

A NOTE FROM THE ISSUE EDITORS

Love is the beginning and end of life. Everything in between requires attention and, more to the point for us, the attentiveness of moral theologians. The commands to love God and to love neighbor condition all that we do. For this reason, an issue dedicated to love seemed appropriate when the editorial board was thinking through the first few years of the JMT. However, “thinking through” is not the same as putting words to paper. Like love itself, the idea is far easier to come by than its embodiment.

In our efforts, we hope that we have done half as good a job as the editors and authors of the January 2012 issue. In that first issue, David Cloutier and William Mattison set a tone for the journal by taking what they called a “genealogical” approach to method in moral theology. Since discussions of theological method can sometimes become too abstract, Cloutier and Mattison asked authors to approach the question of method through formative figures in the discipline. In most cases, students wrote about their teachers (e.g., James Keenan on Bernard Häring and Craig Steven Titus on Servais Pinckaers). Questions of method were treated in terms of what influential thinkers have inherited and passed on.

The same balance of the abstract and concrete is required of our issue on love. On one hand, we need clear thinking and concepts. As Diana Fritz Cates notes in the lead article, “[w]ithout an adequate conception of love, one cannot meaningfully say that one is acting from obedience to the love command.” On the other hand, we should be attentive to what can be discovered through concrete encounters at home, through work, and in service to our neighbors. In his discussion of the physician-patient relationship, Brian Volck proposes that “[a]ny form of human endeavor... is undermined when language is eviscerated by abstraction and sentimentality, divorcing words from embodied experience.”

Each article weaves together concept and encounter. However, there is a contrast in emphasis. Three essays emphasize a more conceptual approach, engaging theories and theorists of love—and fittingly, Thomas Aquinas and his synthesis of the tradition feature prominently in each. Three other essays take specific relationships as their points of departure—relationships with the poor, in health care institutions, and among family.

The issue has been organized so that the more theoretical essays provide the frame. In the first article, Diana Cates explores Thomas Aquinas' account of love as it is rooted in a general philosophical psychology. Next, William C. Mattison brings Thomistic distinctions to bear on a specific problem in contemporary accounts of love, a problem occasioned in part by the idealization of romantic love since the late nineteenth century.

At the other end of the volume, Charles Pinches and David McCarthy examine love and its connection to natural law. A concluding review essay, by Bernard Brady, provides a survey and analysis of recent work on love by moral theologians. (Brady's essay is a model for what we intend to offer in each issue: a broad ranging consideration of work in moral theology on a specific topic.)

Within this frame we have set the three essays featuring specific encounters. Here our authors write from their experiences—Margaret Pfeil as a Catholic Worker, Brian Volck in the profession of medicine, and Holly Taylor Coolman as a parent. Their more personal approach is no less theological, and perhaps more theological for being incarnational: displaying and analyzing the features of love from within specific, challenging callings in the world.

We have several people to thank for helping us to produce the volume: Taylor Sadarananda, Ericka Dixon, and Dale Phillips for their formatting and proof-reading; editorial board members for their quick work in the review process; Cindy Kokoski for managing business matters; and Provost David Rehm and President Thomas Powell of Mount St. Mary's University for their consistent and strong support.

—David Matzko McCarthy & Joshua P. Hochschild