

The Associates World

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Hecker and Today's America

By Fr. Frank DiSiano, CSP

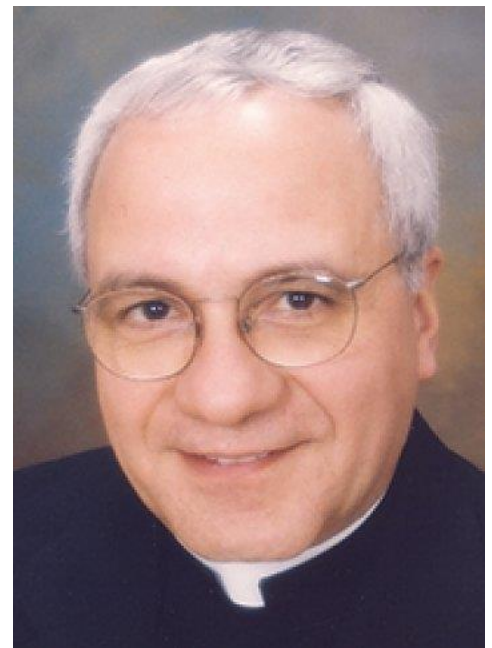
What would Hecker make of our time?

Isaac Thomas Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers, was notably characterized by his optimism about his world, both the social world of America in the mid-nineteenth century, and the prospects of the Church in his day. As we look at the disarray of the American social and political scene today, as well as the profound shifts happening at least among the Catholic faithful (if not among the formal structures of the Church), we have to wonder what sense Hecker would have made of our situation today.

Of course, the scene Hecker saw was no picnic. Immediately after the founding of the Paulist Community in 1858, the country tore itself literally in two, as decades of recrimination between the North and the South evolved into an outright claim for secession, followed by five years soaked in the blood of American citizens. While Hecker believed that a nation united under one faith, the Catholic faith, would not have split apart, it's hard to know whether Catholic bishops, even the giants of that day, could have possibly kept the guns at bay.

The church scene was not much better in Hecker's time either. Decades of pushing for a pronouncement about papal infallibility created tensions between those who thought a stronger papacy was needed and those who felt that any declaration of this type would be hopelessly misinterpreted. This came to a head just ten years after the Civil War began, in 1870, at the First Vatican Council in Rome. There the pro-infallibility bishops pushed through a declaration, one which some bishops from England and the United States had a hard time swallowing. As did Hecker -- initially anyway.

Should we then, after seeing what Hecker dealt with, be rather happy with the issues that we have now? We have parties at each other's throats, but we don't have states breaking away from our Union. We have tensions between left and right-wing impulses in the Church, but we are not facing



solemn declarations at solemn church councils. We have scandals touching at the neuralgic points of sexual behavior affecting just about every country in the Catholic universe, but our Church still seems like it will hold together.

What would Hecker make of this today?

Hecker, ever optimistic, would call us to a positive vision of where we are, and urge us to trust even more in the future the Holy Spirit will bring about. As an American and a Catholic convert, Hecker saw the gifts that the American experiment (freedom, trust, sharing, openness, innovation) could bring to the Church. Because he so clearly saw the structures that held the Church together, he could imagine new social and spiritual patterns emerging precisely from modern experience.

It took over a hundred years before the Church began to open itself to modernity—that is, to engaging with the modern world that had begun to take shape with the Industrial Age. We can see today the enormous social and environmental consequences of the emergence of industry, corporations, and labor—some terrible, some essential; but Hecker could only sense the initial energy, the hopes, and the confidence that God could deal with modern America as well as God dealt with the Middle Ages or even the Dark Ages. He wanted the Church to engage with, and evangelize, his modern world.

Modernity carries many traits long resisted by the Church—autonomous systems of information, democratic expressions, affirmations of economic dynamics, the equality of all people (especially genders), and the movement of technology. Hecker would look at these as opportunities for the Church to exercise its ancient spirituality and foundational doctrines. And he would do so with a firm nod at the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I suspect he would see Vatican II as a start, not as a climactic ending. Vatican II would create a new point from which to build forward into the future.

Certainly, part of our political array comes from the impact of modernity on politics. We no longer have only newspapers backing candidates. We now have non-stop 24-hour news cycles, Internet sites, and endless comments on social media from untraceable sources. Likewise, the entanglement of politics and economics seems more overt, and also more sinister, in today's environment than 150 years ago. It isn't just agricultural areas battling urban areas. It's corporations, technology, big data, automation, diminished labor, and global influences, that scramble the omelet of today's life.

But Hecker would look at these as opportunities for the Church to articulate an integral spiritual and human vision of humankind, asking the Church to bring this vision precisely to the deepest issues of modern life. Much contemporary church language revolves around bashing modern culture (consumerism, individualism, hedonism, etc.).

Hecker would not have engaged in anything like this.

Rather, he would have thought, the blotches on modern culture should call for the healing balm of the deepest Catholic vision of humankind.

As he was in his day, Hecker might seem controversial today. But the controversy would revolve not around his ultimate vision, but around his optimism. The Church still has not caught the inherent optimism that comes from opening oneself to the Holy Spirit and trusting in the Spirit's guidance of those who submit in humble love. Hecker offers optimism, not naivete.

I see Hecker asking us to look beyond the tensions and battles of both church and world today, to look beyond these to something yet fuller, which the Spirit of Jesus is bringing about through those who open their hearts and dare to face the future with faith. Surely the Holy Spirit can help the Catholic people bring their spiritual depth and expansive community to help modernity—with its autonomous

democratic processes, its economic patterns, its call for radical equality, its trust in technology, and its open communications—to serve the purposes of the Kingdom of God.

This would involve some imaginative thinking along this line: How can we envision a future America (along with Canada and even Mexico), faithful to the democratic values and secular impulses (secular, in the sense of not being controlled by a church), coming to replicate, in governmental and social terms, the values of the Kingdom of God. These Kingdom values, articulated, for example, by Pope Francis, belong to all of humankind. *A fortiori*, they should belong to the then-unique experiment that America was, separating church and government, ultimately for the betterment of both.

Pope Francis writes: “The Gospel is about *the kingdom of God* (cf. *Lk 4:43*); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity. Both Christian preaching and life, then, are meant to have an impact on society.” (The Joy of the Gospel, 180)

The Church cannot pretend to control social forces, as it might have done in the Middle Ages. But we can certainly enter the processes through dialogue and engagement; and we can bring the stability of our faith perspectives to help guide modern people to a fuller future because the saving work of Christ continues even now, in our day, and in our culture (as Hecker might have put it!).

Grand Rapids Reflects on Isaac Hecker Quotes

“It is the life that flows through us that refines, elevates, and ‘e-nobles’ our being.”

Isaac Hecker speaks of “the life that flows through us”. I was struck by this description of our true relationship with the Holy Spirit. The force of life itself flows through our very being and we are nothing without this. When I live in accord with the Spirit I know I can do the most amazing things and more importantly do so peacefully. This is a power far greater than hatred or strife. The amazing thing is that the more I allow the Spirit to move in my life the more delighted I am. I believe that to the degree that I can trust without fear God’s gratuitous love, to that degree I will be the person that I am called to be. Naturally, like all of us, my willingness to trust comes and goes, but one happy day I will allow myself his total love and live in the very heart of our Lord. I give thanks for this wonderful gift we call life.

By Bob Eardley, Paulist Associate

“Self-submission to God is the highest act of a human being.”

When I read this quote it made me think of the Gospel of Luke’s account of the announcement of the birth of Jesus and Mary’s total response, her “yes”, her “Fiat” to what the angel told her and what God was asking of her. The angel Gabriel, when he approached Mary, called her highly favored and blessed among women. He told her that she would conceive a son would be given the name Jesus. Then the angel talked about Jesus having great dignity, being called Son of the Most High, given the throne of David, and ruling house of Jacob. Mary, wondering how this could be and receiving the angel’s answer, says “Yes” to God. She is a servant of the Lord and self-submits herself to God by stating “Let it be done to me as you say.” Mary truly is our example for submitting ourselves to God to fulfill His

By Cathy Hoekstra, Paulist Associate

“ Would we only be willing to see things as they are, and be willing to be just what we are, we should find more good in the world, and in creation than some religious writers would be willing to acknowledge.”

Father Hecker offers a mighty challenge and a most difficult one for us today as we seem to be inundated with negative news which is always at the forefront. On the Sunday following the attack on 9-11 at the World Trade Center, *The Grand Rapids Press* had an article which included a poignant picture of our late Paulist priest, Father Joe Gallagher, giving communion wine to a parishioner at the Catholic Information Center on Ionia Avenue. *The Press* article included excerpts from Father Joe’s homily in which he brought attention to the faith exhibited through

“the countless prayers offered in the wake of the terrorist attacks. They came not only from the faithful, but from those with little faith. There were millions of people praying in the same direction, for the same thing. God gave strength to the rescuers, enabling them to do things they couldn’t have done a week before.”

Father Joe, in Father Hecker’s mind, “saw things as they were” and the “good in the world” just as was the case after Hurricane Harvey struck with so many individuals using their personal watercraft to rescue fellow citizens from the flood waters of south Texas. Father Hecker would no doubt see that people were being, in Hecker’s words, “just what {they} are” and at the same time recognizing the “good in the world.”

By Gary Clark, Paulist Associate

For Cathy at Christmas

by Sandy Murray

They said you were handicapped,
developmentally delayed.
Yet your face belies their judgment.

Your blindness does not hinder you
from seeing beyond the tangible.
What secrets do you know
that have not yet been revealed to me?

Your face is like a beacon in my darkness,
shining, glowing, alight with joy,
the mystery of God becoming human.



(Cathy is a treasured member of the St. Thomas More Newman Center)

Upcoming Pilgrimages, Retreats, Events

The Footsteps of Jesus: The Holy Land - March 30-April 10, 2019

Paulist Fathers Thomas A. Kane and Bruce Nieli will lead an unforgettable 12-day pilgrimage to Israel and the Holy Land. Registration and pricing available now: <http://paulistpilgrimages.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Paulist-Pilgrimages-Holy-Land-Save-the-Date-Flyer.pdf>



The Footsteps of St. Paul: Greece and the Islands: May 21 – June 1, 2019

Join Fathers Thomas A. Kane and Rich Andre for a 12-day pilgrimage to Greece and the Islands. Who better to explore Pauline sites than two members of the Paulist Fathers? St. Paul, our patron saint, is a key inspiration in our lives and ministry! Fr. Thomas has traveled extensively throughout the world, leading many pilgrimages in Greece and Turkey. His knowledge of art and culture will enhance the spiritual depth of our time together with special prayer services and liturgies. Fr. Rich has journeyed to the Holy Land, bringing scriptural insights and a liturgical enthusiasm to the group.



The Loyola Experience: July 4-14, 2019

A ten-day Retreat Pilgrimage into the Heart of Ignatius Loyola with Frs. Thomas A. Kane, CSP and Geoff Wheaton, SJ. Our life is a pilgrimage, a journey of faith to deeper communion with God and with one another. In many traditions, the faithful travel as pilgrims along the paths of the saints. Join us on this retreat-pilgrimage to Spain as we pray together, enjoy new sites, experience community, and deepen our awareness of God's grace. As we trace the life and spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola, we also celebrate the common life we share with fine wines and regional foods.

We begin in Bilbao with a visit to the Guggenheim Museum and continue to the town of Azpeitia for a three-day retreat at the Casa Arrupe near the Sanctuary of Loyola. We have retreat talks on the life of Ignatius of Loyola and special prayer opportunities at various pilgrimage sites nearby. We journey next to Pamplona, where Ignatius was wounded, then on to Javier, the birthplace of St. Francis Xavier. As we make our way south, we visit the ancient monastery of Leyre.

As we ascend Montserrat, we view the breathtaking vistas of Catalán and enjoy the beauty of this lofty Benedictine monastery. As we ride along the Cordoner River, we remember *The Pilgrim* at the cave of Manresa where Ignatius wrote the *Spiritual Exercises*. We conclude our pilgrimage in Barcelona with a festive Eucharist at *Sagrada Familia*, a special sightseeing program around the city and a farewell lunch.

Come join us in discovering the richness of our vast spiritual tradition as we journey through these historic lands. This pilgrimage promises to broaden your faith and be one of the most memorable experiences of your life.

Registration will open and a complete itinerary will be available in fall 2018.

The Splendors of Eastern Europe and Oberammergau - September 19-October 1, 2020

An 11-day pilgrimage with Paulist Father Thomas A. Kane on an unforgettable pilgrimage to Eastern Europe. See the once-a-decade performance of the world-famous Oberammergau passion play and explore the breathtaking cities of Budapest, Prague, and Vienna. Register online at: <http://www.paulist.org/pilgrimages/eastern-europe/>



It is with great pleasure and excitement that I invite you to join us on our Splendors of Eastern Europe and Oberammergau pilgrimage with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to attend the world famous Passion Play in 2020. The villagers of Oberammergau first performed the play in 1634 in fulfillment of their promise to God for sparing them from the Black Plague, and it has been presented there every ten years since then.

Our journey will take us to some of Europe's most interesting countries including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria and Germany. The scenery is absolutely spectacular as we travel through the plains and valleys of the magnificent Eastern European countryside. The points of interest are very diverse, spotlighting historical places and natural wonders. We will also celebrate the liturgy in some wonderful churches along the way.

In addition to our time in Oberammergau, we will have the opportunity to enjoy visits to Prague, the beautiful 1,000-year-old capital of the Czech Republic; Budapest, Hungary's enchanting capital on the Danube River; Vienna, Austria's elegant city with an old world ambience and a rich musical heritage; and Munich, the capital of Bavaria.

The price of our tour includes roundtrip airfare, first class/select hotels and guesthouses in Oberammergau, most meals, first class admission tickets for the Passion Play, the services of a professional tour director and sightseeing in a deluxe motor coach.

SAVE THE DATE

Paulist National Retreat

22 – 26 July 2019

Paulist Associate Board: Visions/Thoughts/Reflections

By Mary Sullivan

Greetings to All Paulist Associates. As a new member of the National Board, I write to introduce myself to those of you whom I do not yet know. I've been an Associate in Boston since the first group was formed at Park Street and have acted as coordinator of our group for the past few years. I am stepping down as coordinator and Barbara Lapinskas will be taking over as the Boston coordinator.

I am very much looking forward to serving on the National Board and hope that you will feel free to contact me with any comments/concerns that you or your local group may have. Since we are spread far and wide, I hope to begin a practice of quarterly conference calls with all of the local coordinators (with one Board member joining), so that we can get to know each other a little better and share best practices, particularly around the formation process for new Associates and topics for our newsletter, *Associates World*. My hope is to begin this in January, 2019.



Being a Paulist Associate has been fun, challenging and, not surprisingly, brought me into contact with some of the most interesting people I have ever met. I have matured (and continue to mature) in my spiritual life in ways that I could not have imagined when I started out, particularly since I began the formation process, not because I was any kind of a "seeker" but because many of my friends were doing so.

Hope to hear from you.

Renewing Promises and Updating Lists of Associates

We are always happy to hear about new Associates taking promises as well as current Paulists renewing theirs. Please post notices and photos on Facebook and let us know so we can add the information in this newsletter.

When these renewals take place, it would be helpful to all if the local coordinator would send an updated list of Associates to Kathleen Lossau so she can keep our contact list current. Please email contact information for those taking first promises and those renewing promises as well as a list of those who have opted not to renewing promises to Kathleen Lossau <klossau@austin.rr.com>.

Looking for Newsletter Input

New material for *Associates World* is always welcome. We would love to hear what is going on with your local organization. If you have material for the newsletter please contact Denis Hurley <dhpc18@gmail.com>.

Proposed Program for This Month

(This is a suggested format; each group may select another outline or topic.)

Submitted by Mike Kallock, CSP

THEME: The meaning of Christmas for Hecker and YOU.

Many Groups have a more informal, celebratory December meeting in the Christmas Spirit. So, the suggested Program for December is to take a few moments during your gathering to reflect on the three short passages below from Hecker' Christmas sermon to give you some idea of what Christmas meant to Hecker and then go around and share what Christmas means to each of you.

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray. We pray, O God of All Creation, that during this Advent Season your Holy Spirit will lead and guide us to an ever deeper understanding and experience of Your Word made flesh among us in Jesus Christ our brother, Lord, and Savior. Amen

READING (IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING)

Brief Excerpts from Hecker's 1870 Christmas Sermon

God became man to facilitate man's love for God.

God is shrouded in our common humanity. Christ is our brother who we can approach with feelings of confidence and affection.

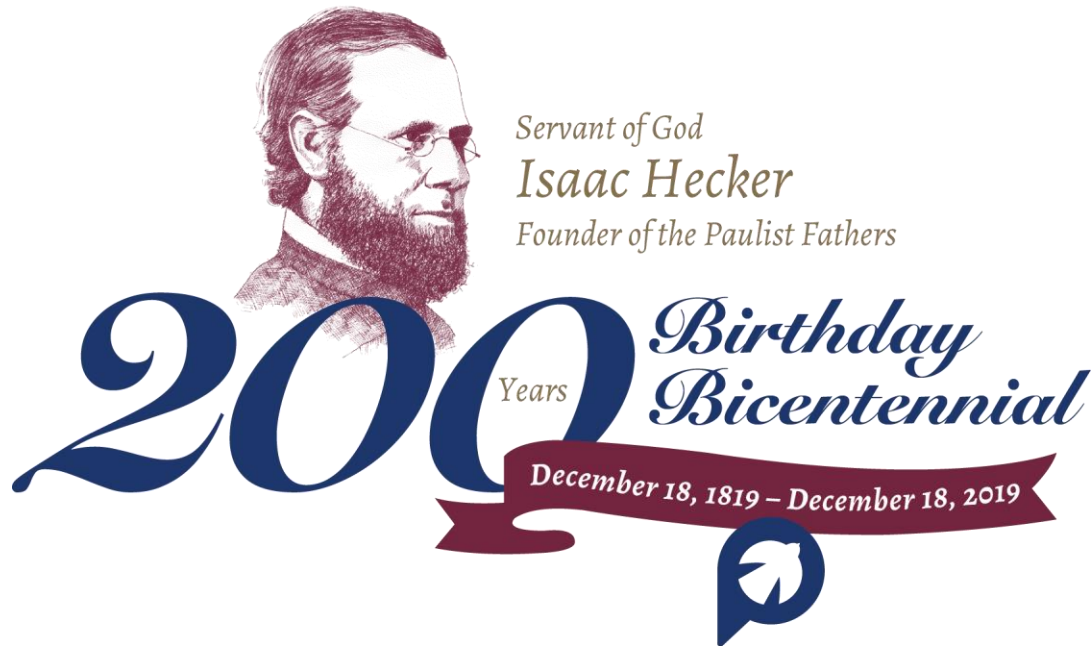
God became a babe! ... For in an infant we see all that is good, lovely and sweet in human nature...Who is so timid to approach this helpless babe as he stretches out his little hands to show us love?

Hecker's entire Christmas sermon appeared in the December 2016 Associates World. It is Hecker's only surviving Christmas sermon.

NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

CLOSING PRAYER TAKEN FROM THE CLOSING OF HECKER'S CHRISTMAS SERMON

O sweet infant Saviour, give to us that peace which you came to bring on the earth. Peace to the young and the old, to the poor and the sick, to the sorrowful and to all of good will. Peace on earth to all nations... Amen



Celebrating Fr. Hecker's Bicentennial

I hope by now you are aware that the Paulists through the Committee for the Bicentennial of Hecker's Birth (December 18, 1819) have a number of suggestions, events and resources to celebrate Fr. Hecker' Bicentennial.

It begins this December 18 with a special mass at our Mother Church, St Paul the Apostle in NYC.

Perhaps your local Paulist foundation is also planning a special liturgy on that day.

I encourage you individually to get involved with your local Paulist foundations efforts and how your Group might creatively raise awareness of Fr Hecker and his spirituality during his Bicentennial Year.

Mike Kallock, CSP

Director of the Paulist Associates

Contacts

PAULIST ASSOCIATES WEB SITE

<http://www.paulist.org/associates/paulist-associates>

FIND US ON FACEBOOK

 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/paulistassociates/>

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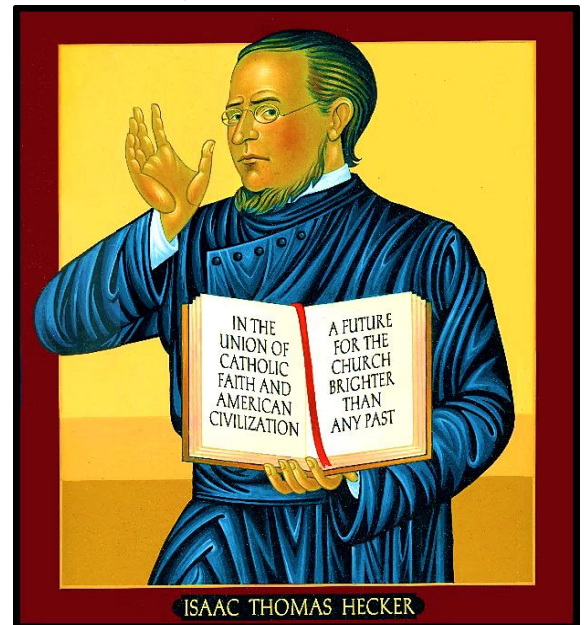
PRAYER FOR THE INTERCESSION OF FATHER ISAAC T. HECKER, SERVANT OF GOD

Heavenly Father, you called your servant Isaac Thomas Hecker to preach the Gospel to the people of North America and through his teaching, to know the peace and the power of your indwelling Spirit. He walked in the footsteps of Saint Paul the Apostle, and like Paul spoke your Word with a zeal for souls and a burning love for all who came to him in need.

Look upon us this day, with compassion and hope. Hear our prayer. We ask that through the intercession of Father Hecker your servant, you might grant us (state the request).

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit. One God, forever and ever. Amen.

When you pray this prayer, and if you believe that you have received any favors through Hecker's intercession, please contact the Office of the Cause for Canonization of Servant of God, Isaac Hecker at heckercause@paulist.org. Visit the web site: <http://www.isaachecker.org/> to learn more about his life and the cause for his canonization.



PAULIST ASSOCIATES PROMISE

I believe that I am drawn by the Holy Spirit to the spirituality and qualities of the Paulist Community.

I have discerned both by prayer and study that God calls me to become associated with the Paulists. I promise that I will pray for the works of the Paulist Society, meet with others, who are also members of the Paulist Associates, for spiritual sharing and formation; and I seek to embody the apostolic qualities of the Paulists in my daily life.

*Attentive to the Holy Spirit and faithful to the example of St. Paul and the charism of Father Isaac Hecker,
I commit myself for one year of membership in the Paulist Associates.*