

From the Editor

Lent is such a rich season of both introspection and moving beyond oneself to the other in service. Christians yearn for the holy days of Triduum. The sensory-saturated Easter Vigil immerses us in an experience of anamnesis calling us to become Christ for one another, to be healing in a hurting world. I write during Lent, but throughout 2018, the world commemorates a series of fiftieth anniversaries—some to be celebrated, some to be mourned. As this issue of *Horizons* becomes available to readers, members of the College Theology Society will be headed to an annual convention to study the conference theme “‘You Say You Want a Revolution’? 1968–2018 from a Theological Perspective.” How does the revolution of Jesus Christ, God crucified, inform and transform our understanding of revolution and the past fifty years?

Violence, destruction, and death stand out in memories of 1968. One of my own homespun but vivid images of 1968 is of my mother sadly and somberly ironing as she watched a funeral on television. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—assassinated April 4, 1968—and Robert Kennedy—assassinated June 5, 1968—and I wondered, with the blissful ignorance of childhood, “How many more of these funerals can there be?” Already, there seemed to be too many for me, and I had no true understanding of what was happening around the world. From Vietnam to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, from racism and poverty to the Cold War, many forms of violence engulfed the world.

Yet, there were signs of hope: the prophetic if controversial witness of the Catonsville Nine spurred debate about the conduct of war; President Johnson signed Title VIII of the Civil Rights Acts (the Fair Housing Act) as well as Executive Order 11399 training attention on the needs of Native Americans; Eunice Kennedy Shriver launched the International Special Olympics; the Second General Conference of the Latin American Bishops in Medellín challenged us to a preferential option for the poor; Thomas Merton opened up a world of interreligious dialogue; and Cesar Chavez fasted for justice and human dignity.

Fifty years later, what memories do we, should we, recall? Did the social, political, theological, and religious movements and revolutions of the day contribute to an ongoing effort to see each other as the image of God? If so, what should be the shape of our Christian praxis today? The threat of

nuclear annihilation has not disappeared from the world; terrorism is a constant fear; nativist rhetoric sounds loudly across the globe; gun violence in our schools, churches, and places of entertainment is considered commonplace; and the crystal-clear biblical injunction to welcome the stranger meets hostile rejection. What is the Christian response to the variety of violence in our lives?

Thomas Merton's diagnosis of a piece of the problem from an American perspective remains apt: "The real focus of American violence is not in esoteric groups but in the very culture itself, its mass media, its extreme individualism and competitiveness, its inflated myths of virility and toughness, and its overwhelming preoccupation with the power of nuclear, chemical, bacteriological, and psychological overkill. If we live in what is essentially a culture of overkill, how can we be surprised at finding violence in it?"¹

As Christian theologians, our vocation is to plumb the mystery of the revolution of Triduum and find in the defenseless power of God answers to a world of violence and injustice. Merton writes, "And to practically everybody peace simply means the absence of any physical violence that might cast a shadow over lives devoted to the satisfaction of their animal appetites for comfort and pleasure.... So instead of loving what you think is peace, love other men and love God above all. And instead of hating the people you think are warmongers, hate the appetites and the disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed—but hate these things in *yourself*, not in another."² Merton has provided a prescription for a Lenten practice that prepares us for the revolutions of the paschal mystery that poets and prophets, activists and artists, glimpsed in the heady year of 1968.

This issue's authors pursue the paschal revolution with perspectives from which to consider challenges from 1968. Liberation theologies insisted on the full humanity of all persons. Joseph Bracken completes a "personhood trilogy" in *Horizons*, taking up "Personhood as Ongoing Gift from Others and to Others," while Susan Ross provides an incisive analysis of Prudence Allen's *Concept of Woman*, volume 3. *Humanae Vitae* ignited conversations about family life and parenthood, and Joseph Mben explores the difficulties posed by involuntary childlessness for women and men in particular areas of Africa. Mary Carlson argues for the inclusion of our differently abled sisters and brothers into the life of the church, much as Eunice Shriver created the Special Olympics to provide a place in sports for those with disabilities. Perhaps some of what drove the variety of student protests fifty years ago

¹ Thomas Merton, *The Nonviolent Alternative*, edited with an introduction by Gordon C. Zahn (Boston: McCall's, 1971), 230.

² Thomas Merton, "The Root of War Is Fear," in *The Power of Nonviolence: Writings by Advocates of Peace*, introduction by Howard Zinn (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002), 103–4.

could have found a response in Timothy Hanchin's examination of a "pedagogy of friendship." The two roundtables exploring just peace and just war as well as dissent within the church offer yet more ways to consider how much progress we have made in reading the signs of the times since 1968.

As always, I thank our authors for sharing their scholarship with our readers, and I thank all of the members of the *Horizons* editorial team for their inspiring creativity, diligent work, and unwavering commitment to excellent scholarship. With this issue, I welcome Mary Kate Birge, Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, Maryland, as one of the book review editors.