

Fr. Perozich comments —

The article on *Integral Catholicism* and the mention of the Benedict Option brought a question to me from a faithful Catholic for some more information.

[Integral Catholicism] means that what we profess to believe is consistent with the assumed principle by which we live out our daily lives.

The article (<http://richardperozich.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/integralcatholicism.pdf>) then went on to show how the church at the top and how its members compromised with the culture so that the moral life of our nation has been compromised, and how Christians just go along with it.

When I suggested the Benedict Option as one vehicle to integrating the faith, further questions arose.

Straight from the horse's mouth below, Rod Dreher answers questions, objections, gives history, and shows that there is no monolithic way of living out the faith, rather it is a life of being with like minded faithful Catholics to tell the Christian story in a world that has it's own narrative of a new world order and is screaming it so loudly, that Catholics and other Christians have not continued to tell our own story through our living out the Catholic faith. In some cases even at the higher levels of the church, we have begun telling the story of the new world order instead.

Dreher says,

“What must the church do in order to live and witness faithfully as a minority in a culture in which we were once the majority?”

“As we try to determine which forms of community, which institutions, and which ways of life, can answer that question, we should draw on the wisdom of St. Benedict and his Rule. We should innovate ways to adapt it to forms of non-monastic living in the world.”

Except for those who are monks and nuns, most of us, priests and laity, live in the world. We need to speak, live and offer our story through the narrative and through our lives in conviction. That is what will revitalize the church and bring the young into the fold.

We do that in our small groups, our parishes, our civic duties, our work place, and in our private lives. We turn in to Christ so that united to Him, we bring Him out to the world for its conversion.

Dreher offers his analysis and answers the objections below.

Rod Dreher/Benedict Option FAQ

Benedict Option FAQ



[Nancy Bauer/Shutterstock](#)
OCTOBER 6, 2015|2:00 PM
ROD DREHER

What is the Benedict Option?

Start with this famous paragraph from philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre's book *After Virtue*:

It is always dangerous to draw too precise parallels between one historical period and another; and among the most misleading of such parallels are those which have been drawn between our own age in Europe and North America and the epoch in which the Roman empire declined into the Dark Ages. Nonetheless certain parallels there are. A crucial turning point in that earlier history occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman imperium and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that imperium. What they set themselves to achieve instead often not recognizing fully what they were doing—was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness. If my account of our moral condition is correct, we ought also to conclude that for some time now we too have reached that turning point. **What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us.** And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not

entirely without grounds for hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St Benedict.

The “Benedict Option” refers to Christians in the contemporary West who cease to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of American empire, and who therefore are keen to construct local forms of community as loci of Christian resistance against what the empire represents. Put less grandly, the Benedict Option — or “Ben Op” — is an umbrella term for Christians who accept MacIntyre’s critique of modernity, and who also recognize that forming Christians who live out Christianity according to Great Tradition requires embedding within communities and institutions dedicated to that formation.

What is MacIntyre’s critique? Be succinct.

MacIntyre says that the Enlightenment project cut Western man off from his roots in tradition, but failed to produce a binding morality based on Reason alone. Plus, the Enlightenment extolled the autonomous individual. Consequently, **we live in a culture of moral chaos and fragmentation**, in which many questions are simply impossible to settle. MacIntyre says that our

contemporary world is a dark wood, and that **finding our way back to the straight path will require establishing new forms of community that have as their ends a life of virtue.**

Why can't we Christians just make up our mind to be good, and join a church with good people in it?

Well, what is the Good? How can you tell good from bad? How does your community makes decisions on right from wrong? How do you? Our culture has become so overwhelmingly individualist that we inevitably end up worshiping the Self. The sociologist Christian Smith's work on Moralistic Therapeutic Deism has shown how historical Christianity has been revolutionized from within by modernity, and has become pseudo-Christian. **To oversimplify, modern forms of Christianity do not challenge modernity's assumptions, and are therefore highly susceptible to being colonized by it. This, in fact, is what has happened to most churches, and most individual believers. As MacIntyre would put it, the lack of awareness of this fact is part of our problem.**

We Christians are forgetting our story. This is not a bug of modernity; it is its purpose. As the church historian Robert Louis Wilken has put it:

Nothing is more needful today than the survival of Christian culture, because in recent generations this culture has become dangerously thin. At this moment in the Church's history in this

country (and in the West more generally) it is less urgent to convince the alternative culture in which we live of the truth of Christ than it is for the Church to tell itself its own story and to nurture its own life, the culture of the city of God, the Christian republic. This is not going to happen without a rebirth of moral and spiritual discipline and a resolute effort on the part of Christians to comprehend and to defend the remnants of Christian culture. The unhappy fact is that the society in which we live is no longer neutral about Christianity. The United States would be a much less hospitable environment for the practice of the faith if all the marks of Christian culture were stripped from our public life and Christian behavior were tolerated only in restricted situations.

So what does St. Benedict have to do with any of this?

Benedict of Nursia (ca. 480-537) was an educated young Christian who left Rome, the city of the recently fallen Empire, out of disgust with its decadence. He went south, into the forest near Subiaco, to live as a hermit and to pray. Eventually, he gathered around him some like-minded men, and formed monasteries. Benedict wrote his famous Rule, which became the guiding constitution of most monasteries in western Europe in the Middle Ages. The monasteries were incubators of Christian and classical culture, and outposts of evangelization in the barbarian kingdoms. As Cardinal Newman wrote:

St Benedict found the world, physical and social, in ruins, and his mission was to restore it in the way not of science, but of nature, not as if setting about to do it [the caveat], not professing to do it by any set time, or by any rare specific, or by any series of strokes, but so quietly, patiently, gradually, that often till the work was done, it was not known to be doing. It was a restoration rather than a visitation, correction or conversion. The new work which he helped to create was a growth rather than a structure. Silent men were observed about the country, or discovered in the forest, digging, clearing and building; and other silent men, not seen, were sitting in the cold cloister, tiring their eyes and keeping their attention on the stretch, while they painfully copied and recopied the manuscripts which they had saved. There was no one who contended or cried out, or drew attention to what was going on, but by degrees the woody swamp became a hermitage, a religious house, a farm, an abbey, a village, a seminary, a school of learning and a city.

Are you saying that contemporary Christians ought to be monks? How would that work?

Well, the world would be a lot better off if more men and women today became monastics, but that's not really what I'm talking about. Remember, MacIntyre says that we await a "new and very different St. Benedict" — meaning a charismatic religious figure, or figures, who can help us form these new communities. The Baptist theologian Jonathan Wilson, in [his book](#) on what

MacIntyre has to say to the churches, says the question contemporary Christians should ask ourselves is this: “What must the church do in order to live and witness faithfully as a minority in a culture in which we were once the majority?”

As we try to determine which forms of community, which institutions, and which ways of life, can answer that question, we should draw on the wisdom of St. Benedict and his Rule. We should innovate ways to adapt it to forms of non-monastic living in the world.

Here are some basic Benedictine principles that we might think of as tools for living the Christian life:

1. Order. Benedict described the monastery as a “school for the service of the Lord.” The entire way of life of the monastic community was ordered by this *telos*, or end. The primary purpose of Christian community life is to form Christians. The Benedict Option must teach us to make every other goal in our lives secondary to serving God. Christianity is not simply a “worldview” or an add-on to our lives, as it is in modernity; it must *be our lives*, or it is something less than Christianity.

2. Prayer and work. Life as a Christian requires both contemplation and action. Both depend on the other. There is a reason Jesus retired to the desert after teaching the crowds. Work is as sacred as prayer. *Ordinary life can and should be hallowed.*

3. Stability. The Rule ordinarily requires monks to stay put in the monastery where they professed their vows.

The idea is that moving around constantly, following our own desires, prevents us from becoming faithful to our calling. True, we must be prepared to follow God's calling, even if He leads us away from home. But the far greater challenge for us in the 21st century is learning how to stay put — literally and metaphorically — and to bind ourselves to a place, a tradition, a people. Only within the limits of stability can we find true freedom.

4. Community. It really does take a village to raise a child. That is, we learn who we are and who we are called to be in large part through our communities and their institutions. **We Americans have to unlearn some of the ways of individualism that we absorb uncritically, and must relearn the craft of community living.**

Not every community is equally capable of forming Christians. Communities must have boundaries, and must build these metaphorical walls because, as the New Monastic pioneer Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove writes, “we cannot become the gift to others we are called to be until we embrace the limits that are necessary to our vocation.” In other words, **we must withdraw behind some communal boundaries not for the sake of our own purity, but so we can first become who God wants us to be, *precisely* for the sake of the world. Beliefs and practices that are antithetical to achieving the community's *telos* must be excluded.**

5. Hospitality. That said, we must be open to outsiders, and receive them “as Christ,” according to the Rule. For Benedictine monks, this had a specific meaning, with regard to welcoming visitors to the monastery. For

modern laypersons, this will likely have to do with their relationship to people outside the community. **The Benedictines are instructed to welcome outsiders so long as they don't interrupt communal life.** It should be that way with us, too. We should always be open to others, in charity, to share what we have with them, including our faith.

6. Balance. The Rule of St. Benedict is marked by a sense of balance, of common sense. As Ben Oppers experiment with building and/or reforming communities and institutions in a more intentional way, we must be vigilant against the temptations to fall into rigid legalism, cults of personality, and other distortions that have been the ruin of intentional communities. There must be workable forms of accountability for leadership, and the cultivation of an anti-utopian sensibility among the faithful. A community that is too lax will dissolve, or at least be ineffective, but one that is too strict will also produce disorder. A Benedict Option community must be joyful and confident, not dour and fearful.

Can you point to any contemporary examples of Ben Op communities?

Yes. There is a Catholic agrarian community around [Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey](#) in eastern Oklahoma. The lay community gathered around [St. John Orthodox cathedral](#) in Eagle River, Alaska, is another. [Trinity Presbyterian Church](#) in Charlottesville, Virginia, is working towards incorporating a version of the Rule of St. Benedict within its congregational life. Rutba House, a

New Monastic community in Durham, North Carolina, and its [School for Conversion](#), is still another. I recently met a couple in Waco, Texas — Baylor philosophy professor [Scott Moore](#) and his wife Andrea — who bought a property near Crawford, Texas, and who are rehabilitating it into a family home and a Christian retreat called Benedict Farm. There is the [Bruderhof](#).

I think schools can be a form of the Benedict Option. Consider [St. Jerome's](#), a classical school in the Catholic tradition, in Hyattsville, Maryland, or the [Scuola G.K. Chesterton](#) in San Benedetto del Tronto, Italy, which is run by Catholics for Catholic children, following the vision of the late Stratford Caldecott (see his essay, ["A Question of Purpose"](#)). Homeschool groups can be motivated by the Ben Op.

I am certain that there is no such thing as a perfect Ben Op community, and that each and every one of them will have struggled with similar problems. In working on the Benedict Option book, I intend to visit as many of these communities as I can, to find out what they are doing right, what they wish they did better, and what we can all learn from them. The Benedict Option has to be something that ordinary people can do in their own circumstances.

Do you really think you can just run away from the world and live off in a compound somewhere? Get real!

No, I don't think that at all. While I wouldn't necessarily fault people who sought geographical isolation, that will be neither possible nor desirable for most of us.

The early Church lived in cities, and formed its distinct life there. Most of the Ben Op communities that come to mind today are not radically isolated, in geography or otherwise, from the broader community. It's simply nonsense to say that Ben Oppers want to hide from the world and live in some sort of fundamentalist enclave. Some do, and it's not hard to find examples of how this sort of thing has gone bad. But that is not what we should aim for. In fact, I think it's all too easy for people to paint the Benedict Option as utopian escapism so they can safely wall it off and not have to think about it.

Isn't this a violation of the Great Commission? How can we preach the Gospel to the nations when we're living in these neo-monastic communities?

Well, what is evangelizing? Is it merely dispersing information? Or is there something more to it. **The Benedict Option is about *discipleship*, which is itself an indirect form of evangelism. Pagans converted to the early Church not simply because of the words the first Christians spoke, but because of the witness of the kinds of lives they lived. It has to be that way with us too.**

Pope Benedict XVI said something important in this respect. He said that the **best apologetic arguments for the truth of the Christian faith are the art that the Church has produced as a form of witness, and the lives of its saints:**

Yet, the beauty of Christian life is even more effective than art and imagery in the communication of the Gospel

message. In the end, love alone is worthy of faith, and proves credible. The lives of the saints and martyrs demonstrate a singular beauty which fascinates and attracts, because a Christian life lived in fullness speaks without words. We need men and women whose lives are eloquent, and who know how to proclaim the Gospel with clarity and courage, with transparency of action, and with the joyful passion of charity.

The Benedict Option is about forming communities that teach us and help us to live in such a way that our entire lives are witnesses to the transforming power of the Gospel.

It sounds like you are simply asking for the Church to be the Church. Why do you need to brand it “the Benedict Option”?

That’s a great point, actually. If all the churches did what they were supposed to do, we wouldn’t need the Ben Op. Thing is, they don’t. The term “Benedict Option” symbolizes a historically conscious, antimodernist return to roots, an undertaking that occurs with the awareness that Christians have to cultivate a sense of separation, of living as what Stanley Hauerwas and Will Willimon call “resident aliens” in a “Christian colony,” in order to be faithful to our calling. And, “Benedict Option” calls to mind monastic disciplines that we can appropriate in our own time.

It also draws attention to the centrality of **practices** in shaping our Christian lives. The Reformed theologian

James K.A. Smith, in his great books *Imagining the Kingdom* and *Desiring the Kingdom*, speaks of these things. A recent secular book by Matthew B. Crawford, *The World Beyond Your Head*, talks about the critical importance of practice as a way of knowledge. Here is Crawford writing about tradition and organ making:

When the sovereignty of the self requires that the inheritance of the past be disqualified as a guide to action and meaning, we confine ourselves in an eternal present. If subjectivism works against the coalescing of communities and traditions in which genuine individuals can arise, does the opposite follow? Do communities that look to established forms for the meanings of things somehow cultivate individuality?

... [C]onsider that when you go deep into some particular skill or art, it trains your powers of concentration and perception. You become more discerning about the objects you are dealing with and, if all goes well, begin to care viscerally about quality, because you have been initiated into an ethic of caring about what you are doing. Usually this happens by the example of some particular person, a mentor, who exemplifies that spirit of craftsmanship. You hear disgust in his voice, or see pleasure on his face, in response to some detail that would be literally invisible to someone not initiated. In this way, judgment develops alongside emotional involvement, unified in what Polanyi calls personal knowledge. Technical training in such a setting, though narrow in its immediate application, may be understood as part of

education in the broadest sense: intellectual and moral formation.

... What emerged in my conversations at Taylor and Boody [a traditional organ-making shop] is that the historical inheritance of a long tradition of organ making seems not to burden these craftspeople, but rather to energize their efforts in innovation. They intend for their organs still be in use four hundred years from now, and this orientation toward the future requires a critical engagement with the designs and building methods of the past. They learn from past masters, interrogate their wisdom, and push the conversation further in an ongoing dialectic of reverence and rebellion. Their own progress in skill and understanding is thus a contribution to something larger; their earned independence of judgment represents a deepening of the craft itself. This is a story about the progressive possibilities of tradition, then.

The Benedict Option is about how to rightly order the practices in our Christian lives, in light of tradition, for the sake of intellectual and moral formation in the way of Christ. You might even say that it's a story about the progressive possibilities of tradition, and a return to roots in defiance of a rootless age.

It's all about the gays, isn't it? I didn't hear a thing about the Benedict Option until the Obergefell ruling legalizing same-sex marriage.

Now, now. I have been talking about the Ben Op in my writing for over a decade. You can find it in my 2006 book

Crunchy Cons. If there were no such thing as gay marriage, we would still need the Benedict Option, because modernity is dissolving authentic Christianity. Hauerwas and Willimon are not theological conservatives, but a generation ago, they wrote their great book *Resident Aliens* in response to the effects of modernity on Christianity, at the practical, parish level.

That said, it is true that the rise of gay rights has provoked an intense interest in the Ben Op among conservative Christians. Why? I think there are several reasons.

For one, it awakened many small-o orthodox Christians to something that ought to have been clear to them a long, long time ago: *the West is truly a post-Christian civilization, and we had better come up with new ways of living if we are going to hold on to the faith in this new dark age. The reason gay rights were so quickly embraced by the American public is because the same public had already jettisoned traditional Christian teaching on the meaning of sex, of marriage, and even a Christian anthropology. Same-sex marriage is only the fulfillment of a radical change that had already taken place in Western culture.*

For another, the way civil rights laws work in the US means that religious liberty is now and will increasingly be at grave risk from the progress of gay civil rights. Christian institutions will struggle to stay open in the years to come. Individual Christians will also face increased pressure to turn from the truth about sex, marriage, and the family, for the sake of participating in American

cultural and economic life. We had better start forming now the institutions and communities within which we can live out our faith in a hostile culture, teach our children the faith and raise them to be resilient, and to support each other.

Finally, we are under a new set of conditions, in which the old ways of responding don't work. [Read Prof. Kingsfield on what we're facing.](#) Voting Republican, and expecting judges to save us, is over. It's all about culture now.

But St. Benedict was a Catholic. I'm not. What's in it for me?

Hey, I'm not Catholic either. So what? We Orthodox claim him as one of our own, as all the pre-schism saints are. But never mind. Evangelicals need to look deeply into Church history to find the resources to withstand the pressures of modernity. St. Benedict is one of them. Because of our varying ecclesiologies, a Catholic Ben Op is going to look different from a Protestant one, and an Orthodox one will look different too. That's okay. Depending on the *telos* of the Ben Op institution, we may be able to work together ecumenically.

This is all rather gloomy, don't you think? Where is your Christian hope?

You call it gloomy; I call it realistic. Hope is not the same thing as optimism. **St. Benedict didn't set out to Save**

Western Civilization™; all he wanted to do was create a space within which he could pray and worship God away from the chaos and decadence of the city. What he and his followers did, without knowing it, was to lay the foundation for the birth of a new civilization out of the ruins of the old. So it is with us. We need to learn to play the long game. Pope Benedict XVI said:

From the crisis of today the Church of tomorrow will emerge—a Church that has lost much. She will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning. She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built in prosperity. As the number of her adherents diminishes, so will she lose many of her social privileges. In contrast to an earlier age, she will be seen much more as a voluntary society, entered only by free decision. As a small society, she will make much bigger demands on the initiative of her individual members. Undoubtedly she will discover new forms of ministry and will ordain to the priesthood approved Christians who pursue some profession. In many smaller congregations or in self-contained social groups, pastoral care will normally be provided in this fashion. Alongside this, the full-time ministry of the priesthood will be indispensable as formerly. But in all of the changes at which one might guess, the Church will find her essence afresh and with full conviction in that which was always at her center: faith in the triune God, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, in the presence of the Spirit until the end of the world. In faith and prayer she will again recognize her true center

and experience the sacraments again as the worship of God and not as a subject of liturgical scholarship.

The Church will be a more spiritual Church, not presuming upon a political mandate, flirting as little with the Left as with the Right. It will be hard going for the Church, for the process of crystallization and clarification will cost her much valuable energy. It will make her poor and cause her to become the Church of the meek. The process will be all the more arduous, for sectarian narrow-mindedness as well as pompous self-will will have to be shed. One may predict that all of this will take time. The process will be long and wearisome as was the road from the false progressivism on the eve of the French Revolution—when a bishop might be thought smart if he made fun of dogmas and even insinuated that the existence of God was by no means certain—to the renewal of the nineteenth century. But when the trial of this sifting is past, a great power will flow from a more spiritualized and simplified Church. Men in a totally planned world will find themselves unspeakably lonely. If they have completely lost sight of God, they will feel the whole horror of their poverty. Then they will discover the little flock of believers as something wholly new. They will discover it as a hope that is meant for them, an answer for which they have always been searching in secret.

And so it seems certain to me that the Church is facing very hard times. The real crisis has scarcely begun. We will have to count on terrific upheavals. But I am equally certain about what will remain at the end: not the Church of the political cult...but the Church of faith. She may well

no longer be the dominant social power to the extent that she was until recently; but she will enjoy a fresh blossoming and be seen as man's home, where he will find life and hope beyond death.

He was talking about the Roman Catholic Church. I think it applies to all Christian churches in the West.

I don't know. All this Benedict Option stuff sounds really radical to me.

It is, but let me ask you: what else is there? To continue the path we're traveling, hoping that things will get better, is to court disaster. Millennials are leaving Christianity in unprecedented numbers — and why shouldn't they, given how wan and lukewarm Christianity is? De-Christianized Europe is our future in America. In fact, Jean-Francois Mayer, a Swiss academic who studies religious movements, told me that among the Christian communities left in Europe, many are making plans right now for how to hold on through the long night. And Father Cassian Folsom, prior of the Benedictine community in Norcia, told me that the only Christians who are going to make it through what's to come are those who embrace some form of the Benedict Option.

In the end, it's not really an option. It's a necessity.

UPDATE (10/7): Is this only a spiritual thing, a pietistic movement? Or is there more?

Caleb Bernacchio and Philip de Mahy have written — [here](#) and [here](#) — about the importance of adding an economic dimension to the Benedict Option. I intuit that they are correct, though I am going to need to do a lot more thinking on and investigation of this point. Caleb has suggested to me in private conversation that Spain’s highly successful [Mondragon Cooperative](#) offers a good economic model for the Benedict Option. Here, via PDF, is [a history of Mondragon](#), which was founded in the wake of the Spanish Civil War by a Basque priest, and which is now one of Spain’s biggest corporations.

The economic dimension of the Benedict Option, and even the political dimension of the Benedict Option, are areas that bear further study and reflection. Given my own interests and biases, I have focused on the moral and spiritual aspects, but Bernacchio and de Mahy show why working out the Benedict Option is going to have to be a collaborative project.

UPDATE 12/28:

I still think you are telling Christians to run away from the world. How can this ever be reconciled with the kind of faith most of us are supposed to live? It’s still not making sense to me.

OK, let’s try this again. I know that some Evangelicals and Catholics instinctively recoil from talk of the Benedict Option, the point of which is primarily “for the Church to tell itself its own story and to nurture its own life” because

we Christians cannot be what we are supposed to be for the world if we lose touch with our own story and our own life. They are under the impression that the Benedict Option is a turning-inward for its own sake, a refusal to evangelize, to tell the Church's story to the unconverted in the world.

They are wrong, and their error has consequences. First, let's get one thing straight: *no church can be authentically Christian without evangelizing*. That is perfectly clear from Scripture and Tradition. So let's get out of the way the idea that the Ben Op is against evangelization (though there are many forms of evangelization).

Here's the thing: after the decision has been made for Christ — and, if baptism and/or confirmation [in Orthodoxy, called *chrismation*] has been performed — what next? The Christian life is not a destination, but a journey towards God, towards fulfilling Christ's charge to "be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." None of us can achieve perfection, and certainly not on our own. We can only do this through God's grace alone. We need the help of others in the church on our pilgrimage, and we need to help others in turn. We first become Christians by baptism, or, if you prefer, by consciously accepting Jesus as our Savior. But how do we become disciples? How do we grow in holiness? The Benedict Option is a broad attempt to inspire churches and small-o orthodox Christian believers who locate themselves in the Great Tradition to do this in a post-Christian society.

The Christian life, properly understood, cannot be merely a set of propositions agreed to, *but must also be a way of life*. And that requires a culture, which is to say, the realization in a material way – in deeds, in language, in song, in drama, in practices, etc. – of the propositions taught by Christianity. To be perfectly clear, **at the core of all this is a living spiritual relationship with God, one that cannot be reduced to words, deeds, or beliefs.**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rod Dreher is a senior editor at *The American Conservative*. He has written and edited for the *New York Post*, *The Dallas Morning News*, *National Review*, the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, the *Washington Times*, and the *Baton Rouge Advocate*. Rod's commentary has been published in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Commentary*, the *Weekly Standard*, *Beliefnet*, and *Real Simple*, among other publications, and he has appeared on NPR, ABC News, CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, and the BBC. He lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with his wife Julie and their three children. He has also written four books, *The Little Way of Ruthie Leming*, *Crunchy Cons*, *How Dante Can Save Your Life*, and *The Benedict Option*.