

which we now accept as the best theory on the origin of the universe. However, when Pope Pius XII heard about this, he wanted to declare Fr. Georges Lemaître's Big Bang Theory a doctrine of faith, because it coincided so nicely with the first chapter of the Book of Genesis. Lo and behold, Fr. Lemaître talked him out of it with the argument that no theory in science is truly final. Later on, Pope John Paul would give us a famous warning: "Science can purify religion from error and superstition. Religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes." Even the Big Bang theory can become an absolute. Sheahen uses great examples to show how to avoid idolatry and false absolutes, especially in science.

At one point, he refers to the well-known statement in Genesis, "Let there be light." Then he explains how important this is, for in physics it is the speed of light that makes time different from space. In his own words, "It is only because there is light that 'space' differs from 'time.'" But, again, God is not in time — we are. Because we are, we are used to dealing with time-related events in religion. Examples are plenty: prayer for healing, slowing down biological time, determining the beginning of human life, the prospect of an afterlife, the existence of hell. Sheahen has some fascinating reflections on these subjects. And he uses good images and comparisons to make his point.

Let me only mention one of these cases as an example of how Sheahen deals with this, just to give you a foretaste of what you are in for. If heaven is not a *place*, as faith tells us, then it must have no *time* either, so we tend to visualize this as "time standing still." Thinking that way makes life in heaven as something in which time passes just like it did on earth. How can heaven be without time? Well, it can, the author suggests, if we consider eternal life to be a life in other dimensions, where time is not a factor. So, it is not an *after*-life but a *full*-life — a relationship with God uncoupled from time or space. Of course, you don't have to accept the author's solution(s), for that would be another case of idolatry and absolutes. But the main point is, again, that time is a problematic concept when applied to God.

Seen in this light, many questions people bring up may make no longer sense. Why did it take God so long — 13.8 billion years — to create the world we see? That question doesn't seem right once we realize that there is no "long" or "short" in God's creation, for God does not exist within time. For these and other questions, read Dr. Tom Sheahen's new book — and hopefully help others to see what is at stake.

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## *Our Life of Service* – Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers

Burke-Sivers, Deacon Harold. *Our Life of Service: The Handbook for Catholic Deacons*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2021. 192 pages.

Reviewed by Deacon Gerard-Marie Anthony.

Handbooks are texts that you should carry with you. Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers' *Handbook for Catholic Deacons* lives up to its title. In this page-turner of information, the author covers a wide range of topics with great wisdom, insight, and authenticity. Although the book is a must-have for deacons, their wives, children, pastors, and all who work with deacons can benefit from this book as well. The set-up of the book makes it easy to follow allowing the audience to soak up knowledge in each chapter. Each chapter has a reflection on one of the eight services of the deacon, then another clergyman's perspective, and self-evaluation questions. After reviewing the self-evaluation questions, the author challenges the reader to set goals and ends with a prayer.

Deacon Burke-Sivers tackles eight aspects of diaconal service starting with service to the spiritual life since a deacon cannot give what he does not have. The other topics of service he examines are: the mission and structure of the Church, the Word, wife, children, parish, wider community, and ongoing formation. He speaks of real-life diaconal struggles pertaining to these topics such as sharing how to set up boundaries to balance family life and diaconal service so one will avoid burnout as well as things to look out for to build relationships in diverse parishes. Deacon Harold dynamically gives advice about topics such as dealing with the tension of clergy who are not fans of the restored diaconate along with strategies to talk to your pastor when your diaconal time is taking away too much family time. He also writes a tremendously powerful chapter on the deacon being servant to his children, which is a topic all deacon dads should reflect upon in an age which fatherhood needs support.

In tackling the tough topics, Deacon Burke-Sivers also gives many theological nuggets about the diaconate. He speaks of the significance of the bishop and deacon both having their ordinations connected to the Gospel. He notes the deacon's service can be found in Genesis and in the life-example of Jesus. Thus, the deacons are icons of Christ both in Matrimony and in Holy Orders. In this, he expounds on how the deacon must be deacon of the domestic Church and the parish in the chapters for wives and children. This was an exceptionally powerful section of the book.

The diamond in this Handbook crown is the practical pastoral theology. The deacon gives practical tips on preparing homilies and preaching on difficult themes, resolving conflicts amidst your ministry team, as well how to serve those who are in pain. As a deacon, I see the need for clergy to be trained in conflict resolution and trauma management. This book is a good start in this type of preparation as it brings up the topic and gives great action-items pertaining to these situations. Deacon Harold also makes sure to mention the importance of praying for our parishioners which is something simple, but often forgotten in helping our ministries and apostolates bear good fruit for the Lord.

Speaking of bearing good fruit, Deacon Harold makes a very compelling case about the role of diaconal preaching. He gives canonical support for deacon homiletics, but notes that deacons imitate Christ in a compelling way when they speak outside the Church walls to the poor, abandoned, and forgotten.

In conclusion, the deacon brings the Gospel to the forgotten, but this book by Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers is a goldmine of wisdom that should never be forgotten. It is something all deacons need to carry in their hands in addition to a much-needed contribution to the Church as she looks at the restored Order of Deacon. It gives a blueprint for the deacon from Scripture but then builds upon it in eight powerful chapters which will help the reader to understand the blessing of the restoration of the permanent deacon. It also motivates deacons as they read to go deeper into their diaconate while being molded into the image of Christ the Servant of which they are sacramental signs. I highly recommend this book for all deacons, their families, and all those who help in their formation. This book is rightly named as it speaks of a life of service and is a service which will inspire all who read it.

Deacon Gerard-Marie Anthony is a deacon of the Diocese of Arlington.

## *Natural Law – Australian Style* – Donald G. Boland

Boland, Donald G. *Natural Law – Australian Style: A Study in Disputation Focusing on the Work of Peter Singer, John Finnis and Tracey Rowland*. St. Louis, MO: En Route Books and Media, 2022. 359 pages.

Reviewed by Francis Etheredge.