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## Book Review

# *When the Gospel Grows Feet: Rutilio Grande, SJ, and the Church of El Salvador*, by Thomas M. Kelly

Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 279 pages, \$29.95

By Diana Owen

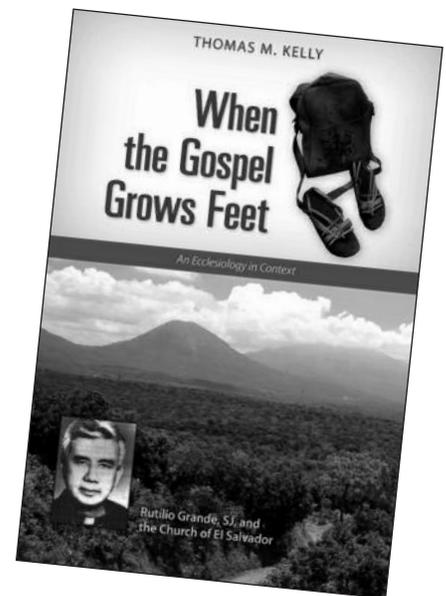
The main cathedral in the Archdiocese of San Salvador is a physical manifestation of the deep division in the Catholic Church in El Salvador.

The traditional cathedral on the main floor is elaborately adorned; the archbishop's seat is located at a distance from the congregation, whose participation in mass is limited. The spartan basement houses the tomb of the martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero; visiting priests from the countryside say mass from the small altar surrounded by people who actively take part while seated on folding chairs. With this imagery, Thomas Kelly illustrates the tensions between the official and the popular forms of the Catholic Church that have shaped El Salvador's political history for centuries.

Kelly's astute work examines the far-ranging consequences of these divisions in El Salvador's long-standing struggle for social justice from an historical and theological perspective. He begins with an exploration of the cultural legacy of the Catholic Church in the colonization of Latin America from 1500 to 1820 and its influence on the extant social hierarchy. This discussion provides a context for his analysis of the impact of Vatican II in Latin America as the church worldwide affirmed its commitment to a common

good that respects the dignity of all people. Latin American bishops, in a landmark move, called for structural changes in the social and economic order. Tensions arose in El Salvador between the government and the church as progressive clergy began to encourage marginalized people to act as their own agents in improving their lot in life. As Kelly argues, there is much to be learned from the Catholic experience in El Salvador. In fact, to understand Pope Francis is to understand the church of Latin America.

Rutilio Grande, S.J., was an advocate for the poor and disenfranchised in El Salvador who was gunned down along with his lay companions, Manuel Solorzano and Nelson Rutilio Lemus, while driving on a dusty road on their way to evening mass. Rutilio's story forms the focal point for Kelly's analysis as he addresses the key question: "How could powerful forces within the overwhelmingly Catholic country of El Salvador carry out the execution of a priest in broad daylight in front of witnesses?" Rutilio engaged in a pastoral variation on liberation theology in which he promoted the development of a new faith community grounded in the Gospel that promoted action on behalf of justice. He adopted the credo "see, judge, act" and was path-breaking in his use of social science to gain knowledge of the problems faced by



Salvadorans in order to develop an informed action plan. He mentored community leaders who tackled key issues, such as education and land reform. In so doing, he walked a tightrope between evangelization and politicization that ultimately cost him his life. Rutilio's assassination influenced his friend, Archbishop Romero, to work more stridently on behalf of the oppressed.

Kelly was urged by the late Dean Brackley, S.J., to tell Rutilio's story, which has been overshadowed by the war in El Salvador and Archbishop Romero's assassination in 1980.

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*Diana Owen is associate professor in the department of communications, culture, and technology at Georgetown University; she is a member of the National Seminar on Jesuit Higher Education.*

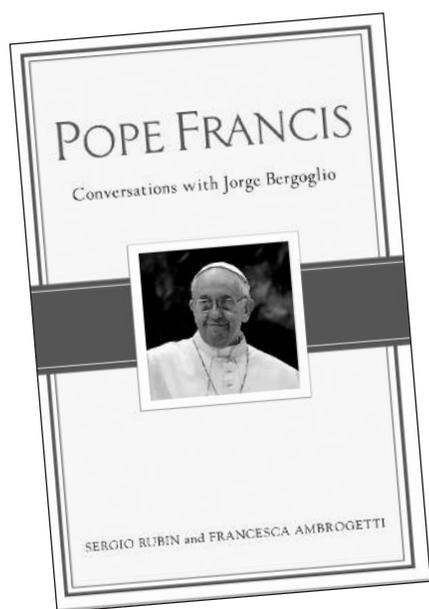
Brackley took the place of one of the six Jesuits murdered in 1989 with their housekeeper and her daughter at the University of Central America (UCA) in San Salvador and worked tirelessly for social justice. It was at the UCA that Kelly's meticulous research led him to discover and translate articles written by Rutilio in *Busqueda*, a journal where priests shared conversations about their ministries. He also interviewed numerous associates of Rutilio.

Kelly has spent considerable time in El Salvador both accompanying students on immersion programs and researching this book. Although he wrote it for students, the text has a far wider appeal to scholars and anyone interested in understanding the nexus between the church and politics in El Salvador or learning about Rutilio's understated but enduring influence on the Christian community. Sophisticated in its argument, the book remains broadly accessible by virtue of Kelly's crisp prose and willingness to clarify terms that may be unfamiliar to nontheologians. I discovered the book while preparing for a mission trip to El Salvador with the Ignatian Colleagues Program and found it to be an extraordinary resource. ■



Tom Kelly and participants in the Ignatian Colleagues Program pilgrimage to El Salvador in February 2014 at the site of the assassination of Rutilio Grande, S.J., and his lay companions.

Thomas Kelly is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Creighton University. He is the Immersion Coordinator for the Ignatian Colleagues Program. More information about the book can be found at <http://www.whenthegospelgrowsfeet.org/>



## The New Dawn of Pope Francis

### Three Books Reviewed

By Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J.

**T**hree books rise out of the tsunami of papal image and myth-making. Taken together, they give a grasp of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Pope Francis, adequate to keeping one's nose above the flood.

Start with *Pope Francis: Conversations with Jorge Bergoglio*, by Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti. The Argentine journalists interviewed the cardinal-archbishop as he was

preparing for his mandatory retirement as Archbishop of Buenos Aires at age 75. The book appeared in Argentina as *El Jesuita* in 2010, and in 2013 in a fine English translation (Putnam, New York).

*Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J., the author of many works on the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola, has served in Jesuit administration and in the formation of young Jesuits.*