

Introduction

It is hard to deny that we are witnessing a revival of interest, both devotionally and theologically, in the saints. After the event of Vatican II there may have been a measure of reserve within the Catholic community on the topic of the saints. Some were eager, if not to jettison the cult of saints, at least to tone down perceived devotional and theological excesses in the Catholic approach to the saints.

Today we find a growing appreciation for the importance of saints in the life of the faith community even as there is much re-thinking about who are the saints, what role does the communion of saints play in our religious life, and what is the significance of the saints for the Catholic religious imagination. This issue of *New Theology Review* provides a splendid overview of the creative theological ferment surrounding the topic of the saints.

Our lead essay by the much-admired scholar Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., provides an excellent introduction to a contemporary understanding of the doctrine of the communion of the saints. Professor Johnson's essay is followed by Robert Ellsberg's astute observations on the saints for today. In both of these essays the authors draw upon rich material they have provided in recent books on this topic of the saints. Our editorial board colleague Sr. Mary Frohlich, H.M., further enriches consideration of the theme with an insightful reflection on the newest Doctor of the Church, St. Thérèse of Lisieux. And the final essay addressing our theme is a thought-provoking analysis by Gary Riebe-Estrella, S.V.D., of how the convergence of cultural worldviews results in a distinctive understanding of *La Virgen* in Mexican Catholicism.

Arguably the issue of divorce and remarriage is one of the most important items on the pastoral agenda of the Catholic Church. The sheer number of our people affected by marital breakdown and the related issues of pastoral care to the divorced and remarried make this topic a paramount concern. Among those noted for their scholarship, honesty, and sensitivity when writing on marriage and divorce the name of Michael Lawler is regularly mentioned. His clear and direct remarks in our final non-theme essay are a needed stimulus for renewed discussion on a pastoral priority.

Rounding out this spring issue are our usual array of columns and book reviews. Readers may find the new title and explanation of our preaching column to be of particular interest. The editors are also pleased to note the addition of Kevin Madigan of Catholic Theological Union and Sr. Ilia Delio, O.S.F., of Washington Theological Union to our editorial board. They replace Srs. Jaime Phelps, O.P., and Theresa

4 *Introduction*

Koernke, I.H.M., who complete their service to the journal. We thank them for their good work.

In closing we must boast a bit and inform our readers that the Lilly Foundation has awarded a substantial grant to *New Theology Review*. We are one of only four Catholic periodicals to have been selected for a grant and are very grateful to the people at the Lilly Foundation for their confidence in and support of this journal's aims. The bulk of the money will be used to research how we can serve you, our readers, even better. During the three years of the grant the publisher and editors will be working with a variety of individuals to sharpen and refine the editorial focus, marketing strategy and promotion of this journal. It is our sincere hope that in the future you will continue to find *New Theology Review* worthy of your time and money.