

<h1 style="color: green;">Initiatives</h1> <p style="color: green;">In Support of Christians in the World</p>	<p>National Center for the Laity PO Box 291102 Chicago, IL 60629 www.catholiclabor.org http://twitter.com/InitiativesNcl</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">June 2021 Number 259</p>
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Theology of Work

Catholics are to improve their jobs, their family and their civic community. In those areas we “act in a Christian manner, on our own responsibility and on our own personal initiative, at our own risk and peril, but not professedly as...sent by the Church,” writes Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) in *Scholasticism and Politics* (Cluny Media [1940]; \$15.95). The action of a Christian in the temporal realm “will proceed from Christian inspiration...[but it] emanates solely...from their initiative as citizens.”

The world “ought to be penetrated and vivified...by Christian energies” as laypeople engage in “socio-political action,” Maritain continues. To be effective, however, a Catholic will cooperate with those of different backgrounds. This means give-and-take. For example, Catholicism imposes “a duty to work on behalf of international peace and for the principles of social justice,” he says. It does not specify tactics or precise results. Competent laypeople, in concert with like-minded others, make the call.

Maritain’s understanding of the laity anticipated Vatican II (1962-1965). Its premise—that the church is in dialogue with the modern world—collapses without its lay-centered model. Christianity relies on laypeople who live their vocations in shops, schools, labs, board rooms, kitchens, union halls, courts, police stations, studios and all the places where Christ is embedded. Laypeople are “to spend their days in the midst of the world and of secular transactions... [They] exercise their apostolate in the world as a kind of leaven,” says Vatican II.

This does not imply that Christians show off their faith as if a sugary glaze of spirituality is needed. According to Vatican II, the “individual and collective effort” of Christians “*considered in itself...accords with God’s will... Indeed, whoever labors to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind is, even unawares, being led by the hand of God.*” (Get *Vatican II: Six Essential Texts*, NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$10.)

In his 1967 encyclical *Development of People* St. Paul VI (1897-1978) repeats the Vatican II directive on the laity. In a line from which NCL’s newsletter takes its name he writes: “It belongs to the laity without waiting passively for orders and direction *to take the initiative* freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community in which they live.”

In its Advent 1977 charter until today, NCL has praised “the involvement of lay people in many [internal] Church ministries,” including parish outreach projects. NCL affirms parish education programs about justice and peace, like Just Faith Ministries (PO Box 40252, Louisville, KY 40252; www.justfaith.org). However, NCL’s *raison d’être* is to remind the whole church that the goal of all these in-house efforts is to equip and support the baptized in their weekday milieu as they attempt to advance justice and peace.

An aside: NCL’s predecessor organization was Adult Education Center located in Chicago at 21 E. Superior St., an address synonymous with a Vatican II Catholicism. AEC had a Maritain Room. The picture below was taken in October 1958 when Maritain visited AEC. From the left: Russ Barta, AEC director and later NCL’s first president, Monsieur Denisoff from the French Consulate, then Maritain.

Taking the Initiative

In Liturgy

Matthew Kaemingk and Cory Willson imply that NCL, now in our 43rd year, has minimal effect unless...

NCL's focus is Christian faith and daily life—on the job, around the home and in the community. NCL has programs, aids research, participates in coalitions, co-sponsors events, produces books and distributes this newsletter. But the connection is solid only when work is essential to every liturgy, say Kaemingk and Willson in *Work and Worship* (Baker Publishing [2020], www.workandworshipbook.com; \$29.99).

When “the regular and repeated practice of worship [is] intentionally designed to encourage workers,” the weekday scattered church will be compassionate, honest and allergic to injustice. When the liturgy does not connect, Sunday is a collection of isolated individuals. It is an “autonomous experience” and going to church is a drive-by “religious *pit stop*.” Young adults in particular are uninterested in worship oblivious to their relationships and careers.

Kaemingk and Willson describe a two-way process. Not only should weekend worship continue into the workweek, but work with its satisfactions, frustrations, solidarity and its sin shapes the liturgy. Labor and liturgy are “designed to be in constant conversation,” they show.

The authors mention their church-going upbringing. The service included a prayer for foreign missionaries and often recognition of a Church-sponsored outreach project. This was “God’s work,” ministers said. “Never once did we see our parents’ labors in the field of the Lord recognized or blessed during the gathered worship,” they lament. One worship leader, Kaemingk and Willson report, encouraged a congregation to “clear their minds and hearts of all *worldly distractions* so that they could *focus* on God,” as if God is absent from messy worldly cares. “The workplace (not the church building) is the primary locale of a church’s local mission,” they continue. Yet what happens during worship and in the church office is “pastor-centric, program-centric [and] building-centric.”

This book does not stop at a change in individual attitudes. Its theme is a Bible-based critique of the liturgical system and the

marketplace system. The ancient Hebrews exited Egypt’s economy, but “extracting the Egyptian economy out of the Israelites was another thing entirely,” Kaemingk and Willson write. It was worship, not a theology course, that “prevented them from repeating the economic patterns of Egypt... The Sabbath was a liturgical reminder to workers that Israel’s economy would be a renewing economy.”

Of course, the chosen people and Christians then and now do not always practice on Monday what they profess on the weekend. Isaiah, for example, explains why God does not respond to high-quality liturgy. It is because the weekday is full of oppression, neglect of orphans and widows, weighted scales in the market and corruption.

Work and Worship is an encouraging book, full of suggestions. But be advised: Kaemingk and Willson throw hard punches. They say, for example, Christian churches are concerned about sexual and reproductive ethics. However, church leaders “do not discuss the presence and participation of rebellious workers, industries and profits... The vocational and economic corruption of corporate worship does not seem to bother them at all.” To get the economy right, get liturgy right. To get liturgy right, get the economy right.

For its part on this topic NCL (PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629) distributes *The Mass Is Never Ended* by Greg Pierce and *Monday Eucharist* by Bill Droel; both for \$15.

Taking the Initiative

On Food and Eucharist

Food production and eating have ecological, ethical and theological significance, writes Sr. Mary E. McGann, RSCJ in *The Meal That Reconnects: Eucharistic Eating and the Global Food Crisis* (Liturgical Press [2020]; \$29.95). She goes on to indict the industrial food system for its destructive impact on the earth’s ecosystems and people. The alternative, McGann asserts, is “renewed Eucharistic eating [that] can reconnect and heal our broken relationships with the earth, with the human family, and with God.”

McGann, a teacher at Jesuit School of Theology, is unsparing in her assessment of our food system. She writes, “Food production at the hands of a corporate, multinational food industry is exacerbating hunger, poverty, and inequality; creating ill health; contributing to climate change; destroying ecosystems; and poisoning

Earth's resources." Businesspeople and economists (rather than farmers), she contends, designed our current food system in the early 1940s with a focus on profit rather than on nutrition and care for the earth. Thus, "food has become a product to be consumed rather than a living relationship between the earth and the human community." McGann traces how this mindset exacts a great cost to soil, water and biodiversity, and intensifies severe climate distress. Added to that is the human cost of malnutrition and hunger, as well as unjust exploitation of farm workers. "What is taking place in the global food system is a serious social sin," she concludes.

How we eat "manifests our relationship with the world as consecration or desecration." McGann understands Eucharist as closely related to our broader experiences of food and shared meals. She believes that the ritual of eating, sharing food and blessing God in Eucharist can heal our broken relationship with God's creation and one another. Eucharistic practice can "effect a prophetic healing of relationships with earth's abundance and all who share it." In contrast to an individualistic culture of consumption, Jesus' expansive table fellowship embodies one of communal, egalitarian sharing and mutual service. An alternative food economy, one in line with Eucharistic values, would be small in scale, locally based, organically sustained, regenerative and rooted in justice. McGann cites small-scale farms and gardens, Community Supported Agriculture (www.nal.usda.gov), urban agriculture, farmers' markets, food justice organizations, and various advances in regenerative agriculture as ways forward.

Is McGann's condemnation of the food industry too absolute? Political scientist Robert Paarlberg, author of *Resetting the Table: Straight Talk about the Food We Grow and Eat* (Alfred A. Knopf [2021]; \$27.95), would adamantly argue so. He is not persuaded that moving toward local, small-scale, organic farming is the way to go. As he sees it, modern industrial farming is much more a blessing than a curse. He considers anti-industrial critics to be nostalgic and unrealistic, asserting that their proposals and farming methods can never be a society-wide or global solution. He believes industrial farming, using "eco-modern" methods, is the only way to feed the world and do so with less environmental harm than small-scale farming.

Paarlberg describes his vision as "a mix of science, economic realism, ethical humanism, and practical politics, flavored by bits of my own

personal experience." He disagrees with the condemnation of biotech innovations such as GMOs, concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), and of any and all chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. In cases where he does acknowledge problems, he sees solutions in tighter regulations, continued innovation, and reforms in dietary health. His outlook on Big Agriculture is decidedly optimistic. For example, he states, "Modern farming protects the environment not only by using less land compared to several decades ago, it also uses less water, less fossil energy and fewer chemicals for every bushel produced." To bolster his case for such claims he cites the example of specific commercial farms that use technological and scientific advancements and techniques such as precision farming.

The important and contentious conversation about how we produce food and how we eat continues. We urgently need a system that provides nourishment to the world and not simply maximum profit to the few. Admittedly, our system is feeding billions. Yet almost a billion people are underfed. There is a crisis to the extent that our agricultural system denudes and poisons the soil, pollutes waterways, tortures animals, exploits farm workers and in other ways desecrates God's creation. We need McGann's prophetic vision of *Eucharistic eating*, of a system that cares for the earth and serves the human family. But we also need that vision to become practical, sensible, sustainable, skillful agricultural practice.

Taking the Initiative *For Our Common Home*

Early this year St. Mary of the Lake Seminary (1000 E. Maple Ave., Mundelein, IL 60060) turned on solar panels that provide more than 20% of its electric. The seminary saves about \$28,570 a year. Dave Brochu (Pure Gen Energy, 21660 W. Field Pkwy., Deer Park, IL 60010) designed the project. He also secured financing from a few investors. (*Chicago Catholic*, 1/24/21)

Several parochial schools have likewise gone solar. Most parishes are going green—using efficient lights and timers, recycling paper and bottles, eliminating Styrofoam and planting more trees. Families too have green habits. These efforts often take inspiration from *Care for Our Common Home*, the May 2015 encyclical by

Pope Francis (available from NCL, PO Box 291102, Chicago, IL 60629; \$10.50).

All these local efforts, however, are not enough. Commitment from big industry is essential. Although they work without notoriety, there are thousands of chemists, engineers, budget managers, public relations experts and trades people assigned to climate departments in many companies. There are also specialty companies for green design, green investments and government assistance, green monitoring and more.

Big industry's green efforts occur in the world-as-it-is where everyone does everything for mixed motives. A company with a pollution track record turns green because the most talented young workers want to make a social difference; because government penalizes polluters and rewards those that clean up; because supplying fossil fuel energy is expensive; because the company needs to diversify its services; because competitors offer green alternatives; and because there is a public relations benefit.

Here is some of what is occurring: Oil companies like Exxon Mobil and British Petroleum are investing in *carbon capture*. For example, BP charges several chemical plants in England to hook into a BP pipe that replaces some chimneys. The pipe takes carbon waste to a BP facility that then funnels it into rocks 90 miles deep in the sea where it is trapped. "The technology has proved to be hugely expensive and it has not caught on as rapidly as some advocates hoped," writes Stanley Reed.

Carbon removal is a similar and likewise expensive strategy. Major companies like United Airlines and Occidental Petroleum invest in big facilities that suck carbon dioxide out of the air and then bury it. It doesn't matter to United that the removed carbon did not originate with one of their airplanes. The incentive to United is earning a carbon offset and perhaps a tax credit, just as United would earn if it bought a lot of trees. Not all businesses need their own carbon removal facility; some companies contract with a specialist like Clime Works (www.climeworks.com) in Switzerland.

All of these strategies are at an initial and expense phase. None, admits Lauren Riley at United, is a "silver bullet." But United "wants to make aviation sustainable" and so, like other companies, "we have to try" these methods. (*N.Y. Times*, 1/2 & 8/8/20 & 1/19 & 3/12 & 3/20/21)

Some ecology groups are skeptical of this turn among former polluters. The companies, some ecologists say, are making showy tradeoffs to allow their primary polluting business to continue. Within a growth economy "relying on market mechanisms to somehow magically fix the climate crisis...isn't going to do," says Jason Hickel in *Less Is More* (Windmill Books [2020]; \$19.95). "Technological innovation is absolutely important to the battle ahead. But...the problem has to do with growth. Over and over again, we see that the growth imperative wipes out all the gains our best technology delivers."

How about it, INITIATIVES' readers? Is big industry a help to the green cause? What is your alternative?

Taking the Initiative *For Green Construction*

Our society needs plenty of building material to repair and replace infrastructure plus to construct housing, schools, maybe grocery stores and clinics. The building material can be green with ingredients like pollution offsets, bacteria, recycled crushed glass, government fines, lamination, limestone, hydrogen, maybe tariffs, big financing, trees, imaginative and skilled workers, patient customers, responsible citizens and more.

Steel and concrete are and will remain essential building material. Together they account for about 15% of all carbon pollution.

Last year's production of steel was equivalent to about 500 pounds for each person. "Two tons of carbon dioxide rises into the atmosphere for every ton of steel," reports Stanley Reed. Arcelor Mittal (1 S. Dearborn St. #1300, Chicago, IL 60603; www.arcelormittal.com), among the largest producers of steel, has a new chief executive, Aditya Mittal, who is experimenting with cleaner steel. Hydrogen can replace dirty coke in the furnace. And hydrogen made using "electricity generated by water power" is in the offing. Long term this is the solution, but at the moment this method is expensive--at least \$48billion for Arcelor Mittal to convert just its European mills. Arcelor Mittal is also installing "large tanks where bacteria will fest on carbon dioxide from plant exhaust and turn it into ethanol," Reed reports.

Cement, the main ingredient of concrete, is the polluter. The methods for green

concrete involve trapping the CO₂ and/or using a substitute for cement. It so happens that if the carbon is captured and then infused into the concrete during the mixing, it can be trapped, plus the concrete is stronger.

The cement substitute can be a recycled aggregate of beer bottles and other glass (called pozzolan). Or, as it was long ago, material like fly ash or slag. Several companies are making green concrete, including the well-known Central Concrete (755 Stockton Ave., San Jose, CA 95126; www.centralconcrete.com). There are newer manufacturers that specialize in green concrete, like Carbon Cure (1344 Summer St., Halifax, NS B3H 0A8 Canada; www.carboncure.com) and Blue Planet (100 Copper Ct., Los Gatos, CA 95032; www.blueplanet-ltd.com).

These efforts need customers that demand “low carbon production and supply chains” for their construction projects, writes Rebecca Dell of Climate Works Foundation (235 Montgomery St. #1300, San Francisco, CA 94104; www.climateworks.org). Her group collaborates with foundations to encourage clean construction. Organizations like Buy Clean (1012 Torney Ave. #200, San Francisco, CA 94129; www.buycleanenergy.org) coax those who intend to build (private businesses and government facilities, including schools) to insist on some percentage of green material.

There is also a movement to use more wood, called mass timber, instead of steel and concrete in projects like clinics, affordable housing, school buildings, motels, fast food places, warehouses and branch banks. The laminated wood beams and columns are attractive in certain settings. The result is durable and experts say that mass timber is not depleting our forests. Kattera Construction (2494 Sand Hill Rd. #7-100, Menlo Park, CA 94025; www.kattera.com) is an experienced mass timber builder. PCL Construction (2000 S. Colorado Blvd. #2-500, Denver, CO; www.pcl.com), to mention one example, specializes in modular green construction. (*N.Y. Times*, 9/23 & 12/16 & 12/20/20 & 3/5 & 3/29/21)

All these examples involve tradeoffs because meaningful improvement begins in the world-as-it-is.

Taking the Initiative *On Criminal Justice*

“By every measure, U.S. crime rates have fallen precipitously” since the 1990s, writes Hari Kunzru in *Harper’s* (666 Broadway, New York, NY 10012; 3/21). Yet “the heartbreaking violence of the American criminal justice system remains undiminished.” Prisons are administered with “sheer cruelty,” Kunzru writes. The system “seems to be motivated not by the desire to prevent crime or to rehabilitate prisoners, but by the impulse to inflict spectacular, exemplary pain for the satisfaction of a general public that derives a furtive pleasure from its proximity to suffering.”

Catholic Criminal Justice Reform Network (Lumen Christi, 1220 E. 58th St., Chicago, IL 60637; www.lumenchristi.org) hosted an early March seminar on criminal punishment. Our National Center for the Laity was a co-sponsor. (The talks are available on the website.)

Cecelia Klingele of University of Wisconsin was a presenter. She was a clerk to Justice John Paul Stevens (1920-2019) plus she is affiliated with University of Minnesota Robina Institute on Criminal Law. Society must hold people accountable for bad behavior, she says. But at many points in the process our broken system renders punishment in excess of the wrong done to individual victims and to society. Punishment must aim for the good of the criminal and the community. Klingele has experience with sentencing that joins justice with love.

Andrew Skotnicki of Manhattan College was the other presenter. With captivating passion and examples he argued for abolition of prisons as we know them. In his book, *Conversion and the Rehabilitation of the Penal System* (Oxford Press [2019]; \$26.95), Skotnicki says the problem “is not crime; it is alienation.” Therefore, “the solution is not punishment, but conversion.” Wrongdoers should be confined to “penal solitude” where through a crisis of meaning they confront the universal “longing to overcome loneliness, fear and hostility.”

In the monastic tradition, imprisonment was used as an opportunity to reflect and heal “the alienation that is at the root of harm deliberately done,” Skotnicki writes. Soon enough society lost the notion that contact with God can occur through criminal justice. In keeping with modern presumptions, Christianity

now assumes that those who have problems differ from those who deserve protection from *those others*. Modern criminal justice, he concludes, is about monitoring and managing risk.

The Reform Network says our Catholic tradition has something to offer toward a more just and effective legal system. So far it includes some law schools plus Catholic Lawyers Guild Chicago and Kolbe House Jail Ministry. One of its goals is to “incorporate the Catholic worldview into the teaching of law,” William Jordan (wjordan@lumenchristi.org) tells INITIATIVES. The Network will “transcend partisan divisions.” The Reform Network has other cyber-forums scheduled and then next spring will host a person-to-person conference at Georgetown. (*Chicago Catholic*, 4/11/21)

Taking the Initiative

On Gun Safety

Tinkering in your tool and die shop? Puttering on your basement workbench? Launching a startup manufacturing company? Metro IAF (89-60 164th St., Jamaica, NY 11432; www.gunsafetyconsortium.org) is requesting safe gun proposals from inventors. They want a gun that is reliable and quick on the draw. The gun must have mechanical and/or electronic features such that only the authorized user can fire it; so secure that even if the gun is stolen, it will not fire.

Metro IAF has several police chiefs, mayors and county executives on its team. They are prepared to buy a safe gun in quantity after it is thoroughly tested. This campaign is simultaneously getting pledges from other large purchasers. With that buying power in hand, the campaign will push for safety measures with the major arms manufacturers.

This is not a partisan campaign, says Mayor Wade Kapszukiewicz (640 Jackson St., Toledo, OH 43604; www.toledo.oh.gov). “We are not talking about passing any new laws or any new regulations or any of those things that get activists on all sides...worked up... This is [about] using the power of the free market...to encourage responsible behavior among the gun industry and among those who purchase guns.” The strategy does not stop all mass shootings or eliminate gang violence or prevent every single suicide. It is one step in the world-as-it-is. “If you add Toledo's buying power to that of Dayton and...Boston and Buffalo, and then you start

bringing in the truly large cities like New York and Chicago, Los Angeles and Houston, then you are talking about tens of billions of dollars of buying power. And that can get [gun producers'] attention; that can make a difference,” Kapszukiewicz concludes. (*N.Y. Daily News*, 4/27/21 & *Toledo Blade*, 4/27/21 & *Chicago Sun Times*, 4/28/21)

Taking the Initiative

For Family Life

In March the federal government made Hutchison Convention Center in Dallas into a holding facility for migrant children. Officials will deal with as many as 3,000 unaccompanied teenagers there.

Catholic Charities (1421 W. Mockingbird Ln., Dallas, TX 75247; www.ccdallas.org) “sprang into action to help,” report Constanza Morales and Michael Gresham. Charities is assigning up to 300 competent volunteers who will translate and in other ways assist the children. A volunteer takes a six-hour shift; some once a week, many others more often.

Dallas Area Interfaith (1104 Lupo Dr., Dallas, TX 75207; www.dai-iaf.org), a community organization, is augmenting Charities' effort. DAI recruits volunteers from its 26 member institutions—churches, a temple, four schools and three advocacy centers. These trained volunteers will serve as interpreters. They will contact a child's U.S. family and will monitor cases.

There are about 800 families in Nuevo Laredo detained under the U.S. Migrant Protection Protocols. They will soon arrive for stateside processing. Catholic Charities (1919 Cedar Ave., Laredo, TX 78040; www.ccdol.org) is scrambling to assist the government. Some volunteers are wary of Covid-19. Nonetheless Charities is already welcoming families at its La Frontera Shelter. The shelter was used during two previous waves of refugees. It has since added more protections against Covid-19.

All the refugee agencies need prayer, volunteers and cash. Some denominations coordinate assistance through a national office, like Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (700 Light St., Baltimore, MD 21230; www.lirs.org). LIRS says that at this moment it is safer for refugee children to enter the U.S. than to send them back south. Through its network, LIRS moves children from federal camps to non-

profit facilities and then places them with a stateside family. About 95% arrive with a contact in the U.S.

Bill Canny directs the Migration and Refugee Committee (3211 Fourth St. NE, Washington, DC 20017; www.usccb.org/committe) for our bishops. In addition to coordinating services, the office also advocates for immigration reform. Donations are payable “National Catholic Fund for Migration.”

INITIATIVES’ friends at Casa Juan Diego (PO Box 70113, Houston, TX 77270; www.cjd.org) provide food and other necessities

to migrants. Casa Juan Diego is a Catholic Worker house.

“We cannot forget that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph were immigrants when they fled Bethlehem and entered into Egypt in order to escape the murderous threats of King Herod,” says Bishop Edward Burns of Dallas. Someone had to welcome and receive the Holy Family. “Now, we receive the immigrant person as we would receive Christ himself.” (*Catholic News Service*, 3/23/21 & *The Tablet* of Brooklyn, 3/20/21 & *Religious News Service*, www.religionnews.com, 4/2/21)

Happenings

NCL’s friends at Catholic Labor Network (Georgetown, 3700 O St. NW, Washington, DC 20057; www.catholiclabor.org) have a 16-page report, *The Underground Economy and Wage Theft* (free download). It is the result of visits to construction sites. The theft is sub-minimum wages, no overtime pay or no required deductions. The primary contractor routinely subcontracts parts of the job. When the subcontractor violates the law, the primary contractor can claim ignorance.

Fr. Ed McKenzie, OFM (St. Peter’s, 110 W. Madison St., Chicago, IL 60602; friared@hotmail.com) is a Vietnam veteran. He has a support group for any and all veterans. It meets in cyberspace for now. Contact him for more information.

INITIATIVES

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NCL’s board includes Charles DiSalvo, Ambrose Donnelly, Tom Donnelly, Bill Droel, Adam Fitzpatrick, John Hazard and Lauren Sukal.

“Our GNP now [1968] is over \$800b [\$21,600b in 2020], but GNP—if we should judge America by that—counts air pollution and cigarette advertising and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and jails for those who break them. It counts the destruction of our redwoods and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and the cost of nuclear warhead...and the television programs which glorify violence... Yet the GNP does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages... It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our compassion nor devotion to our country. It measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile... Our country’s ideal is “individual liberty fused with common effort... A root fact of American life [is] that we all share each other’s fortunes; that where one of us prospers, all of us prosper; and where one of us falters, so do we all.” But this sense is missing now. “What we seek is not just greater programs, but greater participation...where the citizenry can determine how best to use resources.” —Sen. Robert Kennedy (1925-1968) during his 1968 presidential campaign from *RFK: His Words* edited by Edwin Guthman and C. Richard Allen (Harper Collins [2018]; \$16.99).