

# INSTITUTE ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE

*publisher of*

## FIRST THINGS



# 2016

ANNUAL REPORT

# Letter from the Editor



**G**ood times. Bad times. That's the story of 2016. FIRST THINGS enjoyed an outstanding year. We published superb, timely essays. Our commentary on public life was sharp and salient. Subscriptions rose, and donations went up. Meanwhile, earthquakes shook our political culture. Rancor characterized the presidential election. The churches were roiled. Some Catholic bishops said confusing things about marriage. Things seemed to be falling apart.

I can't pretend to know the future. Maybe 2016 was an odd, troubled year, and things will return to the way they were. But I doubt it. It seems that an era is ending.

To a striking degree, our fellow citizens feel unsure, vulnerable, and constrained. I often meet young people, many of them talented, educated, and poised for success. Yet they suffer deep anxiety and worry that they'll somehow make a mistake—take the wrong internship, go to the wrong graduate program, or marry the wrong person. Outwardly, they have extraordinary options. But, inwardly, they lack freedom, because there is little they can trust.

I'm convinced that much of our political distemper stems from this sense of vulnerability. A young friend visited me recently. We talked about his family. His parents lived in the same house for decades, working the same middle-class jobs while they raised four boys. Two of the boys went on to success. Two became drug addicts, fathered illegitimate children, and one went to prison.

This is not simply a matter of factories, jobs, and the price of gas. I'm increasingly exasperated by social

commentators who can't see beyond narrow economic analysis. The problem is cultural, moral, and spiritual. Everything has become fluid. Even the question of whether you are a boy or a girl is up for grabs. There's very little put forward as trustworthy these days.

All of this has caused me to do some rethinking. For a long time, I was an advocate for liberal democracy. The modifier—liberal—was coined in an earlier era when traditional forms of life constrained us in many ways. Freedom required breaking chains and removing obstacles. Liberalization was based on natural rights and God-given human dignity. It's a noble history to tell. But liberalism has turned against the laws of nature and nature's God. When we're talking about transgender bathrooms, we surely can recognize that we've come to a dead end. In the face of growing instability, we need a renewal of moral and religious ballast. Let's call that project "covenantal democracy."

***"To live in communion is empowering, not enslaving, which is why we also cherish our civic covenants."***

The first covenant is marriage. The union of a man and a woman stabilizes our restless longing and provides us with our most intimate experience of communion. For most adults, marriage is the moment when they learn a deep truth about the human condition: I do not live for myself. The family is ordered toward raising children and caring

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for the weak and vulnerable, whether that be a helpless infant or an aging relative. It is no coincidence that abortion and euthanasia wax as the covenant of marriage wanes.

To live in communion is empowering, not enslaving, which is why we also cherish our civic covenants. None of us are perfect; we fail often. Yet we have a rightful pride in our hometowns, local customs, and larger national unity. Ordinary people are capable of remarkable deeds in the service of others who are bound to them in a shared love of a common history, place, and project. Again, we learn a profound truth: What we share together is greater than what I possess alone.

The highest covenant is religious. To seek God is natural; to enter into partnership with him is supernatural. A divine intrusion breaks apart the world's necessities and inevitabilities, calling us to something beyond our

reach—and yet given to us by the hand of God himself. Faith exposes us to the full truth of our vulnerability: The fate of my soul is not, finally, in my hands. And faith provides our most profound experience of security, for my soul is in God's hands. Thus a third truth, one crucial for the renewal of public life, for it puts politics in its place: That which is most precious transcends our powers.

More than twenty-five years ago, FIRST THINGS was founded on the proposition that a free society requires moral and religious substance. 2016 was a disorienting year, and 2017 will likely be as well. We must restore moral and religious vitality to our society. It's not going to be easy. But nothing worthwhile is. I'm grateful that you want to join our shared work.



R. R. Reno



R. R. Reno joined FIRST THINGS as editor in April 2011. He has been published in many academic journals, and his essays and opinion pieces on religion, public life, contemporary culture, and current events have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Commentary*, and the *Washington Post*, among other popular outlets. His recent books include *Sanctified Vision: An Introduction to Early Christian Interpretation of the Bible*; *Fighting the Noonday Devil*; and *Resurrecting the Idea of a Christian Society*, published in August 2016. Reno has appeared as a guest on CNN's *Crossfire*, EWTN's *Faith & Culture*, and numerous radio shows.

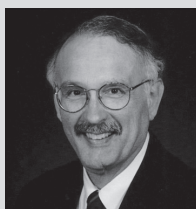
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**ELIZABETH COREY** is associate professor of political science in the Honors College at Baylor University. She holds degrees from Oberlin College and Louisiana State University. Her book, *Michael Oakeshott on Religion, Aesthetics, and Politics*, was published by the University of Missouri Press.



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**DAVID NOVAK** is J. Richard and Dorothy Shiff Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto. His books include *In Defense of Religious Liberty* and *The Sanctity of Human Life*.



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**BRUCE R. SHAW** is a consultant serving the energy industry. He previously served as president of Holly Energy Partners LP and as a consultant at McKinsey & Company. He is on several boards, including those of the Covenant School Foundation in Dallas and the International Arts Movement in New York City.



**LARRY SMITH** is a former private business consultant and now president of ScholarLeaders International, a non-profit ministry that encourages and enables Christian theological leaders. He also serves on the board of Fuller Theological Seminary.



**GEORGE WEIGEL** is Distinguished Senior Fellow of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a Catholic theologian, and one of America's leading public intellectuals. His books include *Witness to Hope: The Biography of John Paul II* and *The Cube and the Cathedral*.

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# Events

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As an organization founded to promote the role of religion in public life, FIRST THINGS has never been just a magazine. We promote conversations—in print and in person. Through our public events and closed seminars, we provide occasions for people from all walks of life, from professional businessmen to professed religious, to have serious discussions. We enable people to think together and speak frankly about the ever-changing interplay of principles, practicalities, and politics, while remaining grounded in a shared love for the truth.

In 2016, FIRST THINGS continued its extensive program of lectures, book talks, and art shows, hosted intellectual retreats in New York City and Los Angeles, and partnered with a number of other organizations to sponsor events across the United States and abroad. The complete list of colloquia, seminars, lectures, and retreats we sponsored, hosted, or organized could fill several pages. Here are a few highlights.

## *The Icons of St. Elisabeth Convent*



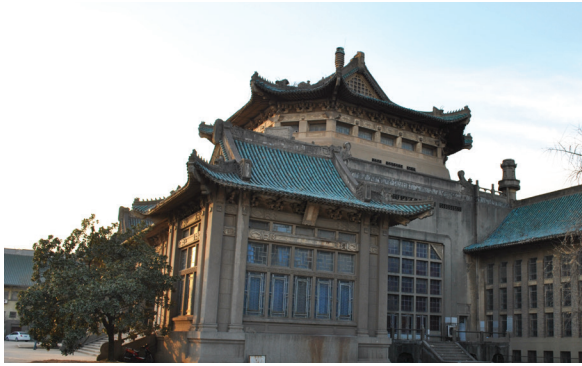
Sisters from the Russian Orthodox convent of St. Elisabeth in Minsk displayed several dozen hand-painted icons from their workshop and explained in detail the history of their order and the theology governing their work. This event was one of our best attended of the year. Participants relished the chance to speak to the sisters about their ministry, while admiring the extraordinary craftsmanship and spiritual vision on display in their icons. The wooden planks for the icons are planed and prepared by members of the sisters' recovery program for drug addicts, and the workshop itself is near the grounds of a large state-sponsored asylum for mentally disabled children, also staffed by the sisters. Video from the event can be found on the FIRST THINGS website.

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## *The Avery Cardinal Dulles Seminar: Capitalism and Liberalism*

In March, a group of academics and intellectuals gathered at the FIRST THINGS editorial office for a seminar on capitalism and liberalism. Papers were presented by FIRST THINGS contributing writer David Bentley Hart and senior fellow Francesca Aran Murphy. Hart addressed the moral difficulties surrounding capitalism in the context of his reading of the New Testament *monitum* against the accrual of wealth, as well as the real

suffering faced by “losers” in the global capitalist system. Murphy responded with a colorful anthropological take on market exchange, defending capitalism as spiritually enriching and insisting that classical liberalism is the best starting point for evangelical dialogue with the modern world. Discussion surrounding both papers was lively. Versions of the two essays were published in the June/July 2016 issue of FIRST THINGS.



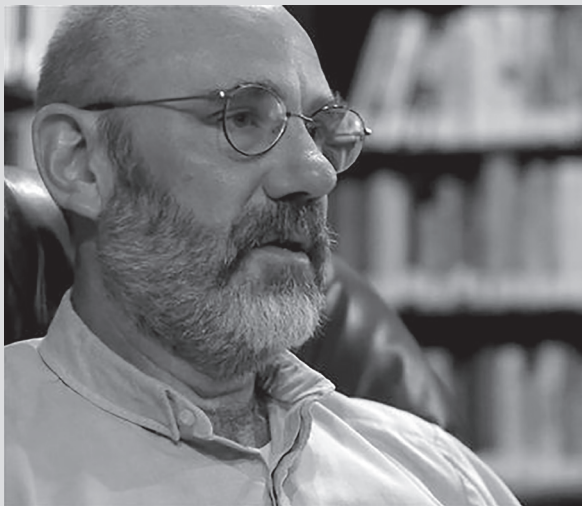
## *Thomism in China*

In late November, FIRST THINGS organized a three-day seminar for students at Wuhan University in Wuhan, China on “Thomas Aquinas and Medieval Theology.” Faculty included FIRST THINGS editor R. R. Reno and contributing writers William Carroll of the University of Oxford and Thomas Joseph White of the Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception. Professor Zhai Zhihong of Wuhan’s School of Philosophy sponsored the event.

## *The Ethics of End-of-Life Care*

Experts in medicine and bioethics gathered at the FIRST THINGS office in September for a day-long seminar on the moral and spiritual considerations surrounding the medical care given to patients approaching death. Several participants presented papers, including Lydia Dugdale, whose essay “Healing the Dying” was published in the December 2016 issue of FIRST THINGS. Discussion focused on two topics: first, the proper role a physician’s faith should play in counseling patients and their families at the end of life; second, moral problems surrounding coma-inducing palliative care. Given the increasing public focus on euthanasia, the chance to explore the religious aspects of this phase of life and the spiritual dignity of dying was both useful and edifying. Funding for the seminar was secured with the assistance of the Issachar Fund.

## *FIRST THINGS Lectures in Austin and Dallas*



One of our ongoing initiatives is to partner with organizations in the United States and abroad to host FIRST THINGS lectures. This gives our readers an opportunity to hear FIRST THINGS writers and editors address major moral, political, and religious issues of the present day. In 2016, we sponsored several lectures, including one in Dallas featuring Elizabeth Corey and one in Austin featuring Peter J. Leithart.

Leithart’s talk addressed emerging problems for Protestantism: its identity as a protest movement and the failure of denominationalism to live up to the Christian vocation to ecumenical unity. Elizabeth Corey’s lecture dealt with the spiritual repercussions of our cultural obsession with “achievement” and career success. How can a well-founded desire for personal excellence be re-directed toward a more sacrificial and other-oriented way of living? We are grateful to the Austin Graduate School of Theology and the Covenant School for partnering with FIRST THINGS on these events.



## THE 2016 ERASMUS LECTURE

# Can the Religious Right Be Saved?

Now in its 29th year, the Erasmus Lecture brings world-renowned speakers to New York City to address an audience of FIRST THINGS friends and subscribers. Past speakers include Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Archbishop Timothy Dolan, Gilbert Meilaender, and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. The lecture also appears in the pages of FIRST THINGS and on [firstthings.com](http://firstthings.com), and is streamed live over the internet.



In 2016, Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, delivered the 29th annual lecture, asking "Can the Religious Right Be Saved?"

Moore challenged American Christians to eschew the "God and Country" idolatry that, he says, has defined their rhetoric for so many years: "We must remind ourselves . . . that we can be Americans best when we are not Americans first." This does not mean, however, that Christians should withdraw from political engagement in the public square. He spoke of the need for an Evangelical front that, while politically active, puts the gospel at the core of its projects and never sacrifices or silences Christian truth for the sake of political gain.

The text of the lecture was published in the January 2017 issue of FIRST THINGS. Video of the event is available for viewing on [firstthings.com/media](http://firstthings.com/media) and has been watched nearly 5,000 times.

*"Religious liberty is a means to an end, and the end is not political. The end is religious communities free to serve and to persuade."*

## SAVE THE DATE:

October 30, 2017

Erasmus Lecture featuring Bishop Robert Barron of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles

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## SOME OTHER EVENTS FIRST THINGS HOSTED IN 2016

- FEB 2** Michael Novak and Paul Adams, lecture and book signing, *Social Justice Isn't What You Think It Is*
- FEB 9** The National Association of Scholars (NAS) Report Launch: Beach Books
- MAR 31** "Global Challenges Facing Pope Francis," an evening lecture with John McCarthy, former Australian Ambassador to the Holy See
- APR 7** James K. A. Smith, book talk and signing, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*
- APR 14** Art opening: Jörg Madlener, "The Jordanian Woman (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*)"
- MAY 26** Victor Lee Austin, book talk and signing, *Losing Susan: Brain Disease, the Pastor's Wife, and the God who Gives and Takes Away*
- MAY 31** The Hillbilly Thomists concert
- JUN 8-9** Production of John Paul II's play *The Jeweler's Shop*
- JUN 21** Art opening: Frank Dobbs, "Life Itself"
- JUN 23** Mary Eberstadt, lecture and book signing, *It's Dangerous to Believe: Religious Freedom and Its Enemies*
- SEP 20** R. R. Reno, talk and book signing, *Resurrecting the Idea of a Christian Society*
- SEP 22** "How to Spot a Dictator," an evening talk with Helen Andrews
- OCT 11** Kenneth L. Woodward, a conversation with R. R. Reno and book signing, *Getting Religion: Faith, Culture and Politics from the Age of Eisenhower to the Era of Obama*
- DEC 1** Art opening: Karen Schiff, "Broken Letters (after Agnes)"

## THE SECOND ANNUAL

# Poetry Reading

with Dana Gioia

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In October 2016, FIRST THINGS was pleased to host its second Annual Poetry Reading, an evening with Dana Gioia in New York City. Gioia is California's poet laureate and formerly served as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, where he worked to revive the role of poetry in American public culture. Between reciting selections from his most recent collection, *Ninety-Nine Poems*, he relayed anecdotes, discussed the relationship between faith and art, and expressed his gratitude to readers who have deepened his understanding of his own work. The event was broadcast live over the internet.

# Intellectual Retreats

IN NEW YORK & LOS ANGELES

Through the generous support of donors and friends of the magazine, FIRST THINGS has been able to host a series of weekend retreats focusing on important topics in religion, politics, and culture. Each retreat is composed of a series of seminars on classic texts, flanked by two lectures given by FIRST THINGS writers.

The retreats combine our mission of educating for the renewal of public life with the important goal of building community among those committed to this task. Retreat participants consistently express their satisfaction at having found a community of inquiry where they can discuss issues of fundamental importance in a friendly environment.



## The Search for Happiness

INTELLECTUAL RETREAT IN LOS ANGELES

In May 2016, FIRST THINGS joined with the Agora Foundation, the Center for Liberal Arts and Free Institutions, and Thomas Aquinas College to offer an intellectual retreat on the campus of UCLA. The topic was happiness, and readings for the retreat were taken from Aristotle, Epictetus, Thomas Aquinas, and Bertrand Russell.

FIRST THINGS editor R. R. Reno addressed participants in a lecture on the crisis of moral and material insecurity plaguing young people, and board member Elizabeth Corey spoke on the tensions between achievement and happiness in career and family life. The weekend was rounded out with a poetry reading and lecture by California's poet laureate, Dana Gioia.



**REGISTER NOW FOR THE NEXT  
INTELLECTUAL RETREAT!**

## *The Good of Marriage*

May 19–21, 2017 at Baylor University  
Visit [firstthings.com/retreat](http://firstthings.com/retreat) for more information.



## Love and Friendship

### INTELLECTUAL RETREAT IN NEW YORK

We hosted our second annual retreat in New York City on August 5–7, 2016, in partnership with Northeast Catholic College on the campus of New York University. Participants were treated to a candid panel discussion of the mission of FIRST THINGS and the present political moment, featuring FIRST THINGS editors Mark Bauerlein and R. R. Reno, as well as board chairman Robert L. Wilken. Dr. Wilken also addressed participants in a moving lecture on love and friendship in the Christian life and his own life.



During the retreat's Saturday seminars, attendees discussed a wide range of texts from Plato and Augustine to Joseph Soloveitchik and John Henry Newman on themes including "Charity and Wisdom" and "Love as Ecstasy." The weekend was concluded with a concert of sacred choral music and a talk by George Harne, president of Northeast Catholic College. We will hold our third New York retreat during the summer of 2017.



## China's Christian Future

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*In the August/September 2016 issue of FIRST THINGS, Chinese dissident Yu Jie wrote about the spiritual destiny of China and his own experiences as part of the underground church. What follows is an excerpt from his essay, translated from the Chinese by H. C. Hsu.*

Christianity has transformed how I see myself as a dissident. Over decades of involvement with the Chinese democracy movement, I have seen so-called dissidents think the same, talk the same, act the same as those from whom they are supposedly dissenting. Too often the Communists and dissidents are kindred spirits. I have also seen personal ambitions and power struggles drive friends apart and turn those who should be working with one another against one another. My fellow dissidents attach great hopes to democracy, but it is simply a better method of public management and division of powers—the least worst, as Churchill said. It is not the horizon of all human hope and longing. If one does not believe in something other than democracy, one is no better off than the Communists, making a god of a political system.

When I became a Christian, I learned to recognize myself as a sinner. In doing so, I developed a sensitivity to sin that helps me recognize evil

and injustice when I see them. As I point out the tyranny of the Communist regime, I reflect on and judge myself. This interior work of repentance for my own sins has transformed my fight against totalitarianism. No longer am I merely pointing out faults in the world. I also recognize them in myself.



On the night of December 10, 2010, as the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony honoring my friend Liu Xiaobo was taking place in Oslo, I was kidnapped by the secret police and taken to the outskirts of Beijing. They beat and tortured me for hours, breaking my fingers one by one. I blacked out and was taken to a hospital. A hospital in Changping, a suburb of Beijing, refused to take me, saying I was “hopeless.” Then I was taken to a hospital in Beijing. My life was saved. For days my wife was under house arrest and did not

know my whereabouts, or even if I was alive. She was seized by a sinking feeling and could not eat or sleep. In a few days most of her hair fell out. Before I lost consciousness, I prayed: “Lord, if you take me, then make me a martyr. I am not worthy, but I am willing.” In that moment, I clearly heard his voice: “As surely as I live, not a hair of your head will fall to the ground.” And: “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.” God let me live, for he has greater plans for me. On January 11, 2012, as he did for the Israelites in Egypt, God led my family out of China, on to the capital of the United States of America.

The secret police had warned me: You are number one on the personal list of “two hundred intellectuals to bury alive” kept by Zhou Yongkang, then secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission. Who would have imagined that today I would be writing freely, praying freely, breathing freely, standing on free soil, while Zhou, once nicknamed China’s “security tsar,” would be sentenced to life in prison for corruption by his political enemies? In God’s plan, tyrants count for little. As Mary said in her great hymn of praise, the

Magnificat: “He has shown the strength of his arm. He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.”

In 2013 my wife answered the Lord’s call and became a full-time preacher at the Harvest Chinese Christian Church just outside Washington, DC. As part of the ministry, I help teach Sunday school and lead Bible study. I even cook for my beloved brothers and sisters. God lets me wield a pen in one hand and a spatula in the other. Not everyone in my congregation has read my books, but everyone has tasted my food—with rave reviews!

God let me live to witness and testify for him through writing. And for the 1.4 billion souls in my homeland, I shall continue. I do so in great hope. A growing faith in Christ, strengthened by the bonds of fellowship in church life, is breathing new life into my country. Neither the dead hand of Communism, nor the cynical imitation of Confucianism, nor capitalism, nor democracy, nor any earthly thing will determine the fate of my land. Christianity is China’s future. **Fr**



## The Papers of Fr. Neuhaus

In January 2017, the papers of Father Richard John Neuhaus were accepted by the Catholic University of America. Its library will be the permanent home of this important historical collection: a large body of letters, papers, awards, manuscripts, photographs, and art belonging to the founder of FIRST THINGS—more than 120 boxes in all.

CUA has begun cataloging, and we hope to have the materials available in the archive by the end of 2017. Scholars and graduate students working in the areas of American religion (especially Lutheranism and Roman Catholicism), the civil rights movement, twentieth- and twenty-first-century neoconservative politics, ecumenism, and the pro-life movement will be able to consult these materials and bring the legacy of Father Neuhaus to scholars and students for many years to come.

## WEBSITE

# FirstThings.com

The FIRST THINGS website complements the print edition with web articles by our editors and top writers, published daily and free to all. It also hosts an online version of the print edition—with recent issues available in their entirety for subscribers, and our twenty-five-year archive available to subscribers and non-subscribers alike.

With up-to-date commentary, FIRST THINGS stays relevant and influential, addressing deeper questions of principle in the midst of current affairs.



**103,465**

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**1553**

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**7518**

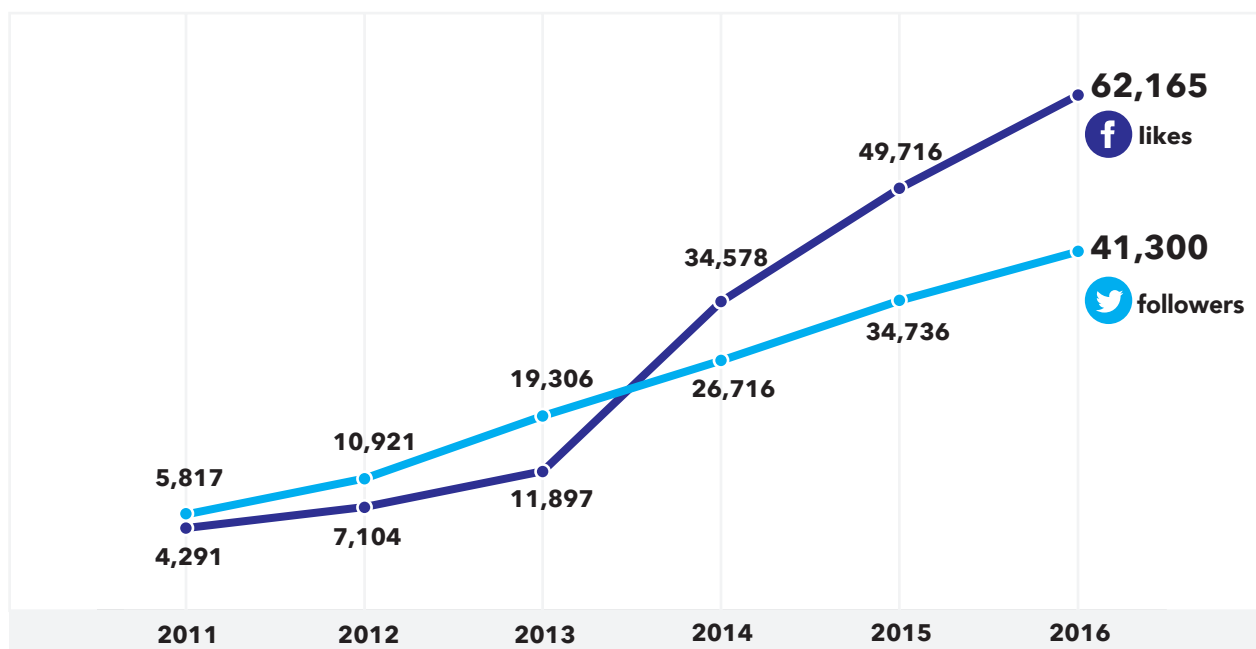
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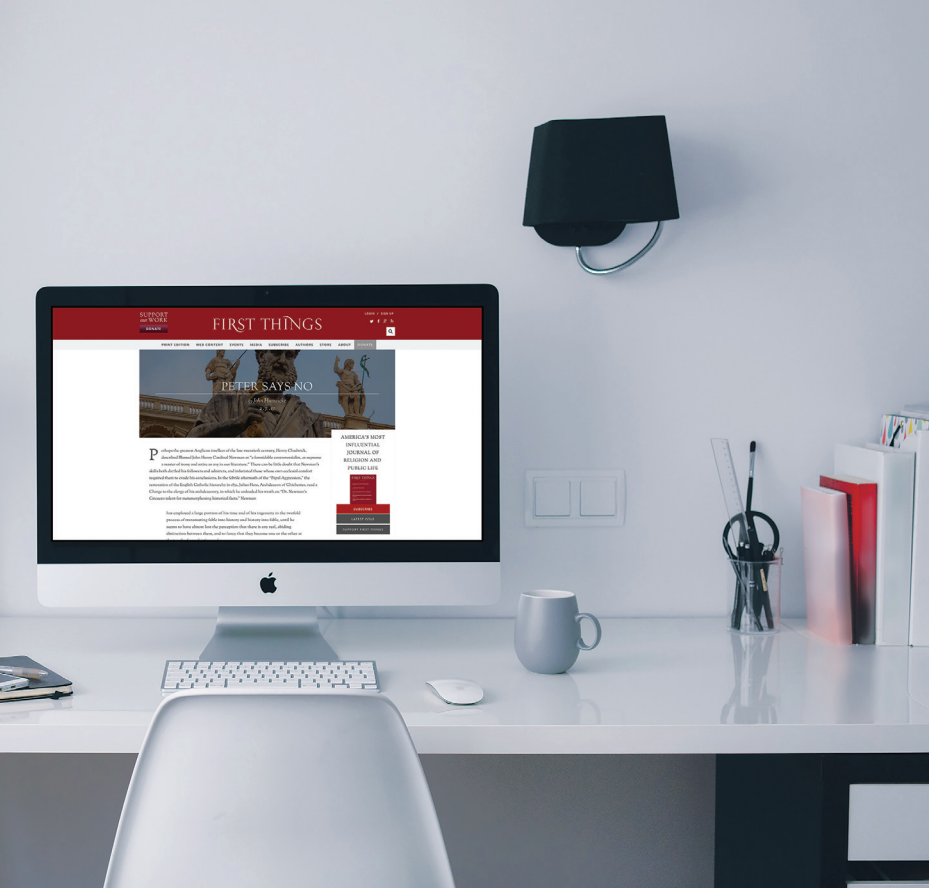


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## Social Media Presence





## Podcast

### *FirstThings.com offers more than just articles.*

We host a library of video lectures from FIRST THINGS events, video interviews with editors and writers, and a web store where readers can purchase back issues and FIRST THINGS merchandise. In 2016, associate editor Julia Yost expanded our digital offerings by inaugurating the FIRST THINGS Podcast. New episodes, released twice a month, feature editors and guests discussing on a variety of topics—from politics and primetime drama to poetry and theology. The podcast is a great way for friends of FIRST THINGS to meet the personalities behind the magazine.

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**JULIA YOST**, *Associate Editor*. In May 2016, Julia took over as editor of the FIRST THINGS website. She holds a B.A. in English from the Schreyer Honors College of Penn State University, an M.A. in English from Yale University, and an M.F.A. in fiction from Washington University in St. Louis.



#### TOP 5 MOST VIEWED VIDEOS

1. Can the Religious Right Be Saved? – *Russell D. Moore*
2. Habit-Forming: Liturgies of Education – *Peter Leithart*
3. The Crisis of Conservative Catholicism – *Ross Douthat*
4. How to Spot a Dictator – *Helen Andrews*
5. The Targeting of Working-Class Christians – *Charlotte Allen*



#### TOP 5 MOST READ ARTICLES

1. Nikabrik's Candidate – *G. Dalfonzo*
2. Scientific Regress – *W. A. Wilson*
3. About Those Unthinking Backward Catholics – *C. J. Chaput*
4. Donald Trump, Man of Faith – *M. Schmitz*
5. America's Lost Boys – *S. D. James*



#### TOP 5 MOST PLAYED PODCASTS

1. Episode 15 – Cowboys, Robots, and Private Eyes
2. Episode 19 – Therapeutic Culture
3. Episode 6 – Asexual Millennials
4. Episode 10 – Against Gender
5. Episode 17 – Poetry and Popery



# Editor's Circle

Since 2011, FIRST THINGS has recognized members of the Editor's Circle for their investment in FIRST THINGS and has provided them with opportunities to participate more intimately in the FIRST THINGS community of scholars, writers, and readers. The following list includes those Editor's Circle members who contributed pledge payments to the FIRST THINGS 25 Fund.

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If you are interested in learning more about the Richard John Neuhaus Society or other ways to make tax-advantaged planned gifts, contact us at 212-627-1985 or at [ft@firstthings.com](mailto:ft@firstthings.com).



## Richard John Neuhaus Society

When he died in 2009, Richard John Neuhaus, founder of the Institute on Religion and Public Life and *FIRST THINGS* magazine, left not only a great intellectual legacy, but also a generous bequest.

The Richard John Neuhaus Society honors his memory and recognizes those who remember *FIRST THINGS* in their retirement plans or wills. Their planned gifts ensure a bright future for *FIRST THINGS*, enhancing the Institute's ability to plan and expand future programs and publications that promote the vital role of faith in the public square. Society membership is open to those who make a bequest or charitable gift annuity to the Institute on Religion and Public Life, or who designate the Institute as a beneficiary in their wills, life insurance policies, or retirement accounts.

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**"I named the Institute a beneficiary because *FIRST THINGS* reliably and continually explores the interface of religion and society in both a courageous and incisive manner. Its success requires guts as well as brains."**

**– B. G. CARTER**

**We are very grateful to acknowledge the following members of the Richard John Neuhaus Society:**

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You can use any number of tax-advantaged financial tools to support the Institute on Religion and Public Life and advance its work, while at the same time returning benefits to you and your family.

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**Make a gift from your IRA.** The IRA charitable rollover provision was made permanent at the end of 2015, so donors 70 ½ years and older can give up to \$100,000 to charities from their IRAs tax-free.

**Make the Institute on Religion and Public Life a beneficiary of your will, revocable trust, or retirement plan**—costing you nothing during your lifetime. Those who remember the Institute in their wills become members of the Richard John Neuhaus Society.

**Donate assets that you no longer need or want,** such as an art collection, a second home, land, or a life insurance policy.

**Realize tax advantages** by selling property to the Institute on Religion and Public Life at a charitable discount or deeding your home to the Institute while you continue to live there.

**Establish a charitable gift annuity that benefits the Institute on Religion and Public Life.** Charitable gift annuities guarantee a fixed income for life for you or up to two annuitants, and come with several tax advantages.

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## Philanthropic Partner



**ROBERT CUMMINS** is president and founder of Primera Technology. He is also chairman and founder of Providence Academy, a private Catholic pre-K to 12th grade school in Plymouth, Minnesota.

### *Robert Cummins*

As a tech industry guy with a degree in electrical engineering, I may not be what you picture as the typical FIRST THINGS subscriber. Yet I still have issues from 1996, so this is not some “flash in the pan” affinity! I was reflecting on this and, as they say, “amazed myself” at how unusual this pairing might seem on the surface. But if you think about it a bit, it really isn’t too odd.

My profession is all about making things work. Platitudes and “big ideas” are fine, but at the end of the day, I am attracted to a magazine that proposes ideas that work. In other words, ideas that are the truth! Month in and month out, FIRST THINGS explores the philosophy and theology of ideas, but always in the light of what is true. And of course, not being formally trained in either philosophy or theology, I really appreciate the effort that FIRST THINGS puts into making all of its articles accessible to a non-academic. I am so glad that FIRST THINGS exists, even for a guy like me!



# New Staff



**DEPUTY EDITOR**

***Elliot Milco***

I started work at the magazine in January 2016, and have been happily chugging away ever since—first revamping our Junior Fellows program, then taking over management of our expanding lineup of intellectual retreats and events, and handling technical support for our staff. The past year has been great fun. I am blessed to work with extremely kind and thoughtful people, and pleased to find myself in a workplace where we are earnestly trying to find ways to improve what we do.

I became acquainted with FIRST THINGS as an undergraduate at Yale, where the magazine was one of the intellectual mainstays of my circle of friends. In graduate school and after, I kept up with FIRST THINGS. It was a touchstone. I didn't agree with everything in the magazine, and wasn't always aligned with the editorial perspective, but FIRST THINGS had a way of getting the best voices to write on topics that were important to me.

Since starting at the magazine, I've been thrilled to help as we published essays by the likes of Martin Mosebach, John Hunwicke, Yu Jie, and Eamon Duffy, in print and online. (Read them if you haven't already!) While there are a number of other publications I appreciate in print today, no one offers the sweeping combination of breadth, depth, and principle found in FIRST THINGS. This magazine stands above the rest, and we're working hard to stand taller still.



**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

***Julia Yost***

I majored in English at Penn State and studied British literature in graduate school at Yale. My main area of interest was the Oxford Movement, specifically the writings of John Henry Newman. So my background is academic, and more importantly literary. When I began to write for *firstthings.com* three years ago, my topics were of this sort: the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, the discourses of critique and prestige surrounding certain lauded television drama series. I then expanded into cultural commentary, and have written for the print edition about our collective fascination with crime and depravity.

My primary responsibility as an editor is to oversee the magazine's website. I am working hard to bring about a small renaissance at *firstthings.com*. In 2016 we published around 1,500 web-only blog posts and articles, most of which I edited. Never a comma out of place!

What else can I say for myself? My most recently acquired academic laurel is an M.F.A. in fiction from Washington University in St. Louis. My thesis was a partial manuscript of my current novel project, which will be finished and sold this summer, if all goes well. If all goes really well, I will become rich. I will not, however, quit my day job.

Happy to be here in New York, the literary capital, editing a magazine that has been so influential in American public life and so formative for me personally.



## Welcome, Nora!

On October 28, 2016, FIRST THINGS managing editor Lauren Geist gave birth to Nora, the newest addition to the FIRST THINGS family. Nora frequents the office, offering her opinions at submissions meetings and making the rounds to visit her new friends. She plans on applying for the Junior Fellows program in 2038.

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# A Word from Our Junior Fellows

## JUNIOR FELLOW

### *Veery Huleatt*

Junior Fellows are involved in the print magazine process: talking about submissions, coming up with titles, and proofreading and fact-checking each issue, as well as maintaining the website and social media pages. It's been a great way to get to know not only the inner workings of a journal, but also the happening writers and issues.

There's a lot more to it than the nuts and bolts of the press cycle. Junior Fellows live at the Community of Christ in the City, a residential community founded by Richard John Neuhaus, where we say evening prayers every day and share Saturday dinners together. It is a chance to live a life in which one's convictions and work, one's faith and public involvement, are integrated—a life that Fr. Neuhaus both endorsed and lived. And even after your one- or two-year stint in the office is over, the Fellowship goes on. I know this from previous Junior Fellows, who occasionally visit the office and community.

This year we sponsored a table at the annual Love and Fidelity Network conference, where I was privileged to introduce FIRST THINGS to students who were hungry, just as I had been a few years before, for what the journal has to offer. The Junior Fellowship has been a chance to meet readers, veteran writers, and young recruits eager to carry the standard into the future—all people who feel themselves to be part of the FIRST THINGS project. I know that I will feel myself to be part of this community long after my Fellowship is over.



## JUNIOR FELLOW

### *Connor Grubaugh*

I've acquired a number of technical skills that will doubtless serve me well down the road. I'm now intimately acquainted with the art of podcast production, and I know the *Chicago Manual of Style* like the back of my hand. But the most important lessons I've learned are not technical, nor are they strictly academic.

Working with our editors, I've had an opportunity to develop intellectual interests beyond the narrow focus of my undergraduate major. Living in community with my colleagues and others, I've had a chance to develop new spiritual disciplines and devotions. And of course, there's the city, with all its art and culture, its bustling commercialism and varied streets. For me, the Junior Fellowship has been not so much about deepening my knowledge as widening it—by learning what I could or should know, but don't yet, and taking a few initial steps on the right path toward education.

I intend to return to academia after my term here at FIRST THINGS concludes, but I'm glad I've taken a little time beforehand to simply be a beginner. In a sense, that's the convert's duty: to dwell among the concepts and creeds of the Christian tradition not for instant mastery, but for patient understanding, as if learning how to see again.

# Year in Review

The Institute on Religion and Public Life continued its strong trajectory of growth in 2016. We reached over 27,000 FIRST THINGS subscribers and had our most successful fall fundraising campaign ever. We welcomed two new full-time staff members, organized seminars and lectures at home and abroad, launched a popular new podcast, and expanded our lineup of intellectual retreats. In 2017, we will organize additional events, build up our network of international scholars, and continue to publish thoughtful, incisive commentary in the pages of FIRST THINGS and *firstthings.com*.

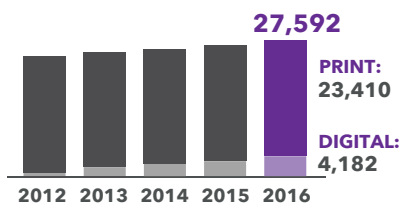
## Financial Summary

### REVENUE

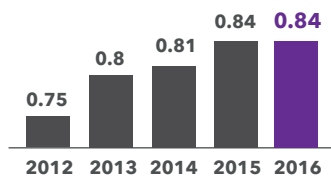
	ACTUAL 2016	PROJECTED 2017
Sales & Program Revenue	\$ 1,041,078	\$ 1,091,000
Individual Contributions	1,530,895	1,605,000
Foundation Grants	415,233	417,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 2,987,206</b>	<b>\$ 3,113,000</b>

### EXPENSES

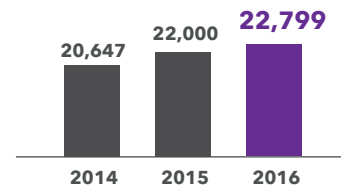
	ACTUAL 2016	PROJECTED 2017
Magazine & Website Publication	\$ 893,659	\$ 851,474
Authors & Editorial Staff	784,968	870,733
Seminars, Colloquia & Events	393,830	375,087
Fundraising	229,033	228,929
Salaries & Benefits	275,783	271,843
Office & Administrative	286,321	287,573
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 2,863,595</b>	<b>\$ 2,885,639</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>\$ 123,611</b>	<b>\$ 227,361</b>



CIRCULATION



RENEWAL RATES



E-NEWSLETTER CIRCULATION

“The first meaning of FIRST THINGS is that, for the sake of both religion and public life, religion must be given priority. While religion informs, enriches, and provides a moral foundation for public life, the chief purpose of religion is not to serve public life. Authentic religion keeps the political enterprise humble by reminding it that it is not the first thing. By directing us to the ultimate, religion defines the limits of the penultimate. By illuminating our highest purpose, all lesser purposes are brought under transcendent judgment.”

– RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

*Founding Editor*