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IN YOUR WORDS

**☛ Pope slipping conservatives’ grasp**  
Cardinal Ludwig Müller . . . you should be rejoicing that you now have a pope, Pope Francis, who has gone back to the roots of your Church, a Church founded by Jesus Christ himself with his universal gospel of love, tolerance, kindness and goodness, generosity and selflessness towards the less fortunate and the downtrodden. It was inclusive, forgiving and not penalizing.  
*NI, WESTCHESTER, N.Y.*

The epidemic of child rape in the Catholic Church can not be separated from its medieval views on the priestly celibacy, the ordination of women or of sexuality in general. A church that allowed priests to marry and women to be priests would not be so desperate for priests as to have to recycle known pedophiles. A Church that did not shame young gay men, and then recruit so heavily from the emotionally stunted products of that shame, would not be so overrun with pedophiles.  
*CHRIS, MEXICO*

I have been listening to EWTN. . . . They have been reporting that he and some of the other cardinals are concerned with the direction in which the family has been heading. They feel that the disintegration of family life is a real concern, and I tend to agree with them. . . . Pope Francis knows that for a society to thrive and flourish, it must have stable and intact families. He has stressed the importance of both a mother and father for true happiness.  
*KMW, NEW YORK CITY*

I suspect those who feel Francis isn’t moving fast enough do not fully fathom how difficult it is that sea change he seeks. If he moves too forcefully, too fast, he risks an already entrenched opposition becoming stronger. I believe that he knows that the church he envisions will not come about in his lifetime. But he has started turning it around.  
*BRUCE, PENSACOLA*

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IN OUR PAGES

International Herald Tribune

**1915 Russian Troops Entrap Enemy**  
PETROGRAD Fighting of extraordinary violence continues in the neighborhood of Dvinsk, where the Russian cavalry has just gained an important success, involving the destruction of a strong enemy column advancing near Lake Tchighvi. The Germans, supported by powerful artillery, were pressing hotly, and the Russians cleverly retreated into the lake region, with which they alone were familiar. The enemy column was finally lured into marshy ground and surrounded on three sides. The Russia cavalry then closed in and half the German troops were cut to pieces, their remainder being captured with the guns.

**1965 Jesuits’ Chief Slams Atheism**  
VATICAN CITY The head of the Jesuits, the most powerful order in the Roman Catholic Church, today [Sept. 27] said that a “new godless society” now holds “almost complete sway in international organizations, in financial circles and in the field of mass communications.” Father Pedro Arrupe said that the “hidden poison” of atheism was operating inside the Catholic Church itself. His remarks, made to the Vatican Ecumenical Council, touched off an immediate controversy among his listeners, many of whom said he had gone too far.

☛ Find a retrospective of news from 1887 to 2013 at [iht-retrospective.blogs.nytimes.com](#).

John McNeill, gay Catholic priest and activist, dies at 90

BY MARGALIT FOX

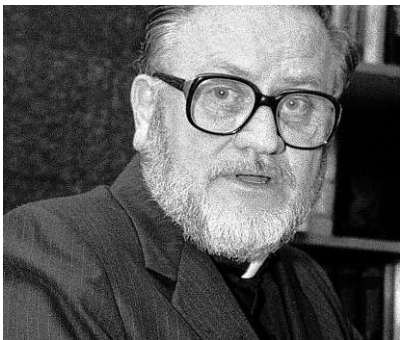
The Rev. John McNeill, an openly gay Roman Catholic priest who, from the 1970s onward, publicly pressed the church to welcome gay men and lesbians — and who was expelled from his order as a result — died on Tuesday in

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Fort Lauderdale, Fla. He was 90. His death was announced by Dignity-USA, an organization that supports gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Catholics. Father McNeill had helped found its New York chapter in 1972. A Jesuit who was ordained in 1959, Father McNeill was known in the decades that followed as an author, activist and psychotherapist specializing in the needs of gay clients. He first came to wide, explosive attention in 1976 with the publication of his book “The Church and the Homosexual.” That book was the first extended non-judgmental work about gay Catholics, a subject that had long been taboo in official church discourse. It has been credited with helping to set in motion the re-evaluation of the religious stance to-

ward gay people — not only among Catholics but also among those of other faiths — that continues today. “John McNeill is one of the most important voices in the history of the L.G.B.T. civil rights movement,” Brendan Fay, the director of “Taking a Chance on God,” a 2011 documentary film about Father McNeill, said in a telephone interview on Friday. “‘The Church and the Homosexual’ became the primary text that is still considered the key in transforming the conversation on religion and homosexuality.” For Father McNeill, the book, and his disclosure soon after its publication that he was gay, would lead to years of public opprobrium, censure by the church, exclusion from his order and, in the end, a newfound level of activism that sustained him to the end of his life. “He was a gay man who was a Jesuit priest — and being a gay man who is a Jesuit priest, by the way, is not an unusual thing,” Mary E. Hunt, a Roman Catholic feminist theologian and longtime friend of Father McNeill’s, said on Friday. “The difference is that John McNeill was honest, and he was honest early. And being honest early meant that he paid a large price.”

“The Church and the Homosexual” drew on Father McNeill’s deep academic training in theology and, though only tacitly, on his own experience. In the book, he argued that a stable, loving same-sex relationship was just as moral, and just as godly, as a heterosexual one and should be acknowledged as such by church leaders. After an extensive review by a panel of theologians, “The Church and the Homosexual” was published under the imprimatur of the Vatican. Translated into several languages, the book caused an international sensation. In the United States, Father McNeill appeared on a spate of national television programs. In a 1976 interview with Tom Brokaw on the “Today” show, he publicly identified himself as gay. “He’s the first priest to come out on national television,” Mr. Fay said. At the time, Father McNeill described himself in interviews as a celibate gay man. It was a claim he made in public out of necessity: As it was, he was receiving stacks of hate mail, including death threats, from incensed strangers. In private, however, he was living with Charles Chiarelli, his lover since 1965. John McNeill was born on Sept. 2,



Father McNeill’s book “The Church and the Homosexual” was published in 1976.

1925, in Buffalo. At 17, he enlisted in the Army and was assigned to the 87th Infantry Division. While serving in France, he was taken prisoner by the Nazis. After the war, he graduated magna cum laude from Canisius College in Buffalo and earned graduate degrees from Bellarmine College in upstate New York and Woodstock College in Maryland. In 1959, he was ordained by Cardinal Francis Spellman, the archbishop of New York.

Daily life in a refugee camp



BLOCKED JOURNEYS “Empire: Samuel Gratacap,” an exhibition through Sunday at Le Bal arts center in Paris, in collaboration with the French Institute in Tunis and the Marrakesh Museum for Photography and Visual Arts, is the first major exhibition by the French photographer. The show, which coincides with a book co-published by Le Bal and Fili-granes Éditions, chronicles Mr. Gratacap’s time photographing Choucha, a camp in Tunisia for several hundred thousand refugees fleeing Libya’s civil war.



GRIM REALITY Mr. Gratacap depicted life in the camp after arriving in 2012. “From day to day, I try to understand: How to speak about the hostility of this place, of its abandonment and of the loss of identity,” he writes in the book. “Four years in Choucha, and you end up transforming yourself into an old man,” a refugee once said to him. “If there was security in my country, I would not have stayed here in this camp, not even a quarter of an hour.”



Juggling act of diplomacy with China



Albert R. Hunt

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

The visit to Washington last week of President Xi Jinping of China, the leader of the world’s second-biggest power, illustrated Lyndon Johnson’s saying that politicians need to be able to “walk and chew gum at the same time.” The meetings that Mr. Xi, the most powerful Chinese leader in decades, held with President Obama almost seemed like a distraction, given the focus on Islamic terrorists, tragedy and dysfunction in the Middle East and the maneuvering of President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. Those all are dire, immediate challenges for the United States. But for the next generation, the relations between what are likely to be the only two superpowers may be the most important geopolitical issue. It won’t be easy. The Chinese are certain the United States wants to contain and isolate them, and sabotage the ruling Communist Party and its mixed economic model. And they believe the United States is determined to dominate their Asian backyard.

Several Asian countries want the U.S. to serve as a check on China’s power.

America’s public and private enterprises, aggressively threatening neighbors in the South China Sea and manipulating its currency for economic advantage. Robert Blackwill, a former United States ambassador to India who could be a policy maker in any future Republican administration, wants the United States to adopt a more confrontational posture. He sees China as a threat to America’s economic interests as it amasses military might “capable of both defeating local adversaries and deterring the United States from coming to their defense in a crisis.” At stake, he argues, is “the balance of power in Asia.” Several Asian countries want the United States to serve as a check on China’s power.

But they aren’t eager for a confrontation that they would watch from the sidelines. Most now do more trade with China than with the United States. One China expert, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd of Australia, says that though there are differences, both sides tend to exaggerate them. The Chinese, for example, have hugely increased defense spending, but the United States still spends four times more. “There is no serious prospect of China reaching military parity with the United States before midcentury, if at all,” Mr. Rudd, who is president of the Asia Society Policy Institute, wrote this year in a paper for Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. Mr. Rudd argues that it’s essential for both sides to search for “constructive engagement” to set rules of the road. The political systems are far apart — China isn’t going to change — and the two powers have competing interests and pressures when it comes to cybersecurity and the quest for regional advantage. There also are important shared interests: economic interdependence, climate change and the terrorist threat.

Domestic considerations will shape these possibilities. In China, Mr. Xi has consolidated his power. Yet the economy has slowed to a 6 percent annual growth rate, from 10 percent to 12 percent, and the Communist leader is cracking down on pervasive corruption. Both efforts threaten powerful arrangements, which might cause internal disruptions, even further restrictions on human and political rights or more aggression in the South China Sea or toward Taiwan. On the other side of the Pacific, if Donald J. Trump or the right wing of the Republican Party prevails, tensions will escalate. The pronouncements from last week’s meetings were encouraging, as China vowed to rein in cyberattacks and made further commitments on climate change. But two years ago, the two leaders hailed their discussions at Sunnyslands, in California — Obama called them “terrific.” Those, too, included agreements on cybersecurity. Yet since that meeting, the United States suspects that Chinese hackers stole the government personnel files of more than 20 million Americans. The next few months will show whether this time will be different.

(BLOOMBERG VIEW)

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