

An Integrated Curriculum For The Washington Post Newspaper In Education Program

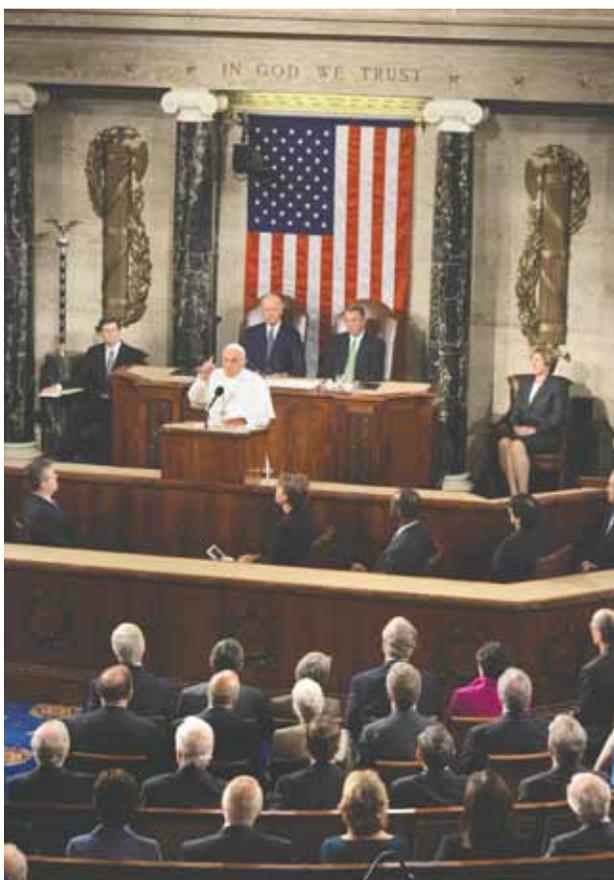
Religion in Media



- Meet the Religion Reporter: Michelle Boorstein
- Student Resource: Tip Sheet: Covering the Religion and Faith Beat
- Think Like a Reporter: Cover Faith and Religion
- Student Activity: Travel to the Holiest Places on Earth
- Post Editorial: The political pontiff
- Post Reprint: The rare moment of unity
- Post Reprint: Heed the pope's advice and help those in need

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Covering religion cannot be avoided with so many conflicts in today's global arena involving people of different faiths. Reporters supply lessons in geography, human pursuits, religion and culture and history.



MELINA MARA/THE WASHINGTON POST

The visit of Pope Francis in September 2015 received extensive coverage by the media. After seven whirlwind days, when bad news seemed to stop, Washington Post editors and columnists considered the lasting influence of the pontiff's speeches, appeals and goodwill. How will faith-based values be seen in daily encounters?

For student media to have a religion columnist or to cover religious practice and expression in a lifestyle section requires a commitment to community-wide coverage. It also requires a sensitive student journalist who will make the effort to get the details right. Topics could include ethical issues and

character education as well as what might be considered religious concerns: zero tolerance, respect for others, attitudes towards service, recycling and combating other forms of waste.

“Meet the Religion Reporter: Michelle Boorstein,” “Tip Sheet” and “Think Like a Reporter” provide background and context for staffs who wish to cover the religion beat.

Meet the Religion Reporter

Q. Why would a newspaper or online news company have a religion beat?

A. In my 10 years on the beat, I've come to realize "religion" – the institutions and dogma – is only part of what I do. The institutions and dogma and tribal identity parts of a "religion" are important, but are only part. Much broader are the complex and personal and sometimes contradictory feelings, behaviors and beliefs we have around faith and spirituality – our understandings and relationships with the transcendent. So I often will say I cover "religion, faith and spirituality." For the purpose of this question I'll assume the word "religion" covers it all.

Religion has two big parts

One is the specialized part, more the "religion" part, that includes many specific institutions and theologies and histories and data to understand and it's essential to have that expertise to understand developments and news. Why does it matter if Pope Francis said he's open to giving more people marriage annulments (as he did recently)? Why does it matter if the Reconstructionist Jewish movement (as it did recently) said it would ordain rabbis who are in interfaith marriages? You need to know the centuries of context and the current climate to understand the forces at work.



THE WASHINGTON POST

Michelle Boorstein

Religion Reporter
The Washington Post

The other big part is more fluid – the human longing for identity, tribe, for routines and practices to mark important celebrations and challenges, for ways to understand the transcendent. This is to me like the arts beat – very, very broad and involves tapping into everything from sociology to biology to understand, but mostly being a good, open listener. It's like covering "relationships" or "art" – very broad and made up of daily life.

Religion coverage is controversial

The religion beat has long been very controversial. For a long time there was such a societal deference to the

topic that the "beat" consisted of one page inside the paper when it was announced that a church hired a new pastor. As society has become more comfortable talking conversationally and openly about religion, the number of religion reporters has waxed and waned. With two full time religion reporters, *The Post* is considered one of the most staffed news organizations on religion. Many organizations allow beat reporters on OTHER beats to simply explore religion when it crosses with their topic – be it education, politics or any other.

Q. When did you become *The Post's* religion reporter? What interested you in the religion beat?

A. In January 2016 it will be 10 years. I fantasized about covering religion since I was in college. I was a reporter on my college paper and had spent a year in Jerusalem, which turned out to be the first Gulf War. It was a very intense time, and I had gone there to begin with because of my own questions of my own identity and practices and belief. I always felt it was the best topic, it was the only beat I ever wanted to cover and when I saw an opening a decade ago, I competed hard for it. Aside from being a religion reporter, I was always in the other 13 years a "general assignment" reporter. I felt the

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religion beat held the most promise for understanding many human drives.

Q. While reporting faith and religion, what you have learned about people and their faith?

A. This will sound obvious, but I've learned that people's relationships with the areas of a) religious identity and b) personal faith vary hugely from person to person AND are often two totally separate things within individual people. I've also learned that we are living in a very polarizing time in this country, with many competing trends. We have a huge amount of openness and exploration and innovation in terms of religion and spirituality, but at the same time we have a very intense conservative (little c) force that is extremely concerned about preserving dogma and continuity and the institutional aspects of traditional religion. It's important to take a big lens, and look at the forces underway around the world, and also at different times in history. You can get in your bubble and not see the big picture. A lot of different forces are going on at once.

Q. What have you learned about maintaining balance and fairness in your reporting?

A. I work very, very hard at this. Obviously I am a human being with my own biases and history, but I try hard to look at data and proof. I try to look at this beat the way

sports reporters might look at theirs, even – to look for concrete signs of things changing and try to interview people deeply about why they said or did this or that, rather than making assumptions. I try to be aware of my own biases and make an effort to check against them.

Q. What sensitivities are needed by a religion reporter?

A. Respect for the topic, which is easy for me since I have it! I think being a practicing person of faith (I am Jewish) has its advantages, since I know my own faith life is full of complexities and contradictions and unanswered questions.

Q. Are you limited to faith and religious issues in America? What have been some of the most demanding and complex stories that you have covered?

A. The news business has become far more fluid with the explosion of digital media. I can cover anything I wish to, as long as my editor and I decide it's legitimate. I have done pieces on ethics, neuroscience, spirituality, religion overseas – anything that we feel fits into the category of human exploration of topics historically put under the category of "religion." That can be ethics, tribe, feelings about God or lack of it, structures around family, people who seek the transcendent in any way, rituals created around things like dying, marrying and on and on.

We just went through Pope Francis' visit to the United States which was incredibly demanding because of the massive digital appetite and our small religion staff. I covered a bit of the Sept. 11 attacks in 2001, both in New York City and in Afghanistan which was also sprawling and emotional.

Q. Do you have sources that are particularly helpful in getting a background on different faiths?

A. It's important on a beat to constantly be doing two things at the same time: Keeping in touch – and being on good terms – with a broad number of sources who are knowledgeable about different aspects of religion/faith/spirituality while at the same time constantly expanding your sources so you don't get narrow and stuck in certain mindsets.

Q. How do you approach a topic when believers' personal beliefs differ?

A. I view my job as a reporter this way (whether I'm writing about religion or anything else): I want people to pick up my article in 10 or 50 years and say: "Yeah, she got it. She prepared her readers to understand what was going on." You are not a propagandist for traditional values nor against them. You are trying to understand and write about the important forces underway in society, or in the life of an individual person or church or community.

Tip Sheet | *Covering the Religion and Faith Beat*

Be Real

Religion, spirituality, faith – at their heart, these topics are all about real life and human longing, not primarily about institutions or rules. That doesn't mean institutional news isn't news, but think of it this way — which lead do you think aims to get more to the meat of real life:

1. School administrators said Thursday that the position of chaplain will be moved from the principal's office to the student activities' office, making it easier to coordinate paperwork or
2. Who wants to pour out their spiritual guts at the principal's office?

For years the school chaplain has been part of the office of the principal, where discipline and grades are overseen. But this week school officials moved the chaplain position to be with guidance counselors and school clubs, a less formal part of the school structure. Officials said in a statement that this was done for reasons of bureaucratic ease, but sources in the principal's office said it came after multiple students complained they were afraid to discuss intimate things there.

The power of this topic is in its realness and its complexity. When you write about it, you are not



Michelle Boorstein

unlike a sports or arts reporter. You are writing about life.

Write For Readers, Not Sources

Your topic is a powerful, personal one. No matter what changes are made to institutional religious life – and those changes are news. People will always look for the transcendent, for meaning beyond themselves, and they will always look for communal, tribal ways to find it. In other words: Spirituality, religion, yearning for faith aren't going anywhere. So feel confident in your topic at an organic level.

Write stories that regular people will pick up and say: "Yeah she knows what she's talking about. That's what my family's Thanksgiving dinner table discussion about religion sounds like." Don't focus on making institutional or expert sources happy, focus on writing for a regular person.

This took me several years to learn, so let me help you not waste your time.

- Bonus pointer: Sometimes on the train to work I'll pick random persons and try to think of them

during the day, try to consider their busy life and why on Earth they should care what I'm writing about. Sometimes I'll cut a photo of some stranger out of the newspaper and pin it on my work space for the same reason. I also meditate on people I know, friends, colleagues, who may or may not inherently think they care about "religion" stories. *Make them care.*

That Said, Be Appropriately Respectful Of Institutional Religion

Remember, institutional religion has been around in various forms since there were human beings. In order to understand why someone cares so much about being able to wear a headscarf during gym class or why a group of parents is opposing the creation of a GLBT club or why you are getting angry emails after you reported that a priest "did Mass," instead of "celebrated Mass," you need to understand the structure and dogma behind it.

In polls, the vast majority of Americans place themselves in some faith group. We may not know every line of doctrine to explain why we call ourselves Jews or Catholics or Episcopalians, but we care deeply about our heritage and tribe and faith.

In order to write fluently and

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conversationally about faith, it's important to know the context. A good book – and a relatively easy read – for thinking about important distinctions between various faiths is *God Is Not One* by Stephen Prothero.

- **Bonus pointer:** Making basic mistakes about doctrine or wording is the easiest way to lose your reader. And readers are unforgiving. Even if you get the bigger points that move their lives and spirits, if you don't take the care to understand the structure of their rituals and beliefs, you will lose people's trust and attention.

Be General, Be Specific

Religion is an area where this can be tricky.

For example, "Judaism teaches that meat shouldn't be mixed with milk," but that doesn't mean all Jews (or even most) follow these dietary laws, called *kashrut* or "keeping kosher."

Think of your own extended family, and how differently individual members might see what "Islam teaches" or what makes someone a "real Catholic." Religions are broad, complicated social groups filled with people who believe and do a wide range of things. You can engage with discussions of faith without over generalizing.

Here are some pointers:

- **Don't say more than you know.** Even if you think you know something for 100 percent certain about what "evangelicals believe," you're probably missing a big

chunk of them. Your reporting won't suffer one iota from backing up and being general – otherwise known as "fudging it." Write something like: "Polls show most evangelicals say they believe in the literal truth of scripture, but what that means about their views on climate change/human sexuality/divorce (etc) is more complicated."

- **Create a solid list of expert sources,** most importantly including cell phone numbers. People you can call on deadline to ask questions about religious laws or structures. People who truly know the wide range of ideas and practices within a faith.
- **Correct errors prominently and immediately.** Today's fast-moving torrent of information online can make it easy to lose track of what you've reported. Don't let it. At *The Post* we follow the same correction rules we did in the past: Fix errors right away and be clear about it. Don't be afraid to fix errors, it will gain you so much more than you will ever lose, and it will keep you careful.

Who Are You?

Consider carefully with your editor and colleagues what type of voice you are cultivating. The once-clear lines between objective reporter and columnist/editorial writer appear to be blurring. You don't have to let them. Consider what your role is in your journalism, and be disciplined. Don't blather on just because you can.

Are you primarily trying to seek facts? Are you an advocate? Is your job just to attract traffic for your news site, and how can you do that in a way you can live with?

I see my role like this: American religion is in a ton of flux these days. I want someone to look back on my stories 10 or 50 years from now and say: "Michelle gave her readers an insightful, prescient, accurate idea of what was really going on in American religion." I don't want people to always predict what kind of perspective my subjects will have; that's dull.

Being An Outsider

At various times in my career – 23 years professionally, and before that in college and before that in high school – I have been a small-town reporter. That's essentially what you are when you report on your school – you are reporting on your own community, and that isn't always easy. Some people are wary when they talk with you, others are more chatty. You are literally close to the people you are writing about, which can at times be uncomfortable. You can feel like an outsider.

A wise colleague told me when I was starting my career: "Remember, when people see you coming, they aren't seeing you, they are seeing the reporter." He meant: People will use you, they will respect you, they will look askance at what you do. Some people will see it as heroic, others will view it as gossip. It will be all those things at various times.

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But remember there is an important purpose to being an outsider in this role. You are not part of the public relations machine of the school, nor of any particular student group. You are a chronicler of history.

A good friend of mine with whom I worked at *The Associated Press* in the 1990s wrote a profile of the author Thomas Wolfe that made an impression on me. The piece, written by Robert Tanner, was about Wolfe's penchant for always wearing white suits. Here is what Wolfe said about why he wears them, and why he accepts that he must stand out (emphasis mine):

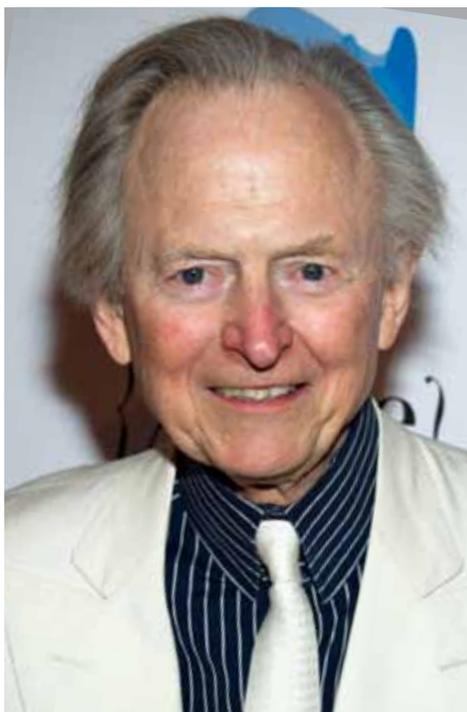
“Trying to fit in can be a trap. ... If you think you're hip, you're fitting in, you can't ask those questions” so necessary to report and observe. So he dressed as he felt comfortable, white suits and all, regardless of whether others might see it as bizarre.

“You must be more like the man from Mars. ‘The man from Mars is here and he doesn't know what's going on, and he wishes somebody would fill him in.’ People are filled with information and they love to tell you things you don't know,” he said. “ ‘Never again did I ever try to fit in.’ ”

Here's a link to the story:

“Trying to fit in can be a trap. ... If you think you're hip, you're fitting in, you can't ask those questions”

— Tom Wolfe, journalist and author



Reliable Sources

Develop reliable sources within the faith community in your town. These individuals are often very willing to answer your questions.

www.religionfacts.com/compare/religions
The Big Religion Chart

<http://www.buddhanet.net>
Buddhist Education and Information Network

http://hafsite.org/resources/media_toolkit
Hindu American Foundation Media Toolkit

http://hafsite.org/resources/q_a_booklet
Hindu American Foundation Q&A Booklet

<http://www.dk.com/us/9780756610777-dk-eyewitness-books-islam/>
Islam

<http://www.jewfaq.org/index.shtml>
Judaism 101

<http://bit.ly/1sF14no>
National School Boards Association, Beliefs & Policies

<http://bit.ly/1tiAwwf>
NSBA, Religion & Public Schools: Striking a Constitutional Balance

<http://www.religionlink.com/reporting-on-religion/>
Reporting on Religion: a Primer on Journalism's Best Beat

<http://www.newseuminstitute.org/religion/resources/publications/>
What is the Truth About American Muslims? And more

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cB5YHMVM0Eg>
The 5 Pillars of Islam Animated in English

<http://live.worldbank.org/power-of-faith-to-help-end-extreme-poverty>
Power of Faith of Help End Extreme Poverty

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Cover Faith and Religion

Some news stories are complex. Within the big story are many different stories, issues and special interests or concerns — cultural, social, medical, political, economic, religious and ethical. The flow of refugees out of Syria, Afghanistan and other countries is such a story. Feature stories also require an understanding of human nature, beliefs and interactions. Taking the time to cover the stories related to the faith and religious beliefs of those in your school community can be very rewarding.

Have a religion beat or faith columnist as part of your media staff organization. It is one way to show respect to the diversity within your school. Fair and balanced reporting can help students to understand one another and to comprehend their religious dress, practices and observances.

You may cover faith and religion in news briefs, news articles or in features — Q&A, profiles, a series or in a designated column. Your print, online, and broadcast staffs will find what is comfortable for them and what is a part of their school community members' lives.

Here are ideas for you and your staff to think like a religion reporter and a staff with a commitment to covering this aspect of student and staff lives.

Brainstorm ideas for diverse coverage — news briefs, news articles and features

Short and informative or longer and insightful, would these interest your readers?

- Interfaith or special services and concerts being held in your town
- Focus on foods and customs of different faiths
- The influence of religion(s) on fashion, fabrics and jewelry
- Photo gallery with informative captions: How did you celebrate ...
- First person pieces: I Have Faith in ...
- Graduates who have pursued careers that are faith-based

Use The Washington Post to inspire ideas for religion coverage.

How might you take a topic and localize it or modify it for your school community?

- **Sports and Religion:** How often does a Sports section article focus on an athlete or team's faith? Is there a profile or feature article on how faith informs the game-time and community actions of athletes? Do players or teams pray or have religious rituals before, during or after a game? Is it considered appropriate during a MLB baseball game to sing "God Bless America"?
- **Area Events:** Search the Community Calendar in Local Living for an event sponsored by a particular faith community. Add the event to your What's Happening listing. Attend and report on the event.

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Travel to the Holiest Places on Earth

Imagine that you are a Washington Post foreign correspondent who has been assigned to visit the holy sites of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. You have a fundamental understanding of the tenets of each religion. You will travel to these seven places:

- | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Bethlehem, Israel | 2. Bodh Gaya, India | 3. Jerusalem, Israel | 4. Lhasa, Tibet |
| 5. Mecca, Saudi Arabia | 6. Varanasi, India | 7. Vatican City | |

Geography: You must learn everything you can about the places and countries before you depart. Locate these places on a map. Find the city (or a city close to it). How might its location influence the practice of the faith today?

Weather: How shall you pack for the trip? Locate the city listed on Metro's weather page that is closest to the place you will be visiting to get an idea of the climate and what type of clothing and personal items to bring.

Current Events: Read the front page of *The Washington Post*. Scan the World Section, including the pictures and captions in the Digest. Are any events taking place that might influence your experience? Conduct an e-Replica search to locate recent articles. Using what is found in your e-Replica search, summarize recent events in the country and their possible connection to religion.

Photography: Find photographs or graphics of religious symbols, ceremonies, services, people worshipping, praying, going to a temple, church or synagogue. Write a descriptive paragraph. Clip (or print from e-Replica) the photos or images to create a collage.

Economics: How dependent is the nation of "faith tourism" to support and sustain its economy? Give examples of industries in the nation that benefit from "faith tourism." What are the seasons of the year, annual pilgrimages, or religious holidays that provide "peak economic" periods?

Arts and Style: How is the art and culture of the country influenced by the religious traditions? Include visual arts (painting, sculpture, mosaics), performing arts, textiles, poetry and literature. Be sure to give examples.

Food: Use the Food section of *The Washington Post* and other reliable sources to learn more about the dietary considerations for certain religions. What foods will you not find on parts of your trip? Why is it important to be sensitive to dietary restrictions when you are a traveller?

On your return home, plan a meal to celebrate your culinary experience. Which foods or recipes in the Food section could not be eaten if you were serving a kosher meal to a Jewish person? Hindu? Muslim? Are any foods or recipes part of religious traditions?

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The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

EDITORIALS

The political pontiff

Can Washington be swayed by Pope Francis's compassion?

EVEN BEFORE he became the first pontiff to address a joint meeting of Congress on Thursday, Pope Francis had fashioned a more political agenda in visiting Washington than his predecessors. Like popes Benedict XVI and John Paul II before him, Pope Francis toured the city and warmly greeted many of the thousands of faithful who turned out to see him under brilliant blue skies. But his popular outreach was matched with remarkably pointed messages to the political establishment that gathered to hear him at the Capitol and the White House.

Pope Francis's first political pitch arguably came when he introduced himself as the "son of an immigrant family" and called the United States a country "largely built by such families." Soon afterward he delighted President Obama by explicitly praising his climate change policies. Then he called for the defense of "religious liberty ... from everything that would threaten or compromise it." In case anyone was uncertain what he meant by that, the pontiff later made an unscheduled stop at the home of the Little Sisters of the Poor, who have led the fight against the Affordable Care Act's contraception mandate.

Before Congress, Pope Francis returned to the subjects of immigration and global warming, along with prison reform and the death penalty, the arms trade, wealth inequality and even the role of money in the political system. He was particularly forceful in urging acceptance of immigrants, saying that in view of the "thousands [who] travel north in search of a better life," Americans "must not be taken aback by their numbers, but rather view them as persons."

The political messages were particularly striking in view of the pope's performance in Cuba, his previous stop, where he said nothing about political or religious freedom. That, too, was a contrast with Pope John Paul II, who spoke explicitly about human rights when he toured the island in 1998. Perhaps Pope Francis believed that the open

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EUGENE ROBINSON

The rare moment of unity

“God bless America” sounds banal coming from politicians but profound when spoken by the shepherd of 1.2 billion souls. In his historic address to Congress, Pope Francis delivered a blessing of encouragement, not admonition — and spoke powerfully about the hot-button issues that keep our political leaders mired in gridlock.

The pope’s words drew warm applause. I wish I could be optimistic that they also touched our leaders’ hearts.

Francis was clear and strong on immigration. At a moment when presidential candidates are promising border walls and tough policies of exclusion, the first pope born in the New World noted that almost all Americans are immigrants.

“On this continent,” he said, “thousands of persons are led to travel north in search of a better life for themselves and for their loved ones, in search of greater opportunities. Is this not what we want for our own children?” His message to those who would “turn their back on their neighbors” was unambiguous: “In a word, if we want security, let us give security. If we want life, let us give life. If we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities.”

Francis was also direct in issuing a condemnation of arms dealing — and, to my ears, what sounded like a clarion call for gun control.

“Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society?” he asked. “Sadly, the answer, as we all know, is simply for money: money that is drenched in blood, often innocent blood. In the face of this shameful and culpable silence, it is our duty to confront the problem and to stop the arms trade.”

On some issues, perhaps mindful of the sharp ideological differences among members of Congress, Francis chose his words with particular care.

He did not repeat his toughest criticisms of capitalism, skipping a passage in his prepared remarks that said politics “cannot be a slave to the economy and finance.” Instead, he quoted his recent encyclical that called business “a noble vocation . . . especially if it sees the creation of jobs as an essential part of its service to the common good.”

And unlike his speech at the White House on Wednesday, Francis’s address to Congress did not include the phrase “climate change.” More obliquely, he said that “the United States and this Congress have an important role to play” in averting “the most serious effects of the environmental deterioration caused by human activity.”

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THE COLOR OF MONEY

Heed the pope's advice and help those in need



Michelle Singletary

THE COLOR OF MONEY

Once the choirs have stopped singing and the homilies have been delivered, will Pope Francis's urging that we all commit to helping the poor make a difference?

I hope the pope's advocacy of the poor not only changes minds but inspires people to become involved in helping the less fortunate.

"Each son or daughter of a given country has a mission, a personal and social responsibility," the pope said during his address to a joint meeting of Congress.

And don't just give your money. Give your time and talents.

My husband, who stretches out his workday so that he can have a day off every other week, has decided to spend many of those days accompanying me to a prison in Maryland where we teach financial literacy to inmates.

Many of them will have trouble finding affordable housing and a job once they're released. As a result, trapped into poverty, they will struggle. And for too many, that battle will lead to more bad choices.

My husband and I hope that, with the money-management skills that

we aim to impart, the men will be better equipped to change their economic standing and become productive citizens.

I tell you this not to brag but to ask you to join us and so many others who see "the least of these," as the Bible calls them — the poor, the hungry, the homeless and the incarcerated — not as people to despise, judge or criticize but as folks who could use some compassionate care.

Some successful people like to point out that they got what they have through grit and dedication. So why should they help others who ought to be able to help themselves? The pope acknowledged those who have worked so hard, telling Congress, "I would like to take this opportunity to dialogue with the many thousands of men and women who strive each day to do an honest day's work, to bring home their daily bread, to save money and — one step at a time — to build a better life for their families."

But look beyond yourself, the pope asked. He recalled the historic Selma-to-Montgomery march 50 years ago led by Martin Luther King Jr. and said, "I am happy that America continues to be, for many, a land of dreams. Dreams, which lead to action, to participation, to commitment."

That's the word. Commitment.

What have you committed to do to help others achieve the American Dream? Have you fed the hungry (and not just during the holidays)? Have you opened your home to someone who needed a place to stay? When you heard someone had been unemployed for months, did you reach out to offer assistance in some way?

"Let us seek for others the same possibilities which we seek for ourselves," the pope said. "Let us help others to grow, as we would like to be helped ourselves. In a word, if we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities. The yardstick we use for others will be the yardstick which time will use for us."

The pope also mentioned Dorothy Day, who co-founded the Catholic Worker Movement, as an admirable example of activism.

As the pope told Congress: "I would encourage you to keep in mind all those people around us who are trapped in a cycle of poverty. They too need to be given hope. The fight against poverty and hunger must be fought constantly and on many fronts, especially in its causes."

The pope probably lost some folks when he talked about the "distribution of wealth." Often

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when people hear those words, they feel it's unfair to take from them to give to others they consider irresponsible or undeserving. Others worry they won't have enough for themselves.

But how much is enough?

My pastor, John K. Jenkins, started a series of messages on service he calls #PassTheSalt. In explaining the theme, he pointed out that among its many attributes, salt brings out the flavor in food. The same can be said for your service to others, particularly the poor.

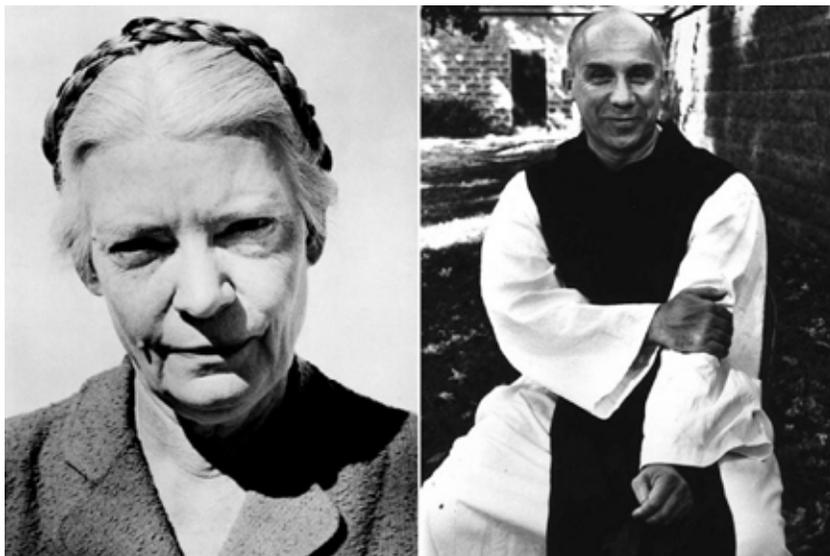
"Are you pulling the best or worst out of people?" Jenkins asked.

My pastor's messages, like the pope's visit, have inspired me to do even more. As Francis told Congress, "Now is the time for courageous actions and strategies, aimed at implementing a 'culture of care' and 'an integrated approach to combating poverty.'"

So how will you serve the poor?

Will you be the salt of the earth?

— September 27, 2015



WASHINGTONPOST.COM

Dorothy Day co-founded the Catholic Worker movement and the Catholic Worker newspaper. A Cistercian monk who wrote more than 70 books, poetry and essays, Thomas Merton, right, sought interfaith understanding. Pope Francis gave Day and Merton, as well as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr., as examples of American individuals who worked for the common good and social and economic justice as well as giving witness to their faith.