



Summer 2018

## Church, Faith, Future: What We Face, What We Can Do. By Louis J. Cameli. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017.

Michael M. Canaris

*Loyola University Chicago*, [mcanaris@luc.edu](mailto:mcanaris@luc.edu)

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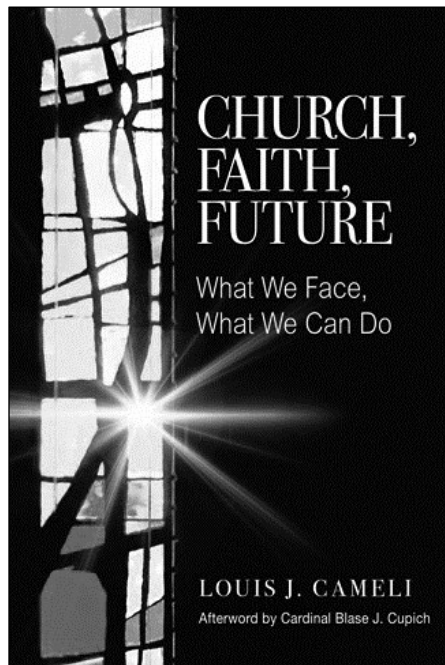
### Recommended Citation

Canaris, Michael M.. Church, Faith, Future: What We Face, What We Can Do. By Louis J. Cameli. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017.. *American Catholic Studies*, 129, 2: 91-93, 2018. Retrieved from Loyola eCommons, Institute of Pastoral Studies: Faculty Publications and Other Works, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/acs.2018.0027>

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*Church, Faith, Future: What We Face, What We Can Do.* By Louis J. Cameli. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2017.

Oftentimes on frigid Chicago evenings, I will delay the inevitable walk home from Loyola’s Water Tower campus, and slip into one of the side doors of Chicago’s colossal Holy Name Cathedral for Mass. I am always heartened when I see Father Louis Cameli rather meekly exit the sacristy to lead the community’s celebration. Though we have never spoken directly, we have liturgically “broken bread” many times together, and I have regularly been enlightened by his insightful

preaching. I was then particularly excited to read his recent book *Church, Faith, Future: What We Face, What We Can Do*.

The small primer is divided into four short chapters which explore the cultural topography of the contemporary age, the challenges it poses to believers, and our potential ecclesial responses to them. Nearly half of the 104-page book is devoted to the last and most substantial of these chapters, titled “What *Ought* We To Do?,” along with an Afterword by Cardinal Blase Cupich about the local “Renew My Church” initiative. This is a wise editorial decision, as the heart of the project lies not merely in diagnostic, but also in prescriptive, analyses.

Cameli demonstrates a nuanced ecclesiological vision, interweaving biblical, spiritual, and sociological approaches, citing a wide range of experts in varied disciplines. His read on the rise of secularism, a notoriously daunting reality for those in professional ministry, while undoubtedly sobering, is also sophisticated and fair. He consciously avoids a scorched-earth criticism of the (post-post-)modern world, which would do justice neither to the millennials coming of age within it, nor to the resiliency of the Tradition and its inextricable relationship with the surrounding culture in which it is handed on and actively received in this and every generation.

Most striking to me was Cameli’s repeated insistence, with various examples and foundation in magisterial pronouncements, that the church is not only charged with the important work of evangelizing the world, but also of being itself constantly (re-)evangelized. In one

passage, Cameli perceptively roots this paradoxical reality in Jesus' call of the Twelve, who are appointed both "to be with Him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message" (Mk 3:14). Like them, the church too is called to be "disciple-apostle or evangelized-evangelizing" (64). The process of continually growing into this dialectical relationship with the Lord is structured along four axiomatic scriptural phrases: (1) What are you looking for?, (2) Come and see, (3) Are you going to stay?, and (4) Go and proclaim the Good News.

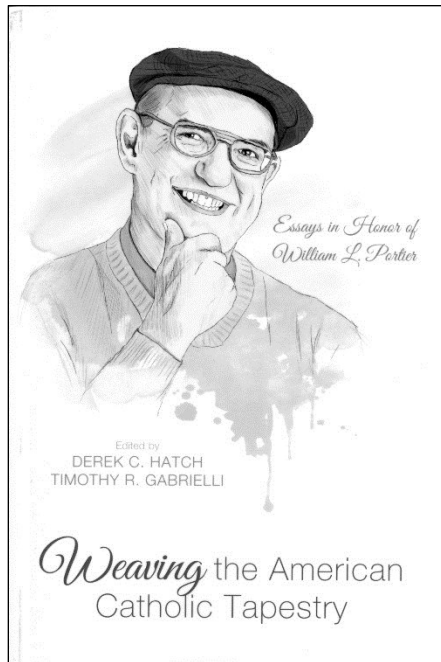
In framing what the church *ought* to be doing, Cameli rejects both an apathetic continuation of permitting the current trajectory of growing indifference, hostility, or malformations that characterize religious life to endure unabated, and an unqualified retrenchment and intensification into a sanctified remnant community. The smaller and purer church, which Pope Benedict XVI once espoused and a recent bestseller provocatively champions as an option, risks an elitism and neo-Novationism that is antithetical to the Gospel. Instead Cameli would have the church emulate and embody a missionary discipleship that rejects the closed "self-sufficiency" of the dominant culture of the North Atlantic, while simultaneously recognizing itself as "a servant of both God and humanity, striving to be true to the word of life implanted by the Lord, and striving to serve that same word of life in the lives of real people" (93).

Despite some rather cursory examinations of potential areas for growth in the church's engagement with the signs and realities of our times (e.g., sexuality, mass media, economic life, etc.), which Cameli readily admits are "compressed" and in need of "much further elaboration" (68), the short volume offers a worthwhile glimpse into the many trials we face, and presents vital pastoral paths forward to address them unflinchingly and solicitously. A slightly longer work would, I gather, have given Cameli the room to examine in a more robust and explicit manner the church's complicity in, or at the very least shared responsibility for, some of the lamentable realities that believers now face. Followers of Christ in the twenty-first century are not in a position merely to respond to perceived slights or actual tragedies reactively, as if the problems arose in a context that was not in so many ways fashioned by Christianity itself. The volume may have been more rhetorically powerful if it nodded to this fact, even passingly.

Yet, Cameli's conclusions and advice are not offered through rose-tinted stained glass windows. They mirror the current leadership in both the universal church, and his local one, in throwing open the sanctuary doors to the bustling marketplaces, agonized groans, isolating shadows, and limitless possibilities pulsating through the streets which surround the community collectively professing its faith,

and in which we all continue to “live, and move, and have our being.” This makes the succinct text’s summons an imperative and exceedingly relevant one.

MICHAEL CANARIS  
*Loyola University Chicago*



***Weaving the American Catholic Tapestry: Essays in Honor of William L. Portier.*** Edited by Derek C. Hatch and Timothy R. Gabrielli. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017. 356 pp. \$41.00.

This collection of essays in honor of William L. Portier, currently of the University of Dayton, is an indispensable volume for the study of Catholicism in America. It will be of interest to anyone interested in American Catholicism, as well as the reader interested in inculturation more broadly. The essays—written by Portier’s closest colleagues and former students—perform what can only be described as historical

“theology à la Portier” (to borrow a phrase from the volume’s editors). To this end, the volume manages to honor the scholar on its cover in the best possible way: by contributing substantively to the contextual theology to which Portier has dedicated himself over the past five decades.

*Weaving the American Catholic Tapestry* appears on the surface a project of *ressourcement*, of recovering many overlooked sources from the American Catholic context. The volume is better understood, however, as a representation of Portier’s larger theological project, namely to reflect on the question of the relationship between nature and grace with careful attention to the context in which the question is asked. The apparent *ressourcement*, therefore, contributes to this broader and perennial question. The volume is a select *dramatis personae* for Catholicism in the United States, including Orestes Brownson, Dorothy Day, Abbe Felix Klein, and many others. The volume’s final essay by Sandra Yocum on Joseph McSorley, however, may provide the best illustration of “theology à la Portier.” Yocum