

# You're Hurting Me, Fr. James Martin

2017-10-10 | Avera Maria Santo

Please, Fr. James, know that this is not me attacking you. I just want to be open, and share my story and my heart with you.

I wanted to make something actually directed towards you, in hopes that you might read it, and that you might consider some of the things that I have to say.

Maybe I'm young, maybe I'm not that smart, but I live with this. I live with SSA every day, and every day is a fight.

I know that you care about your flock, and I know that you care deeply about the LGBTQ+ community.

I know that you want to do good things, but if I'm being honest, Fr. James, I don't think all that you're doing and saying is helping us.

You're hurting me, Fr. James.



I find myself standing on this bridge that you wanted to build with your book, but it's collapsing under me. It's falling under the weight of all that I know to be true, under the goodness, the truth, and the beauty of the true Catholic Church and her teachings.

I understand what you wanted to do with this book, but I cannot agree with all that you have said.

There's a lot that I could go over, but I want to focus on one element in particular, the call of persons with same-sex attractions to chastity and holiness.

Above all, I am a person, not a homosexual person.

There are only three kinds of persons: Divine, Angelic, and Human. The human person cannot be reduced to his or her experience. My identity is a beloved daughter of God, and can't be lowered to anything else.

Because of my nature as a human person, I am God's Creation, and His alone. God made me for Himself, and calls me to draw near to Him in this life so that I may remain with Him forever in the next.

In order to remain with God, I must follow His commands, and the teachings of His Bride, the Holy Catholic Church. If I'm going to follow those rules set out for me, I have to know what they are. What they really are. No watered down version of the faith is going to get me to Heaven.

I feel as though you're hesitant to say that acting on same-sex desires is wrong. It is inherently wrong, Father. God's design for conjugal love does not include the joining of man-and-man or woman-and-woman. It simply does not work.

Marriage is not a man made invention, and therefore is not ours to define. God intended marriage to be between one man and one woman, even the design of the human anatomy can attest to that! If we begin to deny this truth, we lose sight of who we are.

There's an identity crisis ravaging the LGBTQ+ community right now because we base our identities on who we're emotionally and/or sexually attracted to. We are so much more than that!

Calling my sexual desires "objectively disordered" is not "needlessly cruel." If I desire something that is not going to contribute to my holiness, then it needs to go unfulfilled. I cannot understand and bring to fulfillment God's plan for me by

"satisfying" a desire that can lead to my demise. We all have desires that shouldn't go fulfilled; we all want things that we can't have. Me being able to sleep with a woman is no different than that. It's not cruel, it's what I need to hear, it is the truth.

Show me respect by reminding me and my brothers and sisters who we are, and all that we are called to be.

Call me what I am. Call me a child of God, loved by God, and called to greatness beyond my comprehension. See my value and my worth as a human person, and don't reduce me to an experience.

Show me compassion by walking with me and calling me to holiness, because holiness is for everybody.

You talk about how people with SSA are "unjustly discriminated against" in many ways. This is true. But I dare to say that feeding us a watered down version of the Gospel counts as unjust discrimination as well.

Call me to chastity and sanctity. Tell me that I can fight, and I am strong enough to carry my cross.

Insinuating that I need to have the rules bent for me, that I somehow just can't help acting on my desires, tells me that I am not capable of the same holiness as my brothers and sisters without SSA. It tells me that God doesn't love me enough to give me the grace and the strength to carry my cross with dignity, bravery, and courage.

Christ died for me. He told me to pick up my cross and carry it after Him. He is going to give me the strength to get to Calvary, and eventually Heaven.

Show me sensitivity by encountering me with authentic love, the same love that Christ would show me.

Know that in our hearts of hearts, inside our holy of holies, we want God. He made us for Himself, and He want us to go back to Him. Show us His Face in your ministry, in the way that you love us, in the way that you encounter us. Please tell us what He would say, Father. Please tell us the truth, and walk with us on that road back to the one whom our soul loves.

I have had too many people try to preach the Gospel to me while leaving out the Cross. The Cross, the struggle, the suffering cannot be left out. Easter did not come without Good Friday, and we cannot get to Heaven without first fighting for it on earth.

The saints in Heaven fought for holiness while they were on earth. We cannot get to Heaven without a fight. Do not try to make the fight easier for me, Fr. James, come with me, battle with me, and make me stronger.

I firmly believe that the next great saint of our age will be someone who lived with same-sex attractions.

We are called to holiness too, Father.  
Please, do not drown out that beautiful call.

# TRENDING

## A trend that is not trending.

October 12, 2017

The "trending" in the social media world means something is getting a lot of attention, and everyone is sharing it and retweeting it and posting it — yada, yada. But the more accurate understanding of the term refers to how something is unfolding, developing or advancing, so there is some relationship between the more traditional definition and the social media jargon.

What is trending in the Church in the United States these days is near extinction. But the funny thing is not many people are actually talking about it. It's not getting a lot of attention. So the issue is both "trending" and not "trending," depending on where you fall in the world of "trending."

Let's look at an example from the world of politics and culture to make the point. Last week, Pew Research released a poll, measuring the differences between political parties. It found two things of import for our purposes. One, despite a growing disparity between Republicans and Democrats on almost every issue, the trend among even Republicans is decidedly leftward. Two, on the issue of homosexuality, a whopping 70 percent of Americans overall are in favor of homosexuality being accepted by society, and that's up from 46 percent in 1994 — the first time since Pew has been tracking these issues. That is a gigantic statistical turnaround in less than a quarter of a century.

In political terms, the shift that has happened among Republican voters, who in 1994 returned the GOP to a political majority in the U.S. Congress for the first time in more than 40 years, has been seismic — from a minority support to a majority support in less than two generations. And here's the explanation why — it's all demographics. A huge number of those GOP voters who voted for Republican dominance in 1994 and completely stalled the Bill Clinton liberal agenda, well, they

are dead now. They have been replaced by GOP voters, who while still more conservative than Democratic voters, are "trending" more Democratic in their social views.

A breakdown of the age tells the story. Overall, 83 percent of voters under 30 favor homosexuality. Seventy-two percent of voters in their 30s and 40s are in support. Those between 50–65 support homosexuality at a rate of 65 percent. And those older than 65 support homosexuality at a rate of 58 percent.

Now, let's transfer all this into the realm of the Church in America. Roughly 70 million of these Americans are baptized Catholics. Multiple surveys reveal that a majority no longer identify as Catholic and even more do not attend Mass — only about 1 in 5 — and that number continues to decline. Actually, all of the "Catholic numbers" continue to decline. And the reasons adherence to Catholic morality and teachings continue to decline are directly the same reasons why GOP voters continue to trend more and more liberal.

The older generation is dying and being replaced by people who know nothing in these areas. A very small number of Catholics between 18–29 identify as Catholic in any meaningful way. They have given up the Faith. They are the ones "trending." In a very short amount of time, within five years, 10 on the outside, the raw number of Catholics in the U.S. is going to begin to plunge, not decline, mind you — plunge.

This isn't so much a case of people changing their minds about the Church, although that happens to a much lesser degree. Rather, it's just a matter of biology. The last stable group and even that is somewhat of a reach — the last stable group of Catholics who believe will be dead. Period. What will be left is a handful of Catholics currently in their 50s who will move into the category of 65 and older. The other age group categories will undergo an enormous decline, and the plunge will turn into a death spiral right about then.

What this portends for the church by 2027 is essentially something unrecognizable as the Church by today's standards and historical standards. The shrinking will accelerate to the point that thousands of parishes in practically every diocese will be closed down. The Church's

assets in land and investments will have to be sold off — what's left that is — after the multi-billion dollar, gay priest sex-abuse settlements. Archdioceses will be busted down to mere dioceses because, frankly, how can you call a diocese with just a few dozen parishes an archdiocese?

There is no way on earth these things can be argued against — severe drops in Catholic marriages, Catholic baptisms, Catholic births, Catholic baptism. It's simply unsustainable, and the end is quickly approaching. What's interesting is that there is so little trending in Church discussion on this overwhelming trend that will simply swamp the Church here in the U.S.

The end is in sight, clearly in sight, and that's much more than just a trend. The question for faithful Catholics is what are you doing now to prepare?





San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone



Pete Baklinski [Follow Pete](#)

# Abortion and homosexuality are a ‘living reflection of hell’: U.S. Archbishop

SAN FRANCISCO, California, October 11, 2017 ([LifeSiteNews](#)) — Those who doubt the existence of hell, despite Our Lady of Fatima showing its horrors to three Portuguese shepherd children 100 years ago, can nevertheless see a “living reflection of hell” in abortion, euthanasia, and homosexuality, said San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone.

Archbishop Cordileone made his remarks during a [homily](#) last weekend as he consecrated his Archdiocese to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

He recalled during his October 7 homily the great evils witnessed in the past 100 years, including the great world wars, death camps, numerous genocides, and Christian persecution.

“Who would dare to say that such barbarity is not a mocking of God?” he asked.

Cordileone listed legal abortion as one of the many genocides.

“And then there is the attack on innocent human life: Our own land has been soiled by the blood of innocent children in what has become a deadly epidemic tantamount to a genocide on life in the womb,” he said.

“And now we are increasingly witnessing the abandonment of our suffering brothers and sisters at the other end of life’s journey,” he added, in a reference to euthanasia and assisted suicide of the elderly.

The Archbishop went on to list legal homosexual “marriage,” and made a reference to Pride Parades, as ways in which God is mocked.

“And even in our own city of St. Francis, we see ... the celebration and even exaltation of the vulgar and the blasphemous, mocking God’s

beautiful plan in how He created us, in our very bodies, for communion with one another and Himself,” he said.

“God is roundly mocked in our very streets, and it is met with approval and applause in our community – and yet, we remain silent,” he added.

Friday, October 13, marks the 100th anniversary of Fatima’s “miracle of the sun.” The day commemorates the last apparition of Our Lady of Fatima to the three children and the fulfillment of the promised “sign.” Tens of thousands of people, including atheists and those who had come to mock the children, witnessed the sun dancing and emitting radiant colors in the sky.

Cordileone said that today, 100 years after the Fatima apparition, shows itself to be “in so many ways ... a living reflection of hell, one that on so many fronts has roundly mocked God.”

“If we think about what has transpired in these last 100 years,” the Archbishop said, “does it not tell us that the century through which we have just passed was nothing other than an experience of hell?”

“The century since the Fatima apparitions now ending has mocked God, but God will not be mocked: not because He delights in wreaking vengeance on us, but because turning our backs on God only bounces back to us, leading to our own self-destruction,” he said.

## **Heeding the message**

The Archbishop said that now, more than ever, people must “heed the message of Fatima in imploring God for mercy,” especially through her request of “prayer, penance and adoration.”

He asked every Catholic in the Archdiocese to honor Our Lady’s request by praying the Rosary “every day.”

“I ask every Catholic in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, if you are not doing so already, to pray the Rosary every day. And I ask all families to pray the Rosary together at least once a week,” he said.

He also asked Catholics in his diocese to do penance on every Friday of the year.

“I ask every Catholic in the Archdiocese of San Francisco to dedicate Friday as a day of penance in honor of the day that our Lord died for us, selecting one concrete form of bodily fasting to observe on this day, whether that be abstaining from meat or another type of food or from some type of drink they normally enjoy, or omitting a meal altogether,” he said.

Finally, he asked Catholics to honor Our Lady’s request by praying before God in adoration once a week.

“I ask every Catholic in the Archdiocese of San Francisco to dedicate some time each week to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. If it is not possible during the week, take some time before or after Sunday Mass to pray on your knees before our Lord present in the tabernacle. At least some time every week praying before the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament – Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity – will fulfill his desire that we ask him for mercy,” he said.

He also asked that Catholics observe the devotion of the First Five Saturdays once a year.

“The devotion consists of attending Mass and receiving Communion in reparation for sins on five consecutive first Saturdays of the month shortly after or before going to Confession, and spending a quarter of an hour praying five decades of the Rosary,” he said.

Cordileone said that if Catholics honor the requests of Our Lady, it will hasten the fulfillment of her promise that “In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph.”

“Let us heed her message, let us grant her requests, in order to hasten that triumph, that triumph which is that of her Son over death, for she is inseparably linked to her Son, who came to win for us our eternal salvation,” he said.

“Her Immaculate Heart is the door that opens up for us entrance into that triumph. It is through that door that we walk from the darkness of sin and death to the light of Christ’s truth and mercy. There it is, on the other side of that door, a glorious, vast, light-filled paradise that is heaven. Her heart is the gate of heaven,” he added.

OCTOBER 11, 2017

# Open Your Eyes Father Martin

ANTHONY ESOLEN



**Father James G. Martin, S.J.**, is either a cruel or a foolish man. It does not seem to be the first. But if it is not that, it must be the second, because that alone can explain how a Catholic priest can live in the midst of massive and unprecedented family breakdown, and the chaos, loneliness, and alienation consequent upon it, and still wave the banner for the latest innovation in sexual confusion.

He is good at telling stories. Let me tell a few.

Fifteen years ago I was in a Boston hospital, lying on a bed in an out-patient ward where the sexes were not separated. In the next stall was a pudgy young woman, sniffing. When the nurse came round, she asked the girl whether she was sure she wanted to go through with the “procedure.” The girl said she was. For the record, the nurse asked why.

The reason was straightforward enough. She had a two year old at home whose father was nowhere to be found. The child she

was carrying was begotten by another man, also not in the picture. She did not have the energy to take care of both. When the nurse asked if she had any way of getting home, she said her brother was going to come get her after work.

That was that, and the nurse left. The girl kept up the sniffing. You see, Father, what the god of this age hath wrought?

I know a young man who was a firm Catholic when he left home for college, but he was unformed in theology, and the ethos roundabout him was secular and hedonistic. He fell in love with a girl, and one evening when they were on the floor doing things they should not have been doing, she surprised him with a trick from Sodom; and from that evening on, he lost any sense that the Church had something to say about that whole realm of human action. The affair went on, because he was in love, after all. His mind was clouded, he says, and he did things that years later still bring him intense shame. The results were predictable. Nervous days, fearing—fearing!—the natural result of what they were doing, while he, making foolish excuses, told himself that of course they would keep the child and get married. Right; she and her divorced parents would never have stood for it.

The story of the Sexual Revolution is writ in blood. This time, by happy chance, it was not, but it could well have been. The girl found someone else to play the game of hedonism with, someone less serious about marriage, and the boy was left angry, hurt, and, such is the stultifying effect of lust, unapologetic about the pleasant wickedness wherein he and she with full consent had conspired. Multiply him by fifty million. Then I think of a clever and energetic little boy whose family I love dearly, and who is lucky enough to live with grandmother and grandfather, and with plenty of other family around him, but whose father is a dreadful man, having sired children upon three different women. What are the chances that that boy will not learn the lessons of fornication all around him?

I know of a parish whose priest was a homosexual abuser. His foul deeds robbed the local churches of their meager funds, including bequests made by faithful parishioners at their passing. He had portrayed himself as a manly fellow, interested in coaching the teenage boys at wrestling and boxing. One day a friend of mine, a teenage boy, called on the rectory and the priest answered, his arms slicked with oil up to the elbows. My friend recalled that detail years later, saying that at the time he had no idea what it might mean. It was clear that those boys were not coerced, but enticed, seduced. After all, they outnumbered the priest, and they were big. The abuser had won their consent.

Catholic rainbows have no desire to enter into the mind and heart of a young man who has been so enticed. What so gnaws upon him later, if not the warping of his natural manhood, is being led to engage in a deed against which the gorge rises. Yet they would leave young men by the millions beset by such offers, such enticement, ever more frequent, persistent, and shameless, and all that separates the lonely or fatherless boy who manages to grow straight and tall, and one who is led into the depravity of manhood abused, is the chance presence of someone on the lookout at a solitary place or a dangerous time.

Shall we say more? I know a lovely woman whose husband left her and her children for another woman; that story is now as common as dirt. I am sure that Father Martin would not smile upon the abandonment, though he might smile upon the new liaison, the pseudo-marriage, and that is just as bad as far as the abandoned are concerned. They are invisible. It was most fortunate in this case that the woman devoted herself all the more powerfully to the welfare of their children, cheering them on in their sports, hosting parties at her home, and never once distracting herself by the siren call of personal pleasure or a second chance at love. When they were

grown, the family home had to be sold, as per a provision in the divorce settlement.

One of her children took his own life.

Shall we say more? Priests have told me that many men who become addicted to pornography—also as common now as dirt, but not nearly so salubrious—seek sexual thrills farther from the bounds of the normal, procuring pictures of children, or engaging in the act with other men. I can explain this only by keeping in mind the depravity of that all-consensual product called porn, and by the example of the Marquis de Sade, who gives us to know that it is not the act that pleases, but its being forbidden, or, as the pelvic Left has it, “transgressive.”

His testimony was confirmed for me by the confession of a young man who longed to return to his faith and to the natural sanity of the human body and its functions. He told me that porn had led him and some of his male friends to sodomize one another, while maintaining the fiction that they were only fooling around. One of those friends has yet to extricate himself from the demonic habit thus developed.

More? Consider the intense loneliness of young men and women who are invisible to the sexual innovators, because they do not parade down Fifth Avenue in orange sequins and jock straps. They are trying to follow the commandments and the natural law. They get no confirmation, no praise, no accompaniment; at best a sniff of condescension. Some will give up on faith and morality, feeling that they have been played for chumps, because the leaders of their former Church evidently do not really believe that sodomy, let alone natural fornication, is wrong. If you really believe that the mushroom is poisonous, you do not serve it at dinner. It is as if sin were not real, but only regarded so; a social pretense, with no connection to the human constitution as created by God.



And more? What hath Kinsey wrought? That fraud and pederast lent a veil of intellectual respectability to all manner of sexual immorality, and mass entertainment followed happily along. Tell us what you see now, Mr. Hefner. Who gives young people the slightest assistance in remaining innocent and clean? I have seen it again and again. Boys and girls blessed with a sweet temperament and parents who love them suddenly reach the whitewater of puberty, and then, far from lending an oar to help, their very schools are like rocks beneath, waiting to rip their canoes clean through. Father Martin will “accompany” them if they fall into a certain form of perversion, accompaniment that costs nothing, a pat on the back after the harm has been done. Who walks with them when the danger first threatens?

Who stands up for the poor against those who ravage the family? Name for me one impoverished or oppressed people in the history of the world who rose to prosperity or who threw off the yoke of their oppressors while living in sexual license and remaining content with the ensuing family chaos. Name one. The Irish were brutalized by the English for three centuries, yet they did not lose the family, and they prevailed. Had my Italian grandfathers been indifferent to the morals of their children, I would not now be writing these words, because only a strong family headed by a good father can channel the energies of a young man with a rebellious streak who is stronger than his mother and smarter than his teachers. No, it is easier to blame a social specter, like an all-pervading racism or the fog of “privilege,” than to reckon with the uncomfortable facts of common observation, biology, and history, and the testimony of every human culture, from stone knives to the microchip.

The western world is dying, literally dying. No one is getting married. Hedonism has led to its own demise; Eros has slain himself on his own altar. Do you wonder, Father Martin, why you do not see

boys and girls holding hands? Because the world you bless has raised the stakes too high. They dare not do so; it will be a sign that they are in bed with one another, and embarrassment, if not moral qualms, will keep them from making that sign in public. I could go farther. They do not hold hands, because they do not do much at all with one another anymore; evil has crowded out the good, and spread its pall over what was once innocent and sweet. I know many young people who have never known the delight of that gesture, because all of the beautiful land lying between first sight and marriage has been razed as by nuclear war.

What applies to boys and girls applies in a different way to boys and boys. Many young men are lonely and long for masculine affection, expressed in a healthy way, but they cannot find it, because the visibility of the homosexual life has rendered those longings suspect. Father Martin has nothing to say to them. They too are invisible. Yet it is precisely such young men, whose masculine development has been made needlessly difficult, who have most to say about the peculiar harm wrought by the banners for Sodom—while their foes sneer, and say that they might “really” be homosexual deep down. Get lost, kid, or get to the bathhouse. No sympathy for you.

Or for the father whose teenage son announced, on Thanksgiving, that he was “gay,” causing Father Martin to give glory to God for the boy’s honesty. Such callousness takes the breath away. He does not consider that any decent and responsible father would be devastated by the news. It would be the darkest day of his life. He would know that he and his son had failed, and that his son had already acted upon his confusion; that sodomy had set its tentacles into the son’s soul, that he had done things that disgust a normal man, and that his life henceforward must dabble in disease and decay. Boys do not do with boys what chivalrous young men do for the girls they love, nor do they wait for marriage, for in the

marsh of the unnatural there is no need. In Sodom, the acceptable time is always now.

Shall we turn to the poorest among us? What two centuries of slavery and another century of relentless indignities failed to do, the Sexual Revolution accomplished in one generation, the destruction of the black family in the United States. Nor has it reserved its foul work to blacks. It has ruined such families as my grandparents could depend on, when they were mining coal for a pittance in Pennsylvania.

Who could have predicted that license would enslave? Everyone: all the pagan philosophers, even Epicurus; all the prophets, lawgivers, and evangelists in the testaments old and new; all the Fathers of the Church; all the schoolmen, all their enemies among the Renaissance humanists, all the Protestant reformers, all the American founders, even Jefferson, all the Victorian moralists, even the feminist George Eliot, all the popes, especially those who like Leo XIII wrote extensively on the social troubles of the modern world—anyone with eyes and a beating heart.

Father Martin says he is no theologian, but you don't need theology to see the ruin. I beg him to open his eyes. The single pragmatic question that should guide our course of action is simply this. What customs, and the laws that promote and protect them, give boys and girls the best chance to grow up with a married mother and father committed to one another for life, and to learn the feelings and ways that are natural and normal for their sex, so that they will be attracted and attractive each to the other, and determined to have lifelong marriages of their own in turn? Answer that question first, and then we can figure out what to do for those who fall afoul of nature or the moral law or both. That would be mercy indeed, and not indifference (or complicity) with a grin.



By [Anthony Esolen](#)

Professor Esolen is a teaching fellow and writer in residence at Thomas More College of the Liberal Arts, in Merrimack, New Hampshire. Dr. Esolen is a regular contributor to *Crisis Magazine* and the author of many books, including *The Politically Incorrect Guide to Western Civilization* (Regnery Press, 2008); *Ten Ways to Destroy the Imagination of Your Child* (ISI Books, 2010) and *Reflections on the Christian Life* (Sophia Institute Press, 2013). His most recent books are *Reclaiming Catholic Social Teaching* (Sophia Institute Press, 2014); *Defending Marriage* (Tan Books, 2014); *Life Under Compulsion* (ISI Books, 2015); and *Out of the Ashes* (Regnery, 2017).

# FIRST THINGS

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ON THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY OF THE CHURCH

by Charles J. Chaput

10.12.17

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Later this month, Western Christians will celebrate or grieve, or some mix of both, an awkwardly shared anniversary: the nailing of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses to the door of a Wittenberg church in 1517.

Never mind that the nailed-to-the-door story probably never happened. Never mind that Luther's heroic words to an Imperial Diet at Worms—"Here I stand; I can do no other"—probably weren't said. And never mind that the Reformed Churches of Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin may have had more success in spreading Protestant Christianity than Luther ever did. Five hundred years later, Martin Luther, liberator or heresiarch, is the man who set the Reformation era in motion. His memory still looms over the modern world he unwittingly helped create.

His genius was obvious. So were his many flaws. The greatest of the hymns he authored—"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"—is electrifying in its beauty and grandeur; its recording in German by the Leipzig Capella Fidicinia decades ago has the power to transport the soul. Luther's intellect, energy, courage, and zeal for the Gospel were immense. So was his ego. So was his wrath. Reading his 1520 essay "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" is a lesson in brilliant (and bitterly ruthless) polemic—a blitzkrieg of biblical exegesis and ferocious contempt targeting his scholarly critics, corrupt clergy, Aristotle, a "tyrannous" papacy, and the whole architecture of Catholic sacramental theology and practice.

History tells the rest of the story. The fractures in Western Christianity opened by the various Protestant and Catholic Reformations—"the Reformation" was more accurately a series of parallel and competing reform efforts—led to 150 years of fierce religious conflict and the birth of new and drastically different attitudes toward the roles of religion and state.

Five centuries after Luther, we in the “developed” nations live in a world that incarnates the revenge of unintended consequences. As Brad Gregory writes in his absorbing new biography of Luther and his times, *Rebel in the Ranks*, the German monk and his fellow Reformers had no interest in modern notions of democracy, individual autonomy and freedom. Quite the opposite:

Luther would deride the idea of freedom as we know it today and disclaim any credit for it. In fact, he would be disgusted by it, because it has nothing to do with what he regarded as the only real freedom, the bound freedom of a Christian. . . . [All of the Reformers, including Luther,] would be appalled if they could see how their actions led indirectly to a profound diminishing of Christianity’s public influence in Western societies . . . [and to popular cultures] where the consumption of goods and pursuit of enjoyment has essentially replaced religion.

All true. And yet, here we sit by the rivers of New Babylon, believing Catholics and Protestants alike, paradoxically linked in a love for Jesus Christ, but wrapped in a hundred new forms of entangling captivity—sex, food, money, drugs, ambition, technology, noise, more sex, anxiety, distrust, loneliness, the politics of victimhood and resentment, feelings posing as truth, emotion posing as reason, moral indifference and cowardice posing as compassion, imaginations strip-mined of the sacramental and supernatural, and then colonized with the relentless teasing of material appetites. A place where the horizons of the eternal disappear into a fog of the urgent now. A mighty fortress is our gaud.

Or to put it another way: great mission territory.

Twenty years ago a priest friend said—he had served in Rome, with all the good and sometimes not-so-good experience that implies—that even in a world paved in cement, life forces its way

through the cracks. So it is with the Gospel. So it is with hearts alive in Jesus Christ. And so it needs to be, #ve hundred years after Luther, with the witness each of us as Christians o"ers to the world. The greatest captivity of Babylon, whatever name it goes by in any age, has little to do with persecution or repression.

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It's the lie that nothing deeper, nothing greater, nothing more beautiful and satisfying and permanent than itself, exists.

We were made for more, and that "more" is this. *Only Jesus Christ is Lord*—and in that truth, despite every sin we've committed against each other over so many generations, is our unity as Christians, our joy, our salvation, and the only enduring hope for the world.

*Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., is archbishop of Philadelphia and author of Strangers in a Strange Land: Living the Catholic Faith in a Post-Christian World.*

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