

## Fr. Phillip On New Year Reading

At points, you have asked, "what do you do for fun?" Amid canon law studies and responsibilities of two parishes, there isn't much time for those choices. If I could choose my leisure time, it would include reading. After Christmas, I committed to finishing books I was in the middle of and it reminded me of a some I read in the last year. Here are some ideas for your 2019 reading plans.

### **Bishop Robert Barron. *Arguing Religion: A Bishop Speaks at Facebook and Google*. Park Ridge, IL, Word on Fire, 2018.**

- Anything by Bishop Barron is worth your time. Explore his website at [wordonfire.org](http://wordonfire.org) and subscribe to his YouTube channel. He intelligently and compassionately engages contemporary culture. Above all, he speaks as someone who loves those he is speaking with.
- This small book is helpful for someone who is questioning their belief in God or has become interested in atheism. We are unwilling/unable to have a meaningful religious argument and need to recover this. Barron synthesizes the Catholic understanding of faith and reason better than anyone else.

### **Father Thomas Berg. *Hurting in the Church: A Way Forward for Wounded Catholics*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2017.**

- Berg addresses, frankly and painfully, the ways we are hurt in the Church, including by those who minister in the Church. This book has been a source of reflection and prayer for me, and hopefully it will be helpful to you. It is well written, though, as always, stronger in some areas than others.
- I purchased a few extra copies. They are in the Christ King parish library, with a special note that they are yours to keep.

### **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love. A Pastoral Letter on Racism*. Washington, D.C., USCCB, 2018. Available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/racism/index.cfm>.**

- Racism is a concrete danger to our souls and addressing it is necessary for anyone interested in their own conversion; Christ's call is to constant turning of hearts (conversion). This is a good read which I endorse and suggest reading. The letter is structured on the words of the prophet Micah (6:8): "You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God."

### **Benedict XVI. *A School of Prayer: The Saints Show Us How to Pray*. San Francisco, Ignatius, 2012.**

- This is a collection of Pope Benedict's General Audiences in 2011 and 2012 which focused on prayer. Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI is a master teacher with the ability to communicate the deepest mysteries of God, and life, in an accessible and creative way. His natural holiness and humility come across as he teaches us how to pray.

### **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography*. Washington, D.C. USCCB, 2015. Available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/pornography/index.cfm>.**

- Pornography is a disease infecting our society and is indescribably harmful. It is a slavery that so many of us have become victim to. The letter is a compassionate and helpful guide forward so that we may embrace the human dignity that God has given us.

### **Bishop Robert Barron. *To Light A Fire on the Earth: Proclaiming the Gospel in a Secular Age*. New York, Image Books, 2017.**

- A collaboration between Barron and journalist John Allen, Jr., I could not put this book down. I believe Barron's approach to evangelization is one of the most effective and meaningful out there. Tightly written and practically helpful, this book can serve as a blueprint for discipleship in today's culture.

**Romano Guardini. *Meditations Before Mass*. Notre Dame, Indiana, Christian Classics, 2014.**

- Originally published in 1936, Guardini, in short chapters, helps us reflect on aspects of the greatest prayer possible, the sacrifice of the Mass.

**Damian Stayne. *Lord Renew Your Wonders: Spiritual Gifts for Today*. Frederick, Maryland, The Word Among Us Press, 2017.**

- A spiritual and practical reflection on the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit gives us, yet we leave unused. There are essential reflections on allowing God to heal us of our wounds. Let us always be open to the Lord's plans for us by discerning carefully our spiritual gifts, including the "Called and Gifted" workshops we have offered at the parishes and will provide in the future.

**Non-theology reading:**

- Haruki Murakami is my favorite author and I read anything he writes. This summer, after two years, I finally finished his 1200-page *1Q84*, and I am eager to start *Killing Commendatore*.
- Earlier this year I read Susan Cain's *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking*. I was captivated by a talk she gave in Wauwatosa and the book is well done. Introversions and extroversions are not personality traits but central to who we are. This impacts how introverts and extroverts respond as children in school, in workplaces, in marriages, etc. As an introvert, I found this book helpful for self-understanding of my strengths and weaknesses.
- When Tom Wolfe died last year, I regretted not having read any of his books. I recently finished *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. I love New York City and this is a great story set in an important historical period, winding through that city.
- There are many books in the productivity genre, which always interest me as I want to be most effective as a pastor. *A Life of Productivity* chronicles a year with Chris Bailey testing as many productivity techniques as possible, the results distilled in this book.
- I can handle poetry in doses. However, anything by Billy Collins, former Poet Laureate, is time enjoyably spent. I also recently enjoyed Dana Gioia's *99 Poems*.
- I subscribe to *Harvard Business Review* and utilize their electronic content. A useful publication and website for ongoing reflections on leadership, organizational health and growth, and more.
- I have long subscribed to the digital edition of the *Wall Street Journal* and added the digital *New York Times* as I can get it cheaply with a student ID due to the canon law studies. The weekend editions of both papers are what I really want though I don't often have time to enjoy them.
- Of course, so much to watch on the streaming platforms. Over Christmas I watched (via Amazon). *Swiped: Hooking Up in the Digital Age*. My reaction was a verbal "Yikes!" A depressing look at the loneliness in our young people and their participation in exploitive behavior without the human resilience to overcome these risks. All participants express disappointment and the documentary will remind you how much our young people need real compassion today.

When you use Amazon, go to <https://smile.amazon.com/> and choose "Christ's King Congregation" as the charity you support (yes, the name is spelled incorrectly). The same products are there, and a portion of your purchases comes to our bank account.

Happy reading, and see you at Mass,

Fr. Phillip