
HABITS OF DEVOTION: CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICA

JAMES M. O'TOOLE, ED.
CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2004
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Reviewed by Patrick Flanagan

In *Habits of Devotion*, four scholars examine the historical trends and practices in American Catholic devotions during the 20th century. Specifically, the authors look at four major areas: prayer, devotion to Mary, the sacrament of confession, and the Eucharist. Chinnici begins with a thorough and historical examination of Catholic prayer from 1926 to 1976. Kane then examines special devotionals to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. O'Toole reviews one major devotional practice separating Catholics from other Christians, the sacrament of confession. Finally, McGuinness analyzes the Catholic devotion to the Eucharist from 1926 to 1976.

In the section, "Catholic Community at Prayer, 1926-1976," Chinnici argues that while documents coming from the Second Vatican Council were of incredible historical importance, a movement of change in the Catholic community had been brewing for years.

Liturgically, in the period from 1926 to 1960, the people and priests were moving from silent exchange, to participation, to dialogue; eventually, in the 1960s, when this mutation itself revealed the full weight of institutional authority and other more complex social and political dynamics were surfacing, both people and priests would discover "free speech." (p. 38)

In explaining the peak popularity of devotions from the end of World War I through the early 1950s, Chinnici argues that the devotional practices once rooted in local neighborhoods and tied to ethnic identity and parish life soon became institutionally practiced through diocesan structures and movements. It was also during this same time of national insecurity that devotionism increased as more people turned, for example, to devotions of the saints as guides to patriotism and politics.

One example of prayer life reflective of this era was the campaign for the family rosary during and after World War II. It was during this time period that an association was made between praying the rosary and military victories. Another example of prayer connected to this era was the practice of erecting and venerating the Sacred Heart of Jesus in homes as a way of promoting and strengthening family and social values in a society which lived in fear of Communist atheism.

The historical connections Chinnici makes to prayer are fascinating. While this reviewer found some lack of continuity throughout the text, the author's historical and event-based perspective on Catholic prayer and devotion is enlightening.

In the section, "Marian Devotion Since 1940: Continuity or Causality?" Kane explains the transformation of Marian devotions from very private, household activities in the 19th century to more open and public practices in the 20th century. Devotions to the Blessed Mary are expected to yield both temporal and spiritual rewards. According to the author, connections to Mary through such devotionals as novenas, rosaries, and scapulars both identified Catholics and set them apart from their Christian brothers and sisters.

Kane views the 1950s as a high point in using the conservative ideals of Mary to promote ideals in the United States. These standards were reflected in everything from encouraging women to return to the home after holding jobs in the workplace during the war, to modest attire. While devotions to Mary have decreased significantly since the Second Vatican Council, they "have remained significant among certain segments of the Catholic population, notably Latino and Asian Catholics, and among Catholic conservatives" (p. 126).

While no single factor led to the substantial decline of participation in the sacrament of confession, O'Toole identifies the major components of this phenomenon in the section titled, "In the Court of Conscience: American Catholics and Confession, 1900-1975." O'Toole points to fear, uneasiness in cross-gender dialogue, and an implied message of the Second Vatican Council for the reduction of confessions.

If confession was no longer meaningful to them, why should they continue to go through it? Many lay Catholics were revising their self-image, seeing themselves as religiously autonomous in a way that their parents (or they themselves) had not formerly been. (p. 173)

O'Toole joins Kane and Chinnici in offering the reader an insightful and historically based overview of a devotional practice in the American Catholic

Church. Readers looking for a factual and non-sacramental view of confession will find this section informative and interesting.

The time period from 1926 to 1945 was marked by another significant change in the devotional habits of Catholics. During this time period, Catholics gradually began to receive Communion on a more frequent basis. McGuinness explains this phenomenon by pointing to the proclamation from Pope Pius X that daily Communion was available to all the faithful in the final section of the book, "Let's Go to the Altar: American Catholics and the Eucharist, 1926-1976." Mass goers receiving Communion continued to rise through the 1960s and 1970s, with the percent of weekly communicants growing from 29% of those attending Mass in 1973 to over 50% in 1976, despite a decrease in Mass attendance. In a readable approach, McGuinness defines practices and trends associated with participation in the Eucharist.

Overall, the content of *Habits of Devotion: Catholic Religious Practice in Twentieth-Century America* is an informative read for the Catholic educator looking for a historical background on the major devotions of the Catholic Church in America during the last century. The authors provide an objective view of an area of Catholicism that could easily be clouded in subjectivity or bias.

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CATHOLIC EDUCATION: DISTINCTIVE AND INCLUSIVE

JOHN SULLIVAN
 KLUWER ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS, 2001
 \$159.00, 248 pages

Reviewed by Susan Richter

Catholic schools are different from other educational institutions. Catholic education strives to go beyond instruction, inculcating a set of beliefs and doctrines, sharing in discipleship, and promoting the development of Christian persons so that they are able to share in God's life. In the book, *Catholic Education: Distinctive and Inclusive*, Sullivan (2001) argues that Catholic schools can be both distinctive and inclusive: