.

### Counsel the doubtful

Counsel the doubtful

Pope Francis says in *The Joy of the Gospel*: "Goodness always tends to spread. If we wish to live a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good." In this instance, be a good listener. Pray for wisdom and courage when helping others with their problems. Many times, though, simply genuine concern and a willing ear are all that is required.

### Instruct the ignorant

Instruct the ignorant

'A Church which 'goes forth' is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world" (*The Joy of the Gospel*). Be ready to share your faith. Be ready to point others to resources which they can use to answer their questions. And always make sure you have the correct facts—simply reciting something you learned as a child is not sufficient and may in fact cause harm.

### Convert the sinner

Convert the sinners

The best way to accomplish this work is by example. A Christian life lived honestly and joyfully is the greatest evangelisation tool that we have.

### Comfort the sorrowful

Comfort the sorrowful

Comforting our loved ones during times of sorrow may come naturally but stepping out of our comfort zones and offering comfort to people we don't know well may not. We may not be able to fix any of the problems but again a listening ear and practical help will go a long way to ease someone's suffering.

### Forgive offenses willingly

Forgive offenses willingly

Even though it seems so hard to forgive, pardoning others is a powerful grace placed in "our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence, and revenge are necessary conditions to living joyfully", the pope said as part of his World Youth Day message. We need to forgive others because we have been forgiven—God extends his mercy and forgiveness to us at all times, so we are not in a position to withhold it from others.

### Bear wrongs patiently

Bear wrongs patiently

'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you" (Lk 6:27-28). This does not mean to stand by and accept evil, it means to not enter a cycle of revenge or allow yourself to be consumed by hatred. Many people act thoughtlessly, perhaps even you, so don't be quick to judge someone's motives.

## Pray for the living and the dead

Pray for the living and the dead

The pope said of prayer: “It is opening the door to the Lord, so that he can do something. If we close the door, God can do nothing! “We must pray to Jesus to get to know him better.” Our Lord may not answer straight away or he may say “wait” or “that is not my will” but either way your prayers for yourself and others are always heard. For the Year of Mercy the pope suggested we pray: “Lord, I am a sinner. Come with your mercy.” This is beautiful prayer and it’s very easy to say every day.

## Corporal works of mercy

### Feed the hungry



Feed the hungry

Feeding the hungry may seem straightforward in that you can donate food to charities or join a parish relief group, most of whom do wonderful work feeding the poor through soup kitchens and the like. Another aspect to this work of mercy is to educate ourselves on the problem of hunger worldwide and see if we can contribute towards change locally.

### Give drink to the thirsty

There is a wider social dimension to this work of mercy. Thirst may come in different forms, both physical and spiritual. Make sure you are providing both for your fellow man.



Give drink to the thirsty



Clothe the naked

### Clothe the naked

Perhaps in medieval times people actually had to go naked but we see less of this nowadays, thankfully. That doesn’t mean that people aren’t getting cold every winter and in desperate need of clothing and blankets. And if we took an honest look at our wardrobes we’d see that we are able to give away many things we no longer wear.

### Visit the imprisoned

‘I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security’ (*The Joy of the Gospel*). Probably the work of mercy that is least undertaken, visiting people in jail can be problematic but that doesn’t stop courageous people who make this part of their work. You can support prisoners in other ways such as writing to them and even praying for them.



Visit the imprisoned

### Shelter the homeless



Shelter the homeless

‘Every human being is the object of God’s infinite tenderness. Appearances notwithstanding every person is immensely holy and deserves our love.’ Pope Francis here is telling us that if we realise that every person is worthy of our giving, we will be able to share our lives with others and generously give of ourselves. The current refugee crisis worldwide requires us to see others as immensely valuable and offer them shelter. The Jesuit Refugee Service assists people who come into the country, often with nothing other than what they are carrying. Supporting a service like this can make a world of difference for those who have to flee their own countries.

### Visit the sick

Visiting the sick is not restricted to visiting hospitals or sick beds. There are those who are lonely or abandoned and those who are in need of friendship. Often the people in need are sitting next to us at Mass. Reach out to them.



### Bury the dead

In medieval times it was up to relatives to bury family members. While we don't have to do this physically ourselves now, we may still assist others financially and emotionally with burial costs and preparations. Offering Masses for the repose of souls is a very old tradition which brings much comfort for those left behind.

That's the list of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy and while they may seem daunting let's take heart in the words of St Vincent de Paul: "Go to the poor: you will find God."

## REFLECTION

### Only in Silence

(Ron Rolheiser)



The Belgian spiritual writer, Bieke Vandekerckhove, comes by her wisdom honestly. She didn't learn what she shares from a book or even primarily from the good example of others. She learned what she shares through the crucible of a unique suffering, being hit at the tender age of nineteen with a terminal disease that promised not just an early death

but also a complete breakdown and humiliation of her body en route to that death.

Her attempt to cope with her situation drove her in many directions, initially to anger and hopelessness but eventually to monasteries, to the wisdom of monasticism, and, under its direction, into the deep well of silence, that desert that lurks so threateningly inside each of us. Away from all the noises of the world, in the silence of her own soul, inside the chaos of her raging, restless insides she found the wisdom and strength not just to cope with her illness but to also find a deeper meaning and joy in her life.

There are, as John Updike poetically puts it, secrets that are hidden from

health, though, as Vandekerckhove makes evident, they can be uncovered in silence. However uncovering the secrets that silence has to teach us is not easy. Silence, until properly befriended, is scary and the process of befriending it is the soul's equivalent of crossing a hot desert. Our insides don't easily become calm, restlessness doesn't easily turn into solitude, and the temptation to turn to the outside world for consolation doesn't easily give way to the idea of quiet. But there's a peace and a meaning that can only be found inside the desert of our own chaotic and raging insides. The deep wells of consolation lie at the end of an inner journey through heat, thirst, and dead-ends that must be pushed through with dogged fidelity. And, as for any epic journey, the task is not for the faint of heart.

Here's how Vandekerckhove describes one aspect of the journey: "Inner noise can be quite exhausting. That's probably why so many flee to the seduction of exterior background noises. They prefer to have the noise just wash over them. But if you want to grow spiritually, you have to stay inside of the room of your spiritual raging and persevere. You have to continue to sit silently and honestly in God's presence until the raging quiets down and your heart gradually becomes cleansed and quieted. Silence forces us to take stock of our actual manner of being human. And then we hit a wall, a dead point. No matter what we do, no matter what we try, something in us continues to feel lost and estranged, despite the myriad ways of society to meet our human needs. Silence confronts us with an unbearable bottomlessness, and there appears no way out. We

have no choice but to align ourselves with the religious depth in us."

There's a profound truth: Silence confronts us with an unbearable bottomlessness and we have no choice but to align ourselves with the religious depth inside us. Sadly, for most of us, we will learn this only by bitter conscription when we have to actually face our own death. In the abandonment of dying, stripped of all options and outlets we will, despite struggle and bitterness, have to, in the words of Karl Rahner, *allow ourselves to sink into the incomprehensibility of God*. Moreover, before this surrender is made, our lives will always remain somewhat unstable and confusing and there will always be dark, inner corners of the soul that scare us.

But a journey into silence can take us beyond our dark fears and shine healing light into our darkest corners. But, as Vandekerckhove and other spiritual writers point out, that peace is usually found only after we have reached an impasse, a "dead point" where the only thing we can do is "to pierce the negative."

In her book, *The Taste of Silence*, Vandekerckhove recounts how an idealistic friend of hers shared with her his dream of going off by himself into some desert to explore spirituality. Her prompt reaction was not much to his liking: "A person is ready to go to any kind of desert. He's willing to sit anywhere, as long as it's not his own desert." How true. We forever hanker after idealized deserts and avoid our own.

The spiritual journey, the pilgrimage, the Camino, we most need to make

doesn't require an airline ticket, though an experienced guide is recommended. The most spiritually rewarding trip we can make is an inner pilgrimage, into the desert of our own silence.

As human beings we are constitutively social. This means, as the bible so

bluntly puts it, that it is not good for the human person to be alone. We are meant to be in community with others. Heaven will be a communal experience; but, on the road there, there's a certain deep inner work that can only be done alone, in silence, away from the noise of the world.

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## REFLECTION

### Our Muslim Brothers and Sisters

(Ron Rolheiser)



This is not a good time to be a Muslim in the Western world. As the violence perpetrated by radical Islamic groups such as ISIS, Al Qaeda, and Boko Haram becomes more and more prevalent, huge numbers of people are becoming paranoid about and even openly hostile towards the Islam religion, seeing all Muslims as a threat. Popular opinion more and more blames the Moslem religion itself for that violence, suggesting that there is

something inherent in Islam itself that's responsible for this kind of violence. That equation needs to be challenged, both in the name of truth and in the name of what's best in us as Christians.

First of all, it's untrue: Painting all Muslims with the same brush is like painting all Christians with the same brush, akin to looking at most the depraved man who calls himself a Christian and saying: "That's Christians for you! They're all the same!" Second, it's also unfair: Islamic militants no more speak for Islam than Hitler speaks for Christianity (and that comparison isn't idly chosen). Finally, such an equation misleads our sympathy: The first victim of Islamic terrorism is Islam itself, namely, authentic God-fearing Muslims are the first victims of this violence.

When we look at the history of any terrorist Islamic group such as ISIS or Al-Qaeda, we see that it first establishes itself by terrorizing and killing thousands of its own people, honest, God-fearing Muslims. And it goes on killing them. ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Boko Haram have killed thousands more Muslims than they have killed Christians or persons of any other religion. While their ultimate target may well be the secularized, Christian West, but more immediately their real war is against true Islam.



Moreover the victims of Islamic terrorists are not just the thousands of moderate Muslims who have been direct victims of their violence and killings, but also all other Muslims who are now painted with the same brush and negatively judged in both their religiosity and their sincerity. Whenever Islamic terrorists perpetrate an act of violence, its victims are not just those who die, are injured, or who lose loved ones, it's also all true Muslims, particularly those living in the West because they are now viewed through the eyes of suspicion, fear, and hatred.

But the Muslim religion is not to blame here. There is nothing inherent in either the Koran or in Islam itself that morally or religiously undergirds this kind of violence. We would holler "unfair" if someone were to say that what happened during the Inquisition is inherent in the Gospels. We owe Islam the same judgement. One of the great students of World Religions, the renowned Houston Smith, submits that we should always judge a religion by its best expressions, by its saints and graced-history rather than by its psychopaths and aberrations. I hope that others offer us, Christians, this courtesy. Hitler was somehow a product of the Christian West, as was Mother Theresa. Houston Smith's point is that the latter, not the former, is a truer basis for judging Christianity. We owe our Islamic brothers and sisters the same courtesy.

And that's more a recognition of the truth than a courtesy. The word "Islam/Muslim" has its origins in the word "peace", and that connotation, along with the concept of "surrender to God", constitutes the essence of what it means to be a Muslim. And for more than 90% of Muslims in the world, that is exactly what it means to be a Muslim, namely, to be a man or woman of peace who has surrendered to God and who now tries to live a life that is centered on faith, prayer, responsibility, and hospitality. Any interpretation of Islam by a radicalised group that gives divine sanction to terrorist violence is false and belies Islam. Islamic extremists don't speak for God, Mohammed, Islam, or for what it means to surrender in faith, but only for a self-serving ideology, and true Muslims are, in the end, the real victims of that.

Terrorist attacks, like the recent ones in Paris and Mali, call for more, not less, sympathy for true Muslims. It's time to establish a greater solidarity with Islam, notwithstanding extremist terrorism. We are both part of the same family: We have the same God, suffer the same anxieties, are subject to the same mortality, and will share the same heaven. Muslims more than ever need our understanding, sympathy, support, and fellowship in faith.

Christian de Cherge, the Trappist monk who was martyred by Islamic terrorists in Algeria in 1996, wrote a remarkable letter to his family in France shortly before he died. Well aware that he had a good chance of being killed by Islamic terrorists, he shared with his family that, should this happen, they should know that he had already forgiven his killers and that he foresaw himself and them, his killers, in the same heaven, playing together under God's gaze, a gaze that lovingly takes in all of God's children, Muslims no less than Christians.

# WEBSITE

## Catholics & Cultures

<http://www.catholicsandcultures.org/>

### About This Site

*Most Catholics experience the faith through a single cultural lens. Yet people all around the world live and imagine it in a rich diversity of ways. Catholics & Cultures widens the lens with a scholarly, vivid and accessible look at the religious lives and practices of contemporary Catholics in countries around the globe.*

Catholics & Cultures, an initiative of the Rev. Michael C. McFarland, S.J. Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture at the College of the Holy Cross, aims to foster comparative study of contemporary Catholic life around the globe and to provide teaching resources about Catholic life in all its richness and particularity. The initiative focuses on “lived Catholicism,” the ways that ordinary Catholics practice their faith in their everyday lives. The initiative will sponsor scholarly conversations, international conferences, and publications, including an electronic journal.

The Catholics & Cultures website, a centerpiece of the initiative, serves as a growing, changing depiction of the global Church today for an international and interreligious audience. The site seeks first to provide insight into Catholic practices and beliefs as they are understood by those who live them. Second, it aims to understand those practices and beliefs in the context of the cultures they navigate and variously reflect, shape, and oppose. Finally, it aims to

identify and link to select bibliographic and scholarly resources where readers can turn for more in-depth analysis and alternative perspectives.



The Catholics & Cultures website features research articles, interviews and bibliographies, photographs and videos, maps, graphics, video lectures and more to provide viewers a global sense of what it means to be Catholic today. Because culture is shaped significantly by social and economic conditions, the site also offers demographic data by country to aid in comparison and add perspective. Viewers will be able to search by country or search cross-cultural themes among Catholic practices and values.

**For example, viewers of the site may:**

- Consider the places in the world where Catholicism is practiced publicly, with religious displays in city squares, streets and stores, and compare to cultures where religious



practice is more privatized and reserved for the home and sacred spaces.

- Learn about the myriad Marian feasts and festivals celebrated around the world.
- Explore the melding of Catholicism and culture and its influence on

gender roles, marriage, family life and death rituals.

- Discover the diversity of shrines, with ex-voto offerings such as flowers, notes and candles, tokens of miracles and healing, and elaborate works of art.
- Watch a charismatic Catholic service or an Eastern rite liturgy.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### Little Worm's Big Question



The authors, Schlunke & Polyp, explain the inspiration behind 'Little Worm's Big Question'. Little Worm appeared out of the blue one day, during a casual natter about where people's sense of self-worth comes from. We were discussing how different personalities resemble different animal characteristics. Some

people announce their importance by being loud (roosters), some people show off their beauty by preening and grooming (peacocks), others pride themselves on their status, (alpha male gorilla), and so on...

Far too often it's the noisy, competitive attributes that people notice, while quieter qualities like honesty, determination, curiosity and perseverance are overlooked or unappreciated.

Then we thought about worms! On the surface, worms have no obvious strengths or talents, and are more likely noted for their vulnerability and helplessness.

But below the ground the true value of worms is evident - and phenomenal. Little Worm is the embodiment of all these overlooked qualities, yet far too modest to see them for himself.



As artists, we'd often expressed frustration at the patronisingly low standard of artwork in children's books. Why is it assumed that children don't appreciate complex, vivid, images? Who says that children relate to over-simplified, two-dimensional, scribbly drawings?

We wanted to create a book for all ages that is entertaining and funny, investigative, challenging and inspiring. We want the readers to become lost in the images, and to return to them again and again to spot new details - like the threats to each animal lurking in the backgrounds... some more obviously than others. It's a book which celebrates nature's beauty - its mystery, diversity and fragility, whilst trying to be as biologically accurate as possible with the animals' claims. Why use lazy animal stereotypes when the real life qualities are far more intriguing?



We also wanted it to be visually hilarious with the determined absurdity of Little Worm's efforts to 'dress appropriately' for each environment!

We tried to keep the language simple without sacrificing expression. The rhythmic, repetitive phrases will keep toddlers engaged and able to anticipate familiar sounding patterns, while older kids will enjoy some new, snazzy-sounding words, which they can ask about, experiment with, and add to their vocabulary.



And since Little Worm is such an 'ask-questions' book, we've even included a fact page at the end to assist parents and teachers, or to satisfy/stimulate the interest of curious young 'read-alone' readers.

But possibly it'll be Little Worm's tenderness that wins the hearts of readers. It's a story that stirs empathy, and questions what we value about ourselves and others. More importantly, it reassures with a simple, yet profound message:

**It's your unique contribution to the world which makes you special. Status is sometimes about being part of something bigger than you are, and you'll never find it by constantly comparing yourself to others.**

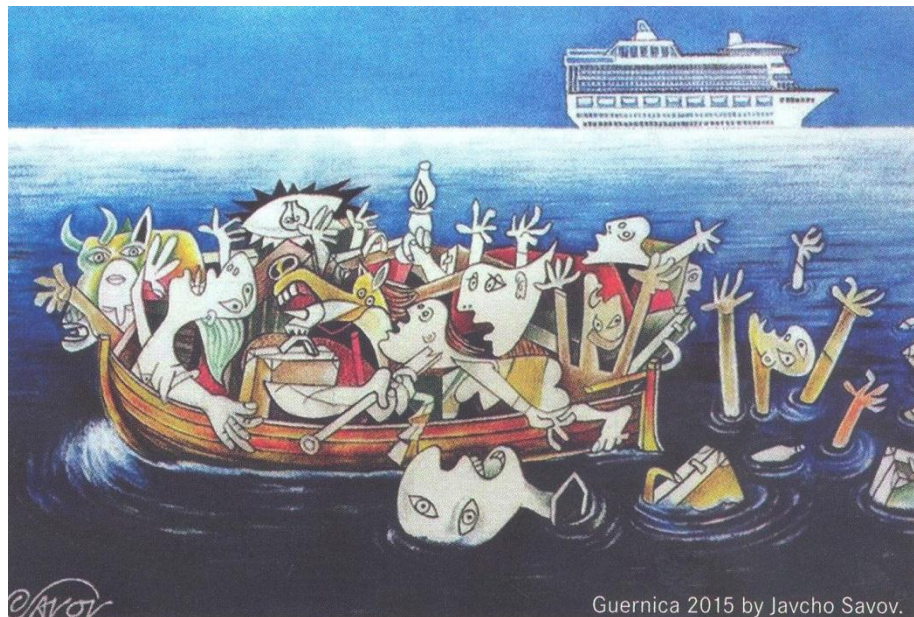
But perhaps Little Worm's greatest discovery is love. He finds the one who makes him feel special just for being himself.

**Little Worm's Big Question is available from New Internationalist from 18 February 2016. Find out more:**

<http://newint.org/books/little-worm-big-question/>



## RICH AND POOR – REFUGEES ALL?



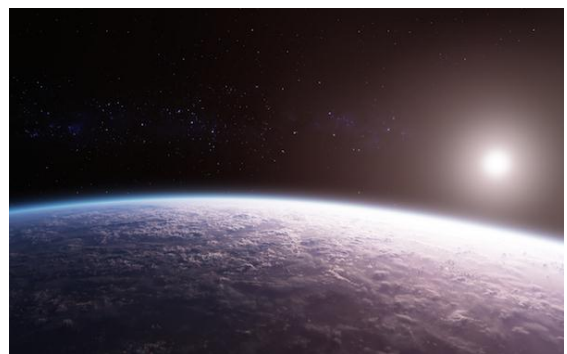
## ARTICLE

### Does Evolution Contradict Genesis?

(Matt Fradd)

The theory of evolution proposes an explanation for how life in general and mankind in particular arose. It holds that that there was a long period in which natural processes gave rise to life and to the different life forms on earth.

This in no way conflicts with the idea of God. As the omnipotent Creator, he is free to create either quickly or slowly and either directly or through intermediate processes that he sets up.



He can even do a mixture of these things, such as creating the universe in an instant (as apparently happened at the Big Bang) and then having it experience a long, slow process of development giving rise to stars and planets and eventually life forms including human beings.

He can even intervene periodically in these processes going on in the universe, such as when he creates a soul for each human being or when he performs a miracle.

From its perspective, science can learn certain things about the laws governing the universe and the processes occurring in it. But that does nothing to eliminate the idea of God, for the question remains: Why is there a universe with these laws and these processes in the first place?

Consider an analogy: Suppose that after a thorough and lengthy scientific investigation of the Mona Lisa, I concluded that it was the result of innumerable collisions of paint and canvas which gradually went from indecipherable shapes and colours to a beautiful and intriguing picture of a woman.

My analysis of the painting may be correct. That is, in fact, what the Mona Lisa is and how it developed. But it by no means disproves nor makes unnecessary Leonardo Da Vinci as the painter behind the painting.

Furthermore, if we were the product of a purely random processes then we have good reason to doubt our mental faculties when it comes to knowing the truth. Why? Because our mental faculties would be the result of a random evolutionary process which is aimed, not at producing true beliefs, but at mere survival. But if that were the case then why should we trust the idea that we are the product of purely random factors? The mental processes leading to this conclusion

would not be aimed at producing true beliefs.

Charles Darwin seems to have understood this when he wrote:

“With me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would anyone trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?”

This worry disappears if God was guiding whatever process led to us and if he shaped the development of the human mind so that it was aimed at knowing him, and thus knowing the truth.

"But," you might be thinking, "surely evolution contradicts the creation account in Genesis."

No, it doesn't.

The Bible contains many different styles of writing. History, poetry, prophecy, parables, and a variety of other literary genres are found in its pages. This is not surprising since it is not so much a book as it is a library - a collection of 73 books written at different times by different people.

As such it is important that we distinguish between types of literature within the Bible and what they are trying to tell us. It would be a mistake, for example, to take a work as rich as the Bible in symbolism and literary figures as if it were always relating history in the manner

that we in our culture are accustomed to.

Much less should we expect it to offer a scientific account of things. If one is hoping to find a scientific account of creation then he will not find it in these texts, for the Bible was never intended to be a scientific textbook on cosmology.

Saint Augustine put it this way: “We do not read in the Gospel that the Lord said, ‘I am sending you the Holy Spirit, that he may teach you about the course of the sun and the moon’. He wished to make people Christians not astronomers.”

The Catholic Church is open to the ideas of an old universe and that God used evolution as part of his plan. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “The question about the origins of the world and of man has been the object of many scientific studies which have splendidly enriched our knowledge of the age and dimensions of the cosmos, the development of life-forms and the appearance of man. These discoveries invite us to even greater admiration for the greatness of the Creator, prompting us to give him thanks for all his works and for the understanding and wisdom he gives to scholars and researchers” (CCC 283).

When it comes to relating these findings to the Bible, the Catechism explains: “God himself created the visible world in all its richness, diversity and order. Scripture presents the work of the Creator symbolically as a succession of six

days of divine ‘work,’ concluded by the ‘rest’ of the seventh day” (CCC 337).

Explaining further, it says:

“Among all the Scriptural texts about creation, the first three chapters of Genesis occupy a unique place. From a literary standpoint these texts may have had diverse sources. The inspired authors have placed them at the beginning of Scripture to express in their solemn language the truths of creation-its origin and its end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and finally the drama of sin and the hope of salvation. Read in the light of Christ, within the unity of Sacred Scripture and in the living Tradition of the Church, these texts remain the principal source for catechesis on the mysteries of the ‘beginning’: creation, fall, and promise of salvation.” (CCC 289)

In other words, the early chapters of Genesis, “relate in simple and figurative language, adapted to the understanding of mankind at a lower stage of development, fundamental truths underlying the divine scheme of salvation.” (Pontifical Biblical Commission, January 16, 1948).

Or, as Pope John Paul II put it:

“The Bible itself speaks to us of the origin of the universe and its makeup, not in order to provide us with a scientific treatise but in order to state the correct relationship of humanity with God and the universe. Sacred Scripture wishes simply to declare that the world was created by



God” (Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, October 3, 1981).

As Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) explained:

“The story of the dust of the earth and the breath of God...does not in fact explain how human persons come to be but rather what they are. It explains their inmost origin and casts light on the project that they are. And, vice versa, the theory of evolution seeks to understand and describe biological developments. But in so doing it cannot explain where the ‘project’ of human persons comes from, nor their inner origin, nor their particular nature. To that extent we are faced here with two complementary-rather than mutually exclusive—realities.”

The recognition that the creation accounts must be understood with some nuance is not new, nor is it a forced retreat in the face of modern science. Various Christian writers from the early centuries of Church history, as much as 1,500 years or more before Darwin, saw the six days of creation as something other than literal, twenty-four hour periods.

For example, in the A.D. 200s, Origen of Alexandria noted that in the six days of creation day and night are made on the first day but the sun is not created until the fourth. The ancients knew as well as we do that the presence or absence of the sun is what makes it day or night, and so he took this as an indicator that the text was using a literary device and

not presenting a literal chronology. He wrote:

“Now who is there, pray, possessed of understanding, that will regard the statement as appropriate, that the first day, and the second, and the third, in which also both evening and morning are mentioned, existed without sun, and moon, and stars—the first day even without a sky? . . . I do not suppose that anyone doubts that these things figuratively indicate certain mysteries, the history having taken place in appearance, and not literally.” (De Principiis, 4:16)

What Origen was onto was a structure embedded in the six days of creation whereby in the first three days God prepares several regions to be populated by separating the day from the night, the sky from the sea, and finally the seas from each other so that the dry land appears. Then, on the second three days, he populates these, filling the day and night with the sun, the moon, and the stars, filling the sky and sea with birds and fish, and filling the dry land with animals and man.

The first three days are historically referred to as the days of distinction because God separates and thus distinguishes one region from another. The second three days are referred to as the days of adornment, in which God populates or adorns the regions he has distinguished.

This literary structure was obvious to people before the development of modern science, and the fact that the sun is not created until day four was

recognized by some as a sign that the text is presenting the work of God, as the Catechism says, “symbolically as a succession of six days of divine ‘work’” (CCC 337).

Origen was not the only one to recognize the literary nature of the six days. Similarly, St. Augustine, writing in the A.D. 400s, noted:

“What kind of days these were is extremely difficult or perhaps

impossible for us to conceive, and how much more to say!” (*The City of God*, 11:6).

The ancients thus recognised, long before modern science, that the Bible did not require us to think that the world was made in six twenty-four hour days.

<http://www.strangenotions.com/does-evolution-contradict-genesis/>

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## HOW TO CRAFT YOUR OWN PEACE POLE

Use the ideas and instructions given below but don’t take them literally. Use your own imagination and the resources you have available.

### Materials Needed

Cedar 4 x 4 Pole  
Language Plates from Shop Peace  
Quart of Spar Urethane ®  
2.5” Foam brush for each coat  
1 piece 80 grit sand paper  
1 piece 220 grit sand paper  
Sanding block  
Tack cloth  
Use of a compound mitre saw  
Mask - NIOSH approved respiratory protection



### Choosing Your Pole

Even before you receive the plates you ordered from us on Shop Peace, you can get started on the Pole itself. Call your yard to make sure they have what you want before you go there. We recommend using cedar, as it has great rot resistant properties and is readily available at better lumberyards. Pick through the pile of cedar to find the lightest, straightest and nicest looking pole.

### Creating Your Pole

Once home, cut a point on the top at 45° angles so it looks like a little pyramid using a compound mitre saw and wear eye protection. Start with the 80 grit and sand the entire 4”x4” until the whole piece is clean and smooth. (Note: a 4”x4” is actually 3.5”x3.5”) Finish the sanding by doing the same with the 220 grit paper. Once sanded, use the tack cloth to remove all dust.

Start applying the urethane from the top down and watch for drips. Follow all safety instructions on the urethane can and protect yourself from dust during the sanding process by wearing NIOSH approved respiratory protection mask. Once your first coat is completely dry, give the Pole a light sand with a clean piece of 220 grit, remove the dust and apply the second coat. Follow the same process for the 3rd and (if you want, as we do here at The World Peace Sanctuary) the 4th coat.

While you are at the lumberyard you might want to pick up any of the items needed for the Peace Pole planting that are on the instruction for planting you received with your plates.



**Note on the use of Urethane:** There are alternatives to urethane available and if you want to look in that direction, speak with the millwork specialist at your lumberyard, but remember that you are basically putting a nice piece of furniture outdoors.

**Recycling your Foam Brush:** You can also try to use a single brush by putting it in a sealable sandwich bag, get out as much air as possible and put it in the refrigerator in between coats.

**Maintenance of your Peace Pole:** We highly recommend that you lightly sand and add a new coat of polyurethane to your Peace Pole every few years.

**Support:** If you have any questions while crafting your Pole, feel free to call us at The World Peace Sanctuary during business hours. Thank you for supporting The Peace Pole Project and remember to send us a photo of your Peace Pole Dedication!

The Peace Pole Project at The World Peace Sanctuary  
26 Benton Road, Wassaic, NY 12592

[info@worldpeace.org](mailto:info@worldpeace.org), [www.worldpeace.org](http://www.worldpeace.org), [www.peacepoleproject.org](http://www.peacepoleproject.org)

## LOCAL NEWS

### Is the South Africa's first Peace Pole?

(The Southern Cross Staff Reporter)

An East London parish has erected what might be South Africa's first Peace Pole.

Eucharistic Heart of Jesus parish raised the Peace Pole in the church yard, with Bishop Vincent Zungu of Port Elizabeth and parish priest Fr Varghese Kannanaickal officiating at the blessing.



There are about 250 000 Peace Poles in over 170 countries. The first one was erected in 1970 in Fukuoka, Japan.

The poet and philosopher Masahisa Goi was so deeply affected by the destruction of World War II, especially in Hiroshima, that he founded the World Peace Prayer Society, a non-sectarian organisation that has made the erection of Peace Poles one of its projects.

"Peace Poles are meant to call to mind the need for peace in our world," said parishioner Sharron Reynolds. "Whenever we see a Peace Pole we are reminded that peace begins with each one of us.

"We are encouraged to live each day in the spirit of May Peace Prevail on Earth," she said, adding that the motto is inscribed on East London's Peace Pole in 12 different languages.

The Justice & Peace group of the parish, steered by Sr Aloysia Zellman OP, proposed the Peace Pole, and the parish was involved in the decision.

We feel that by this symbol we can contribute to generating more peace in our city, province and country," Ms Reynolds said.

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## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### Global Warming Continues

Global temperatures are running far above last year's record-setting level, all but guaranteeing that 2015 will be the hottest year in the historical record - and undermining political claims that global warming had somehow stopped.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the American agency that tracks worldwide temperatures, announced that in 2015 the hottest September had been recorded, and in fact took the biggest leap above the previous September that any month has displayed since 1880, when tracking began at a global scale. The agency also announced that the January-to-September period had been the hottest such span on the books.



The immediate cause of the record-breaking warmth is a strong El Niño weather pattern, in which the ocean releases immense amounts of heat into the atmosphere - but temperatures are running so far ahead of those during the last strong El Niño, in 1997 and 1998, that scientists said the records would not be occurring without an underlying trend caused by human emissions of greenhouse gases.

"The bottom line is that the world is warming," said Jessica Blunden, a climate scientist with NOAA, in Asheville, N.C. She pointed to measurements in several of the world's ocean basins, where surface temperatures are as much as 3° Fahrenheit above the 20<sup>th</sup> century average, a substantial increase when calculated over such large areas.

The combined effects of El Niño and greenhouse warming are already roiling weather patterns worldwide, probably contributing to dry weather and forest fires in Indonesia, to an incipient drought in Australia and to a developing food emergency across parts of Africa, including a severe drought in Ethiopia. Those effects are likely to intensify in coming months as the El Niño reaches its peak and then gradually subsides.

Earlier this year, the global warmth contributed to a spring heat wave in India and Pakistan that killed many people, possibly several thousand, with temperatures hitting 118° F in parts of India. The effects on the natural world have also been severe, with extreme ocean temperatures bleaching coral reefs around the world, and many of them likely to suffer lasting damage.

The World Food Program, a United Nations relief agency, is preparing for expanded operations across Africa, and appealing for donations. Harvests are down across large stretches of that continent, and the number of people going hungry in Ethiopia is likely to be in the millions in the coming months, relief groups have estimated.

(Justin Gillis, [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com))



## Marrakech Declaration Historic and Inspiring: A Report from the Chair of the Parliament

*(Robert Sellers)*



It was my privilege, on behalf of the Parliament of the World's Religions, to attend the January 25-27 Marrakech Conference on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Lands, conducted under the high patronage of His Majesty, King Mohammed VI, of Morocco. Three prominent leaders had worked on this initiative since 2012—Shiekh

Abdallah Bin Bayyah of Abu Dhabi, President for the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies; Dr. Ahmed Toufiq of Rabat, Minister of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs for the Kingdom of Morocco; and Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi of Washington, D.C., Director for The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. Through the planning of these visionaries, more than 300 cabinet ministers, imams, scholars and intellectuals, peace activists, and interfaith leaders from 120 Muslim territories were brought together to reaffirm the principles of the 1400-year old Charter of Medina and to discuss its implications for our contemporary world. Joining them were approximately 50 non-Muslim leaders who served as observer-participants in the conference. The Marrakech Declaration—its powerful concepts shaped and debated during many hours of supportive speeches, breakout sessions, and multiple drafts, and its final wording ratified by the impressive range of Muslim signatories—is both historic and inspiring.

On the one hand, the Declaration is historic. It is a groundbreaking effort to clarify and unify the response of global Muslims to the world's bitter experiences of war and terrorism, hatred and violence, desecration of sacred spaces, ethnic cleansings, forced migrations, and other atrocities perpetrated by "criminal groups" and "ignorant fools" whose vile actions "have nothing to do with religion." The Declaration draws upon the principles of the Charter of Medina, drafted by the Prophet Mohammed in CE 622 as a means of bringing harmony between his followers and the non-Muslims of Medina, and reflects as well the values of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It challenges Muslims around the world to develop laws that guarantee the equal citizenship and just treatment of religious minorities in Muslim nations. Furthermore, the Declaration calls for all sects and denominations of Islam "to confront all forms of religious bigotry, vilification, and denigration of what people hold sacred, as well as all speech that promotes hatred and bigotry." The Declaration is historic!

On the other hand, the Declaration is inspiring. Once again—just as was the case in the 2007 Muslim document, “A Common Word between Us and You”—leaders of Islam have drafted a statement affirming their commitment to neighborliness in a world too often marked by religious boundaries and the clash of civilizations. By ratifying this call to harmony and the just treatment of religious minorities, these Muslim leaders have given us who are not Muslims an example that we also must follow. I thus find inspiration in this Declaration for thinking seriously about the rights of non-Christians in Christian-majority nations, like the United States. For example, making the appropriate categorical substitutions, this document can “urge [Christian] educational institutions and authorities to conduct a courageous review of educational curricula that addresses honestly and effectively any material



that instigates aggression and extremism, leads to war and chaos, and results in the destruction of our shared societies.” Furthermore, the Declaration can “call upon politicians and decision makers to take the political and legal steps necessary to establish a constitutional contractual relationship among its citizens, and to support all formulations and initiatives that aim to fortify relations and understanding among the various religious groups in the [Christian] world.” Not only should we be concerned about the human rights of non-Muslims in Muslim-majority nations, but we must be attentive to the human rights of Muslims in non-Muslim-majority nations. Islamophobia must diminish and neighborliness in the human family must increase. Toward that end, this Declaration is inspiring!

As the Chair of the Parliament of the World’s Religions, may I reiterate my personal commitment to interreligious harmony and cooperation, and on behalf of my fellow trustees and peoples of all faiths who are committed to the interfaith movement, may I say that we will not cease in our efforts to bring about the kind of peaceful, mutually beneficial society around the world that is envisioned in this historic and inspiring Marrakech Declaration.

See more at:

[http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/blog/2016-01-31-1334/marrakech-declaration-historic-and-inspiring-report-chair-parliament?mc\\_cid=39aa896461&mc\\_eid=eb28cdb911#sthash.FXleL1Zx.dpuf](http://www.parliamentofreligions.org/blog/2016-01-31-1334/marrakech-declaration-historic-and-inspiring-report-chair-parliament?mc_cid=39aa896461&mc_eid=eb28cdb911#sthash.FXleL1Zx.dpuf)



Professional Society of Religious Educators