

The Pivotal Players

Session 1

St. Francis of Assisi: The Reformer, Part 1 (31 minutes)

Introduction

- Man of contradiction: simple and humble, yet a deeply troubling and unnerving figure
- Represented back-to-basics evangelization with a return to the radicality of the Gospel
 - o Wake up to the reality of God

Early Years

- Born in 1182 in Assisi, son of Pica and Pietro Bernardone, a cloth merchant
- Not a proficient writer; loved to sing, especially songs of French troubadours
- Worked in his father's shop and liked fine clothes, money, and partying
- Sought fame, joined battles, eventually imprisoned
- Had a powerful dream where Christ asked him whom he would serve: the master or the servant
- Back in Assisi, the things that used to satisfy him did not anymore

Conversion

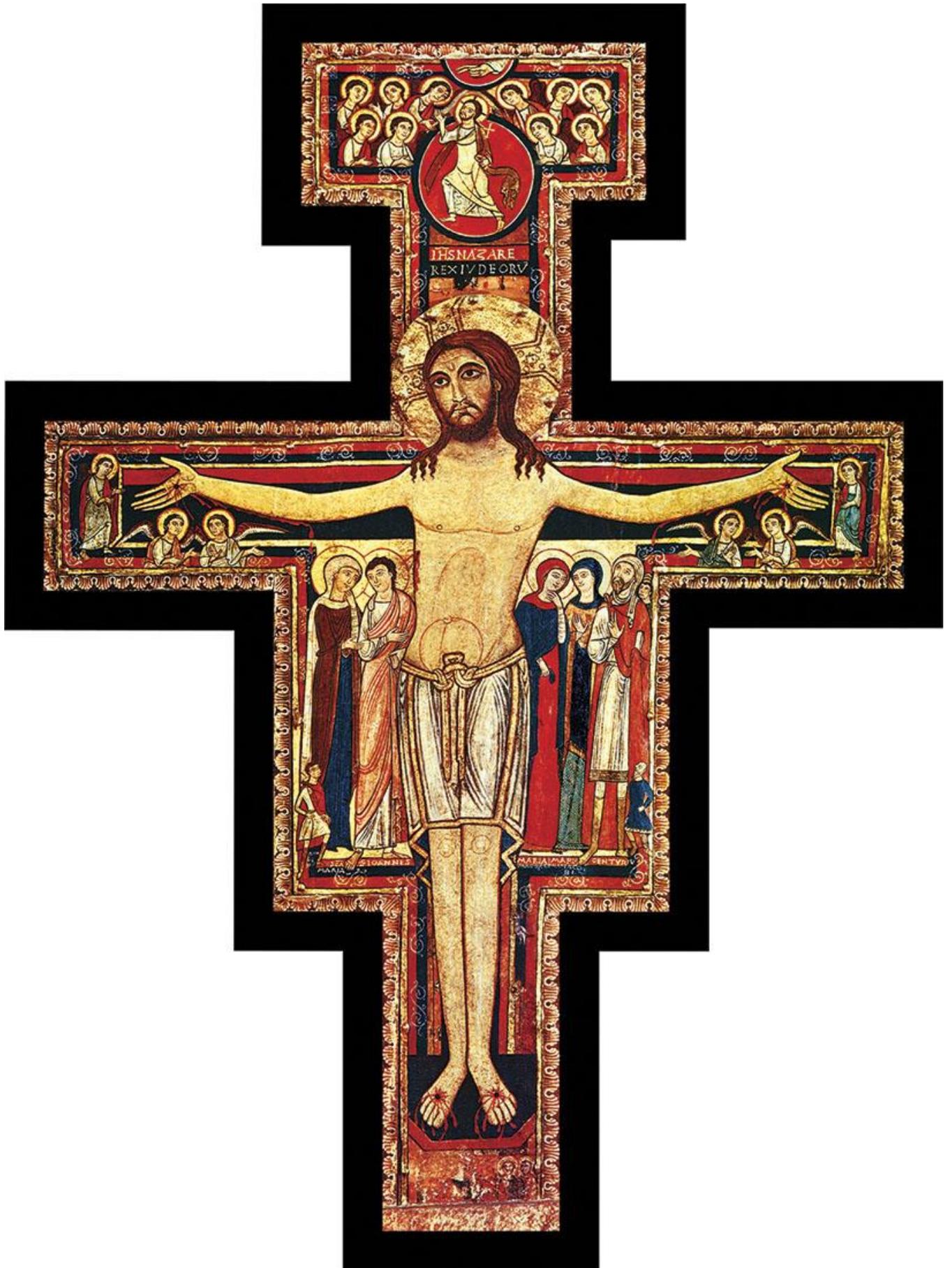
- Began to give things away to the poor
- Embraced leper and was filled with happiness
- Radical detachment from goods of the world and a passionate attachment to the purposes of God

Rebuild My Church

- In 1206 at San Damiano, a small church in ruins, Francis heard Christ speak from the Cross, telling him to rebuild his house
- Sold cloth from father's shop to fund renovations
- Put on trial before bishop and came to renounce father and declare total devotion to God as his only Father
- Solely dependent on God's providence; begged for sustenance
- Others began to join him, selling possessions to fund his mission

Establishment of the Order

- In 1209, along with twelve disciples, Francis went to see Pope Innocent III to get permission to begin an order
- Corruption rampant at the time; initially dismissed by pope
- Came back and was given permission after pope remembered a dream about *il Poverello* (little poor man) holding up the Lateran church
- Called order the "Friars Minor" as they were to take the lowest place
- Vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience



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Session 2

St. Francis of Assisi: The Reformer, Part 2 (27 minutes)

Growth of the Order

- Many men joined the **Friars Minor**
- **St. Clare** founded female **Franciscan** order: **Poor Ladies**
- **Francis** had a special connection to animals
 - o Preached to birds
 - o Tamed the wolf of Gubbio
- Missions near and far
 - o Sent brothers to **Christian** lands and they did not fare well, except in England
 - o Sent brothers to non-**Christian** lands and some were executed
 - o Joined crusades and interacted with the **Muslim Sultan** himself
- Experienced perfect joy in suffering for **Christ**
- **St. Claire** – Mother of all female **Franciscans**
- **Cross of San Damiano**
- First Christmas Crèche
 - o A tableau or model representing the place of the birth of **Christ**

Stigmata and Death

- Went on spiritual retreat in La Verna, Italy, in 1224
- Asked for two graces: feel full pain of **Christ's Passion**, and love **Christ** with the love that made him sacrifice himself for us
- Received stigmata
- Back to Assisi; suffering from eye disease and effects of stigmata
- Died singing and in total submission to **God**
 - o October 3, 1226

Why A Pivotal Player?

- **Francis'** life showed that one can realize the **Christian** ideal by living according to the **Gospel literally**
- This lifestyle unleashes enormous, transformative power in the world

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Session 3

St. Thomas Aquinas: The Theologian, Part 1 (35 minutes)

Introduction

- Huge contributor to the Church and to Western culture
- Many roles: philosopher, theologian, scientist, mystic, biblical interpreter, and, most importantly, saint

Life and Times

- Born in Italy in 1225
- Sent to **Benedictine** monastery of Monte Cassino at age 5 and was there for nine years
 - o Asked a key question at a very young age: “What is **God**?”
 - o Spent his whole life answering this question
- At age 15, went to the University of Naples
 - o Double radical
 - Devotee of **Aristotle**
 - Took vows as a **Dominican** (mendicant lifestyle) over objections of his family
- With Dominican companions, went to Paris and studied under **Albert the Great**
- Accompanied **Albert** to Cologne as his apprentice and was ordained there
- Returned to Paris in 1252 to complete his doctoral studies; in 1256 became a **Master of Theology**
 - o Preached on **scripture** and conducted “**disputed questions**” forum
- “**Disputed questions**” became the foundation of his seminal work, the **Summa Theologiae**, written from 1265-1274
- Productive life: over 25 years, 50 volumes of collected works
- In 1273, on the Feast of **St. Nicholas**, something happened and he stopped writing, saying that his writings were “nothing but straw compared to what has been revealed to me.”
 - o Took to his bed
 - o Died on the way to the Council of Lyons on March 7, 1274

Doctrine of God

- **Thomas’** answer to his own question: “What is **God**?”
 - o If you understand, that’s not **God**
- **God** is not a being, but being itself: **ipsum esse subsistens**, the sheer act of “to be” itself
- **God’s** essence and existence is one and the same
 - Essence = What it is
 - Existence = That it is
 - o He is being itself, which has always existed
 - o Man’s essence and existence are different (by contrast)

- **Attributes: eternal, immutable (unchangeable), immaterial, infinite**
 - **Immutable** – is to say **God** is reliable; he doesn't pass in and out of emotional states, he doesn't fall in and out of love with the world he has created
 - **Eternal** – is to say **God** is not stuck in any particular moment of time, and, therefore, is present to all moments of time
 - **Immaterial** – is to say **God** is not restricted to any one place, but can, therefore, be present to all places
- **A personal **God** who knows and loves himself and overflows with “effervescent love” to create the universe**
 - Things exist because **God** knows them into being (**Psalm 139**)

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Session 4

St. Thomas Aquinas: The Theologian, Part 2 (23 minutes)

Faith and Reason

- Many philosophers of the time preached that faith and reason were in conflict: if it's true according to faith, then it's false according to reason
 - o Double truth theory (Latin Averroism)
- **Thomas** taught that faith and reason were compatible, as they come from the same source: **God**
- Faith is above reason – not opposed to it but going beyond it. “No sacrifice of the mind is involved in authentic religious faith.”

The Human Person

- Anti-dualist: the unity of the human person; soul and body are one and not opposed to each other
 - o The soul is in the body, not contained, but containing
- Humans made in the image and likeness of **God**
- Infinite capacity of mind and will
 - o The mind wants the truth itself; the will wants the good itself
- Ordered to something beyond our human nature

Christology

- **Thomas** was deeply in love with **Jesus Christ**
- Supreme act of **God's** goodness was the **Incarnation**; **God** giving himself away
- **Jesus** is the divine ecstasy reaching down and the human ecstasy reaching up, the coming together of divinity and humanity
- Philosopher in the service of theology

Why is Thomas A “Pivotal Player”?

- Showed that faith and reason are not in conflict
- Exemplified a true, catholic mind that is open to all influences and not afraid of public, religious discourse
- Revealed that **God** is not competitive with humans
 - o The glory of **God** is a human being fully alive (**St. Irenaeus**)

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Session 5

St. Catherine of Siena: The Mystic, Part 1 (23 minutes)

Introduction

- Fascinating **Catherine**: uneducated; counselor to popes and kings; **Doctor of the Church**
- Mystical power vs. worldly definition of power

Life and Times

- Born March 25, 1347, the 24th child of her parents
- Her vision as a young girl
 - o Saw **Christ** dressed in Papal Vestments
 - Determined that she would best serve **Jesus** by serving the **Pope**
- Vow of virginity and living as a recluse
- **Mantellate / Order of Dominicans**
 - o Cared for the victims of the plague
- Motif in writings: blood

Avignon

- Papacy in exile in Avignon
- Convinced **Pope Gregory XI** to return to Rome from Avignon, 1376
- Supported **Urban VI**, **Gregory's** successor
 - o Against the anti-pope elected and residing at Avignon opposed to **Urban**
 - o Remained in Rome until her death in 1380

Catherine's Understanding of God

- Named **Doctor of the Church** by **Pope St. Paul VI**
- **God** is beauty, truth, and love itself
- **God** is "crazy in love" with the world

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Session 6

St. Catherine of Siena: The Mystic, Part 2 (32 minutes)

Sin and Salvation

- Metaphor of the raging river of sin and the bridge, who is **Christ**
- Moving from the river up three steps to unity with the divine
 - o Reject sin due to fear of punishment (feet of **Christ**)
 - o Reject sin due to love of **God**, but value his consolations more than **God** himself (heart of **Christ**)
 - o Reject sin due to filial love as son or daughter of **God** (mouth of **Christ**)
- Love of **God** inextricably linked to love of neighbor
- Tears of people
 - o Bitter tears of those condemned to hell
 - o Fearful tears of beginners in faith
 - o Tender tears of those beginning to fall in love with **God**
 - o Perfect tears of those in union with **God**
 - o Sweet tears of those who have utterly surrendered to **God**
- Love is the antidote to hell
 - o Block the gate to hell so no one else can enter

Cooperating with Grace

- **God** gives us grace first and we are called to cooperate with it
- Self awareness
- Humility, obedience, charity
 - o Refrain from judgment of others
 - o Pray and work for salvation of all
 - o Never seek reward for our love
 - When love increases, so does suffering
 - o Dedicated prayer life
- Take up the cross of **Christ**
 - o Union with **God** is best accomplished by communion with **Christ**
 - o Getting rid of self-love always involves suffering

Visions and Ecstasies

- The more you have **Christ**, the more you want him
- Goal is total union of the human and divine will
- **Catherine** did not dwell on her visions or ecstasies and told all not to seek them

Catherine As “Pivotal Player”

- Witness to the dimension beyond this world
- Intensity of her love; a conduit of grace and love to this world

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Session 7

Bl. John Henry Newman: The Convert, Part 1 (31 minutes)

Introduction

- Key influencer of Vatican II
 - o His writings on conscience, religious liberty, Scripture, the vocation of lay people, the relation of Church and State, and other topics were extremely influential in shaping the Council's documents
- Catholic thought in dialogue with the Enlightenment
- Lover of the truth
- Resisted liberalism

Anglican Life and Times

- Born February 21, 1801 in London
- Evangelical / Calvinist conversion at age 15
- Oxford as student, tutor, and fellow at Oriel College
- Exploring Anglicanism as a “middle way” between Catholicism and Protestantism
- Wrote *Idea of a University*
 - o Written as a Catholic, but filled with the Oxford spirit
- Founded Oxford Movement in 1833 and wrote key tracts
 - o Dogma counter to Liberal view
 - o Sacramentalism of Anglican Church
 - o Anti-Catholicism (later recanted)
 - Anti-Roman as they were attempting the Catholicize Anglicanism
 - o Excessive devotion to Mary and the Saints
 - o Tract 90 (most famous): Challenged requirement to swear to 39 articles of Anglican faith for professor and public officials
 - Regarded as a traitor to Britain
 - This attacked the cornerstone of the British establishment
 - Caused Newman to resign leadership of Oxford Movement
- Moved away from Oxford and spent time alone, reading the early Church Fathers and reflecting on prior viewpoint that Anglicanism is the right “middle way”

Catholic Life and Times

- Received into **Catholic** Church on October 8, 1845
- Ordained a priest on May 30, 1847
- Rejected by **Protestants** and viewed with suspicion by **Catholics**
- Founded **Birmingham Oratory** in 1849
- **Rector** of **Catholic University** in Dublin, which ended in his dismissal
 - o Wrote *Idea of a University* while here
- Editor of *The Rambler*, lay-run publication that leaned to the left
- In 1864, wrote spiritual autobiography *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*
- Defending against attack by **Charles Kingsley**
 - o Explained his conversion to **Catholicism**
- Wide, popular acclaim that restored **Newman's** reputation and silenced **Catholic** critics
- Named a **Cardinal** by **Pope Leo XIII** in 1879
- Died on August 11, 1890 and beatified by **Pope Benedict XVI** in September 2010

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Session 8

Bl. John Henry Newman: The Convert, Part 2 (28 minutes)

Major Works

- *On Development of Christian Doctrine*
 - Development, not deviations
 - Doctrine as a “living organism”
 - Need for “living authority” to avoid doctrinal corruption
 - The **Church’s** teaching authority
 - Embraced by theological liberals and conservatives
 - Not mutually exclusive, but inclusive
- *Idea of a University*
 - Study of faith is an intellectual endeavor, appropriate for a university
 - Religion / theology needs to be at the center of university courses due to its passion for the whole and the centrality of **God**
 - Expulsion of religion from the university leads to constant succession of false pretenders to centrality
 - Abstract knowledge is good in and of itself (i.e., the true “liberal” education)
 - “Liberal” = free from utility
 - The beauty of a cultivated mind for its own sake
 - Universities are in the business of producing saints
 - **Newman** believed Universities were in the business of producing “gentlemen”
 - Gentlemen = someone with a philosophical frame of mind
 - **Saints** are something other than gentlemen
 - **Churches** are in the business of producing **Saints**
 - Rest means to savor
 - A liberal education reaches you what to do once you get to where you are going
 - Rest in the true, the good, and the beautiful and really cultivate them
 - Rest in Peace
 - Now savor the beauty and goodness of **God**
- *Grammar of Assent*
 - Published in 1870
 - Relationship between faith and reason
 - Assent, not certitude, more accurately describes the route to faith
 - Assent – the psychological and intellectual act of accepting a proposition
 - Notional assent: theoretical; abstract
 - Real assent: concrete; tangible
 - Real assent in faith best understood by reality of conscience
 - Come to assent by weighing probabilities: use abstract arguments, hunches, instinct, memory, opinion of others, emotion, moral examples

Newman as a “Pivotal Player

- Loved and sought to communicate the truth
- Saw modernity as a serious threat to **Christianity** and met the challenge with “thrilling dialogue” between the ancient **Church** and contemporary times

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Session 9

G.K. Chesterton: The Evangelist, Part 1 (28 minutes)

Introduction

- Chesterton embodied the richness and capaciousness of **Catholicism**
- Love of paradox
- Believed **Christianity** would set right what was wrong with the world
- An evangelist because he fought back publicly against the critics of **Christianity** with articulate discourse and writing, proclaiming and celebrating the **Gospel**
 - o Only Englishman, besides **Henry VIII**, to be declared “**Defender of the Faith**” by the **Pope (Pope Pius XI)**

Why a Pivotal Player?

- Articulated Christianity when it was under attack, and did so with joy and clarity
 - o Great impact on C.S. Lewis, Fulton Sheen and others who evangelized in modern times.

Life and Times

- Early Life
 - o Born in 1874 in London
 - o Baptized **Anglican**, but not brought up with a strong faith
 - Parents were Unitarian and Progressive
 - o Interests centered on the arts, theater, drama
 - o Attended Slade School of Art in London
 - o Early life was nihilistic until he came to an attitude of gratefulness
 - o Started writing book reviews for a literary journal and discovered his true gift was writing
- Adult Life
 - o Married **Frances Blogg** in 1901; drawn deeper into **Christianity**; did not have children
 - Absent-minded – Not absence of mind, but presence of mind is elsewhere
 - Wrestling with questions of religion
 - o Intrigued by paradox and believed that the paradoxes of **Christianity** reflected the paradoxes of life (which led to writing **Orthodoxy**)
 - o Model of intellectual and religious discourse (could separate a person from his ideas)
 - Friendship with **George Bernard Shaw**, an atheist
 - o Wrote popular series of mystery fiction: **The Father Brown Stories**
 - o Lectured extensively in U.S. and elsewhere
 - o Became **Catholic** in 1922; believed “**Catholicism** is true [and] became a real messenger refusing to tamper with a real message”
 - “The **Church** is not a movement, but a meeting place, the trying place of all the truth in the world.”
 - o Took on the arguments of modernity against **Christianity**
 - o Died at age 62 on June 14, 1936

Distributism

- **Chesterton's** vision of **Catholic** social teaching
- Distributism is beyond both Capitalism and Socialism
 - Against Big Business, or the concentration of wealth among a few, and against Big Government that acted in place of the family; supported healthy and prosperous middle class.
- Believed that if community or individual had precedence over the family, society would disintegrate

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Session 10

G.K. Chesterton: The Evangelist, Part 2 (28 minutes)

Orthodoxy

- Published in 1908, 14 years before becoming **Catholic**
 - o It is filled with **Catholic** spirit
- Written as an explanation of how **Chesterton** came to believe in **Christianity**
- Argued that the tradition of **Christianity** is really startling and new
 - o Story of an English yachtsman finding England and believing it is a south sea island
 - o A madman isn't someone who has lost his reason, he is someone who has lost everything except his reason
- Argued against any ideology that locks into a narrow and all-explaining system (e.g., scientific determinism, materialism, reductionism)
 - o Tradition is the democracy of the dead
- *The Ethics of Elfland*
 - o Argued against religious skeptic **David Hume** and his views on the regularities of nature
 - Childlike desire to "Do it Again" – the sun and moon rising every day and night
 - **God** gleefully saying "Do it Again" – a theatrical encore
 - o **Fr. Oiland's** homily on July 29, 2018 – What Is The Mass? (17th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Bread of Life Discourse, part 1)
- Discussion of **Christianity's** critics that the faith is filled with vices; however, different critics chose conflicting vices (e.g., fallen human nature vs. optimistic hope; timidity vs. courageousness)
- There are many paradoxes in **Christianity**
- **Christianity** is not a compromise but a radical and confident putting together of mutually exclusive extremes

The Everlasting Man

- Written in 1925, three years after conversion to **Catholicism**
- Two parts:
 - o Argues against the evolutionist theory of **H.G. Wells**, that as man evolved from primitive to modern, he no longer needed religion and had the skills on his own to bring peace to the world
 - Prehistoric cave paintings
 - Man produced a thing that other animals could not – Art
 - o A creator like **God**
 - Man has a capacity for **God**
 - o Argues against comparative religion theory, that all religions are the same and that **Jesus** is just one religious founder among many
 - **Jesus** is the only religious leader who claimed to be **God**

Why a Pivotal Player?

- The Happy Warrior
 - o Against **Puritanism**, and filled with joy
 - Harkens to **St. Irenaeus**
 - “The glory of **God** is a human being fully alive”
- Against relativism, and argued fiercely about the uniqueness and truth of **Jesus Christ** and his **Church**

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Session 11

Michelangelo: The Artist, Part 1 (43 minutes)

Introduction

- Eighth-century dispute over the use of icons / spiritual depictions
 - o Iconoclasts – graven images and idolatry
 - o Iconophiles – lovers of icons
 - **God** made a icon of himself in the humanity of **Jesus**
 - Pictures of **Christ** and the **Saints** simply prolong the Incarnation
- **St. John of Damascus** made **Catholic** tradition of visual art possible
- Draw through the physical image to the transcendent reality it represents
 - o Nothing in the world is **God**, but everything in the world speaks of **God** because he created it
 - Iconic form becomes idolatry if we start worshipping the image

Life and Times

- Born in Caprese in 1475 and raised in Florence (family of stonecutters)
- Apprentice to **Ghirlandaio**; learned the fresco technique
- Lived in palace of **Lorenzo de' Medici** among intellectuals and worked in sculpture garden
- **Lorenzo** dies and **Medici** family loses power; influence of **Dominican Fra Savonarola** rises
 - o The Bonfire of the Vanities
- Went to Rome in 1496, completes the *Pietà*
- Returned to Florence in 1501, completes the *David*
- Back to Rome in 1505, commissioned to sculpt **Julius II's** tomb (never completed)
 - o *Moses* came from this effort
- Completed **Sistine Chapel** ceiling, 1508-1512
- Completed *The Last Judgment*, 1535 (commissioned by **Pope Paul III**)
- Chief architect of the new **St. Peter's Basilica**, 1546
 - o He added the Dome of **St. Peter's**
- Died in 1564, the same year **Shakespeare** was born
- Routes to **God**
 - o Good, Truth, and Beauty

The Pietà

- **Mary**
 - o Serene and youthful although age 45-50
 - o **New Eve**: forever young **Mother** of the **Church**
 - o “**Virgin Mother**, the daughter of your **Son**”
 - From **Dante's *Divine Comedy***
 - o **Ark of the Covenant**
 - **Mary** contains **Christ**

- *Pietà*
 - **Mary** offers her crucified **Son** as a gift of life (**Eucharist**)
 - Designed as an altar piece; connected to the sacrifice of the **Mass**
 - Offering of the body of the crucified **Jesus** for the life of the world

The David

- Renaissance humanism: beauty and glory of the human being
- Foreshadowing of **Christ**
 - Son of **David** and the new **Adam**
 - Archetype of the human according to **God's** intention

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Session 12

Michelangelo: The Artist, Part 2 (33 minutes)

The Sistine Chapel

- History
 - Completed in 1481, papal chapel and site of conclave to elect **pope**
 - Commissioned by **Pope Sixtus IV**
 - Built to mirror **Solomon's Temple**
 - Team of artists commissioned to paint walls
 - **Julius II** was **Sixtus'** nephew
- Ceiling
 - Nine scenes from opening of **Genesis** with prophets, sibyls, and **Christ's** ancestors also depicted
 - First triad: The Creation of the World
 - Separation of light from darkness
 - Primal act of creation was an act of separation
 - Final act (*the Last Judgment*) will also be an act of separation
 - Creation of sun and moon, often representing **Jesus** and **Mary**
 - The moon, representing **Mary**, is reflected light
 - Creation of sea creatures
 - Second triad: The Creation and Fall of Human Beings
 - Creation of **Adam**: energy of **God** flowing from finger to finger
 - Creation of **Eve**: material and spiritual coming together
 - Fall and expulsion from the **Garden of Eden**
 - Third triad: The Story of **Noah** and the Effects of Sin
 - Fleeing the great flood; ark in background as a church
 - Sacrifice of **Noah** as priest
 - Drunken and naked **Noah** being discovered by his sons
 - The triumph of matter over spirit
 - **Christ** is the new **Adam** and will come to undo the effects of the Fall
- *The Last Judgment*
 - **Jesus** centered as the sun with humanity revolving around him
 - Judging all: the saved above and damned below
 - Finished in 1512, and in 1517 is the Reformation, followed in 1527 by the Sack of Rome

Why is Michelangelo a Pivotal Player?

- Proves that the sensual, artistic and beautiful can be a vehicle to the spiritual
- Confirms the key principle of the Incarnation: "**God** became human so humans could become **God**." The divinization of humanity is the greatest humanism possible.