BARRON, Robert, *Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of Faith* (New York: Image Books, 2011), pp. 291. ISBN 978-0-307-72051-1 (cloth) $27.99. *Catholicism: A Journey to the Heart of Faith* (Skokie, IL: Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, 2011) (DVD – 10 discs) $149.95.

This video series and accompanying book by Robert Barron, priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, prolific author, director of Word on Fire Ministries, which has a wide-ranging internet presence, and recently-appointed rector of Chicago's Mundelein Seminary, where he has taught for many years, is an impressive example of what has been termed "the new evangelization," an effort to present the Catholic vision of life in contemporary terms and through contemporary means of communication. In ten episodes, ranging in length from about 40 minutes to just under an hour, Fr. Barron guides his viewers across space and time to highlight what he considers to be the central dimensions of Catholic faith. The ten chapters of the book correspond closely in content and in language to the respective video segments, expanding somewhat on the scripts and incorporating numerous photographs (mainly in black and white but including an 8-page color section as well) of artwork and of sites found in the film. Videos and text complement one another, but each stands quite well on its own, sharing the engaging voice of Fr. Barron as speaker and writer.

He begins with a focus on the person of Jesus and on the Incarnation as "*the* great principle of Catholicism" (1), then moves on in the second section to Jesus' teaching, with particular focus on the Beatitudes, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and the Judgment scene of Matthew 25. The third segment discusses the Catholic understanding of the mystery of God, moving from Anselm's and Aquinas' arguments for the existence of God to the problem of evil to a presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity featuring Augustine's use of the analogy of the human mind with its self-knowledge and self-love. The fourth segment focuses on Mary, first as the embodiment and fulfillment of the hope of Israel, then as Mother of God, Theotokos, as defined by the Council of Ephesus (431), then in the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (linked with the apparitions at Lourdes) and the Assumption, presented as providing insights not just on Mary but on the central meaning of redemption and resurrection, respectively. Peter and Paul as the two "Indispensable Men" (116) of the early Christian movement are the focus of the fifth segment, citing Hans Urs von Balthasar's presentation of the two figures as the archetypes of the two central dimensions of the Church, its structural authority and its missionary outreach, existing in "tensive harmony" (141) that has provided both coherence and dynamism to the Church through the centuries. The

sixth section focuses on the Church itself, looking at its four-fold creedal identity as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, while the following section takes the viewer/reader through the successive sections of the Mass, with a pause at the point of the Consecration to explore the meaning of the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Then follows an exploration of the communion of saints through biographical sketches of four modern women saints, Katherine Drexel, Thérèse of Lisieux, Theresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) and Mother Teresa of Calcutta, presented as exemplifying respectively the cardinal virtues of justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance, elevated and transfigured by grace. The penultimate section focuses on prayer, moving from the contemporary figure of Thomas Merton back to his great model John of the Cross, and to John's own teacher Teresa of Avila, balancing a focus on contemplative prayer with a consideration of the centrality of the prayer of petition, before returning to Merton to complete the discussion. The final section is appropriately devoted to the "last things," drawing largely on Dante for a Catholic explanation of hell and purgatory, pausing for consideration of the existence of angels and devils, and then moving on to heaven, considered under the images of the beatific vision, the city of God, and new heavens and new earth, with its promise of resurrected bodies and a transfigured cosmos.

Fr. Barron's high regard for Thomas Merton, already evident in his earlier book *And Now I See: A Theology of Transformation* (1998) and in his plenary address at the ITMS Seventh General Meeting in 2001, is apparent in his focus on Merton as a thoroughly modern model of prayer. In the video his discussion of Merton begins in bustling Times Square in the heart of Manhattan, and summarizes the process of Merton's spiritual quest and eventual conversion from alienated skeptic to committed Catholic, including the famous incidents of his first experience of Mass, at Corpus Christi Church, and its aftermath of sitting in a diner and feeling as though he were "in the Elysian Fields" (229); Robert Lax's challenge to his friend as they walked along Sixth Avenue that "You should want to be a saint" (230); and his 1941 Holy Week retreat at the Abbey of Gethsemani that led him to recognize it as "the still point around which the whole country revolves" (231) and to return there at the end of that year to spend the rest of his life as a member of the monastic community. Barron clearly presents Merton as a figure with whom contemporary seekers can identify, and therefore as a potential catalyst for a similar spiritual transformation, as Merton has of course been for so many through his writings. After his portraits of the classical figures of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, Barron returns to Merton, and specifically to his epiphany at

Fourth and Walnut, where as a result of his immersion in contemplative prayer, Barron suggests, Merton had a vision of the divine presence in ordinary human beings that was "in some ways as extraordinary as Teresa of Avila's encounter with the angel" (248), an experience in which "it all came together for Merton: metaphysics, creation, incarnation, contemplation, nonviolence, and universal love" (249). In the film, the climactic line "There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun" is aptly accompanied by the blinding sunlight hitting the camera lens and bringing the episode to a conclusion.

While the use of Merton as archetype of prayer is very effective, it is also rather selective. While Fr. Barron does mention in the book (though not in the film) Merton's commitment to nonviolence, and even defends him against accusations of "a surrender to trendiness . . . and an abandonment of the more classically Catholic spirituality he espoused earlier in his life" (248), essentially the Fourth and Walnut episode is presented as the culmination of Merton's contemplative experience rather than as the inauguration of his "turn toward the world," and the final decade of his life is given virtually no attention. (Even the scenes shot at the hermitage precede those of downtown Louisville.) The word "Zen" is never mentioned; the brief listing of his books (232) includes none on eastern religions or social criticism; there is no reference to his Asian pilgrimage, no mention of Polonnaruwa to complement Fourth and Walnut, no allusion to the circumstances of his death, no focus on his more "prophetic" and even "controversial" stances with regard to both American society and the Church in the final years of his life. Many of these omissions, of course, could be justified as not pertinent to the particular focus on prayer in this section, but certainly for Merton and many of his readers, and at least in theory for Fr. Barron as well, Merton's contemplative consciousness was an integral dimension of all his interests, concerns and activities. It is perhaps telling that in specifically mentioning a sampling of Merton's hundreds of correspondents, along with Czeslaw Milosz, Jean Leclercq, Joan Baez (who was in fact only the co-addressee of a single letter) and John XXIII, Barron includes the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar; while Merton certainly admired von Balthasar, who in turn arranged for a German translation of some of Merton's poetry, for which he wrote a gracious and admiring preface, his name is probably not among the first that would spring to the minds of most of those familiar with Merton's correspondence. (Five letters to von Balthasar are included in *The School of Charity*). One wonders if Barron includes the name of von Balthasar, whom John Paul II named a cardinal in 1988, as a kind of reassurance to a segment of his audience that Merton is indeed, despite his reputation

in some quarters, "safely" orthodox, and thus deserving of his prominent place in *Catholicism*. This treatment of Merton may be considered as characteristic of Fr. Barron's perspective throughout the entire project.

There is certainly much to appreciate and admire in both book and videos. They provide a robust and appealing proclamation and explanation of central tenets of the Catholic faith in a coherent and well-organized sequence. Fr. Barron is a genial and dependable guide in both media. His mastery of his material and fluency of delivery is flawless: in the films, while much of the script is delivered in voice-over, a considerable portion is presented as the narrator walks through an Irish field or down a Ugandan road, or stands in a Roman basilica or atop a Mexican pyramid, and there is never the least hesitation or impression of searching for the right word. He has a gift for explaining abstruse ideas in clear and readily comprehended terms, as when he shows how Anselm's description of God as "that than which nothing greater can be thought" presupposes a God that is not simply a Being among other beings, not even the greatest of beings, since by definition "the God Anselm describes added to the world as we know it is not greater than God alone" (63). He can compress an idea into epigrammatic pithiness, as when he points out that the Trinity is not to be considered as "a one plus one plus one adding up to three, but a one times one times one, equaling one" (87). He forthrightly places nonviolence at the heart of the message of Jesus (48-52) and as the essence of the divine nature and of God's dealings with creation (76-77), visible from the Annunciation (89) through the Cross (45-47), and exemplified by incidents in the lives of Mother Teresa and Desmond Tutu (51), by John Paul II in Poland (51), and at some length by the life and work of Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day (56-59).

The production values of the films are stunning, weaving together narration, music, and visuals both of classic works of art and architecture and of natural and urban scenes in a seamless, integrated whole. In a single episode (that on the Mass) the scene moves from Calcutta to Uganda to New York City to the Philippines to Brazil to Chartres to Athens to Mexico City to Lourdes to Chicago to Rome; other segments include Jerusalem, Ireland, Poland, Asia Minor and elsewhere, vivid testimony to the Church's universality (and to the broad vision – as well as the evidently abundant financial resources – behind the project). Both book and videos are intended to present Catholicism in its best light and so to encourage the faithful and attract the curious, and one may hope for and expect their success in doing so.

At the same time, the project may leave at least some readers and viewers with a sense of an incomplete depiction of the full range of the

Catholic experience. Some of the emphases may seem to be less than comprehensive. While identifying the Incarnation as the core of the Gospel message, Fr. Barron emphasizes the fact of *God* becoming human rather than of God becoming *human*. He repeatedly speaks of Jesus as "Yahweh moving among his people" (15; see also 18, 25, 33, 36), a rather unusual formulation that sounds almost modalist in its apparently straightforward identification of the Son with the one God of Israel. When he quotes the Philippians hymn in chapter 5 as "a pithy encapsulation" of Paul's teaching (133), he points out that in the passage "the divinity of Jesus is clearly affirmed" and that as a consequence of that affirmation "Jesus is the kyrios (the Lord)" to whom all allegiance is owed; but he never mentions the *kenosis*, the self-emptying of Christ in assuming full humanity, that is at the heart of the hymn. Of course the human nature of Jesus is affirmed, but the full consequences of that affirmation are not explored in nearly as much depth or detail as is the meaning of Christ's divinity. Likewise more attention to the humble Mary of the Magnificat (only quoted briefly in passing [104]) would have complemented the focus on the Mother of God as "the Queen of all the saints, the Queen of the angels, and the Queen of heaven" (89). As with Jesus, the main focus is more on what differentiates Mary from the rest of humanity ("Our Tainted Nature's Solitary Boast" as the chapter title has it [88]), than on her kinship with all of us. While valid and valuable, this largely traditional perspective, evident throughout the book and the videos, tends to downplay equally significant elements characteristic of much of contemporary theological reflection.

Fr. Barron also seems to be at pains to avoid any topics that might ruffle anyone's ideological feathers – including, in large part, the Second Vatican Council and the contemporary American Church. The current polemical contrast in interpreting the council between a so-called hermeneutic of continuity and a hermeneutic of disruption (in fact a simplistic and reductive distinction) is perhaps responsible for his drawing on the council documents only occasionally, while the present tensions and turmoil in the Church in the United States may have been as potent in determining the paucity of references and scenes in this country as the desire to emphasize the universality of Catholicism. The image of the Church as the People of God, central to the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, is notably absent, as is any reference to *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. The term charism is used only to refer to apostolic succession and papal infallibility (168, 169). The universal call to holiness is mentioned (150), but aside from Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin and the nineteenth-century Ugandan martyr Charles Lwanga, there is virtually no focus on the laity. The inclu-

sion, for example, of Blessed Franz Jägerstätter, executed for his resistance to the Nazis, or Jean Donovan, murdered in El Salvador with three other American church women, would have enhanced the presentation. There is relatively little attention given to the Church's prophetic dimension, its denunciation of structural injustice and systemic violations of human dignity and human rights, little emphasis on "action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world" as "a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel," as the 1971 Synod of Bishops declared. Some attention to such courageous figures as Archbishop Denis Hurley opposing South African apartheid, Dom Helder Camara speaking out against Brazilian dictatorship, Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador giving his life in solidarity with the oppressed poor of his country, or Cardinal Jaime Sin inspiring the Philippine "People Power" movement that ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos, would have complemented the presentation of Pope John Paul's challenge to Polish communism. While reference is made to the declaration in *Nostra Aetate*, the document on non-Christian religions, that other traditions may reflect a ray of the true light, the implications of that statement are not explored in any detail. In fact, in a telling comment from one of the informal interviews interspersed in the film, Fr. Barron suggests that we need to recover a way to have a good religious argument as an alternative to bland religious tolerance on the one hand and violence prompted by religion on the other, as though this were the only mean between the two extremes. The term "dialogue" is absent from the discussion here and throughout both book and film, and the notion that the Church could or should learn anything from the secular world, or from other spiritual traditions, is given virtually no consideration. Inclusion of the Atlas martyrs, Christian de Chergé and his Cistercian brothers, as models of interreligious dialogue would have provided an excellent example of the Church's outreach to other faiths, even in the face of terrorism. There is even a whiff of triumphalism at the outset of the book (not in the film) in the assertion that Protestants and the Orthodox don't "embrace the doctrine [of the Incarnation] in its fullness . . . don't see all the way to the bottom of it or draw out all of its implications" (3) – somewhat ironic in that he has just been referring to the idea of divinization, which for more than a thousand years had been looked on with suspicion in the West and had been preserved principally in the Eastern Church, and also in the fact that he will rely in his discussion of the Incarnation in the following chapter largely on the Anglican layman C. S. Lewis (14, 27) and the Anglican bishop N. T. Wright (15, 30, 31). Fortunately this line of approach is not subsequently developed.

The exposure to great works of art and architecture of the past is

exhilarating, but may give the impression that the Church of the future merely needs to recover the riches of the past. There is an interesting comment in the video on Cardinal Newman's notion of the development of doctrine as explaining the fact of change in the Church, which is unaccountably missing in the corresponding place in the book – did some pre-publication reader suggest that any such reference to change be omitted as too controversial? Fr. Barron is frank in acknowledging the sinfulness of Church leaders over the centuries, including the recent sexual abuse scandals, but there is no hint that the problem might run deeper than individual failure, that it might indicate serious flaws in the institutional structure of the Church and the ways authority has been exercised. While the spiritual witness of women is highlighted throughout, there is certainly no suggestion that a system in which half the human race is automatically excluded because of its gender not only from presiding at the Eucharist but from exercising any sort of official ecclesial authority might need to be seriously re-examined.

Of course the central purpose of the project is not to provide a critical evaluation of the institution of the Church but to reveal the riches and the vitality of its teaching and its lived experience. But those Catholics who are quite content with the present state of the Church and the direction it seems to be taking will in the end probably be more comfortable with and comforted by Fr. Barron's overview than those Catholics whose equally deep love for the Church is more conflicted and complicated – perhaps more akin to that of Thomas Merton – than that which is conveyed in book and videos. As admirable, impressive and inspiring as it is, *Catholicism* may be found by some of its audience to fall somewhat short of the full scope of catholicity.

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QUENON, Paul, *Afternoons with Emily* (Windsor, ON: Black Moss Press, 2011), pp. 88. ISBN 978-0887534928 (paper) $17.

THURSTON, Bonnie Bowman, *Belonging to Borders: A Sojourn in the Celtic Tradition* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), pp. xx + 104. ISBN 978-0814633670 (paper) $14.95.

The inner life, the outer life. Journeys across miles and journeys into the self. Journeys dominate two recent books of verse by two poets whose attention to detail and language heightens the spiritual depth of their work. Poetry has always been about the demarcation of spirit – what it is, who has it, how to get it and how to know when it is slipping away. These two works, one by a Trappist monk and the other by a theologian and former