

*Hope for Common Ground: Mediating the Personal and the Political in a Divided Church.* By Julie Hanlon Rubio. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016. xi + 242 pages. \$29.95.

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In *Hope for Common Ground*, Julie Hanlon Rubio takes on the daunting task of charting a social agenda that moves beyond the division between progressive and conservative Catholics. She makes two main claims. First, there is a great deal of common ground to be found on key social issues masked by the debate surrounding these issues' most controversial dimensions. Second, she proposes that strategies focused on "the space between" (16) the personal and the political show promise in addressing society's ills and in lessening the polarization between the Left and the Right.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first three chapters, Rubio makes her case for "the space between" as a central locus for Catholic social action. She is critical of those Christians who seek to opt out of modern pluralistic politics, affirming Catholicism's commitment to political engagement. At the same time, however, she argues that Catholics have perhaps overestimated what can be accomplished through politics, and that everyday Catholics are more capable of transforming social life through local community action than through political activism. She makes a compelling case that much of the political polarization within the church arises from battles over the proper role of the state in addressing problems such as abortion and poverty, and shifting the focus to the local open space for greater dialogue and collaboration. In the second part of the book, Rubio provides case studies seeking common ground on four issues: the family, poverty, abortion, and end-of-life care. For each case study she shows how focusing on local solutions can lead to real progress on common goals, whereas the politicization of these issues leads to intractable polarization. For example, she points out that there is a great deal of potential consensus on strategies to strengthen marriages—marriage and relationship education programs, promoting better jobs with better wages to make marriage a more realistic possibility—that is often overshadowed by the vitriolic debate over same-sex marriage and the tendency to separate family from economic issues. Likewise, except for a few on the extreme Left, most people see abortion as a tragedy and would support efforts that could reduce the number of abortions, such as making adoption a more realistic possibility and providing better social support to pregnant women and mothers.

Rubio presents an ambitious, inspiring social agenda for twenty-first-century American Catholics. Each of her case studies demonstrates ethical nuance and thorough policy detail, and she provides a compelling set of

proposals for immediate action or further dialogue. The book, however, perhaps too sharply draws a contrast between politics as the realm of conflict and division and the local as that of collaboration and common ground. Although focused on overcoming ideological conflict, the book gives less focus to social conflict, issues in which disparities in power are central, such as racism, economic inequality, and immigration reform. Rubio briefly addresses this problem in the conclusion, suggesting that Catholic social teaching needs both action in “the space between” and political activism. But her argument could be strengthened by recognizing that the local can serve as a space not only for common ground, but also for organizing the powerless to challenge unjust social structures.

The book is essential reading for those interested in Catholic social ethics, and could profitably be used in graduate and upper-level undergraduate courses on faith and politics. Each of the four case studies is comprehensive enough to serve as a stand-alone reading, as well.

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*The Use of Bodies: Homo Sacer IV, 2.* By Giorgio Agamben. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016. xxii + 291 pages. \$85.00.

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Giorgio Agamben is an Italian philosopher who has held academic positions at many Italian universities and currently teaches at the Università della Svizzera Italiana. This volume is the ninth, and perhaps the last, in the *Homo Sacer* series, which began with the book of that name in 1995. Agamben’s earliest work was on the French philosopher Simone Weil, and his most significant interlocutors have been the German philosopher Walter Benjamin and the Austrian-English philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. The *Homo Sacer* series is a work of political philosophy and philosophical anthropology, and is among the most influential works in those fields to have been published in any language since 1945.

The series as a whole is designed to elucidate the distinction, rooted in Aristotle, between *zoe* (bare life) and *bios* (political life, life as a citizen), and to show that it is characteristic of the modern state to arrogate to itself the capacity to determine, by declaring a state of exception, the conditions under which some individual or group may be reduced from the latter to the former condition.

In the first part of this volume, Agamben treats the use and care of the human body, with special reference to work and its lack, and to the relations