CONTINUED ON PAGE 5
synthesize many great thinkers allows him not only to touch the reality of people’s concrete situations and circumstances but also provides him with an instrument for dialogue with today’s culture.”

In addition to Fessard, Guardini, von Balthasar, de Lubac and Giussani, we also remember that the Jesuit Pope Francis is a son of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, his Spiritual Exercises and his rules of discernment which have guided the Pope’s own life and his discernment of the Church’s global missiology grounded in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Pope Francis’ immersion in a wide range of classic European and Latin American comparative literature has enriched his perspective. For instance, his references to Alessandro Manzoni’s The Betrothed/I Promessi Sposi (1827) and the historical figure of Cardinal Federico Borromeo (1564-1631) and the fictional Capuchin friar Father Cristoforo — who heroically risk their lives to tend to the suffering and dying in bubonic plague field hospitals — echo so much of Pope Francis’ own speaking, writing and pastoral approach to touching the wounds of humanity through the wounds of Christ.

One of the critical and foundational experiences for Pope Francis was the 2007 V General Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean in Aparecida, Brazil, at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida. This Conference produced the Aparecida document, a visionary approach to evangelization in the modern world.

Pope Francis often sees parallels between the Aparecida document of 2007 and St. Paul VI’s Apostlic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi (1975). Austen Ivereigh writes:

“In May 2007 the bishops of Latin America met collectively there for the first time in twenty-five years to define their continental mission. Bergoglio was not just a key contributor to the discernment process, but rector-in-chief of the concluding document...Francis has often compared Aparecida to Evangelii Nuntiandi, Paul VI’s great 1975 document on evangelization. Evangelii Gaudium is, in turn, the fruit of both, drawing on the five years from 2007 to 2012 in which Bergoglio and the other bishops of the Buenos Aires region sought to implement Aparecida. It was this experience that flowed into Cardinal Bergoglio’s famous brief speech to the cardinals prior to the conclave, in which he imagined Jesus not on the outside knocking to be let in, but on the inside, asking to be let out, and in which he portrayed the church as paralyzed by introversion, reflecting its own light rather than Christ’s.”

The Aparecida document and vision in 2007 continues to have a powerful impact on Latin America and the Caribbean but it providentially prepared the way for a more global application of its missiology and evangelization in the Pontificate of Pope Francis.

The Introduction of the 2007 Aparecida document foreshadows so much of Pope Francis’ 2013 Evangelii Gaudium:

“The church is called to a deep and profound rethinking of its mission and relaunch it with fidelity and boldness in the new circumstances of Latin America and the world. It cannot retreat in response to those who see only confusion, dangers, and threats, or those who seek to cloak the variety and complexity of situations with a mantle of worn-out ideological slogans, or irresponsible attacks. What is required is confirming, renewing, and revitalizing the newness of the Gospel rooted in our history, out of a personal and community encounter with Jesus Christ that raises up disciples and missionaries. That depends not so much on grand programs and structures, but rather on men and women who incarnate that tradition and newness, as disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries of his Kingdom, protagonists of new life for a Latin America that seeks to be rediscovered with the light and power of the Spirit.” (#11)

The same bold global missiology and evangelization applied to Latin America in Aparecida is expressed in a very similar way to the entire world in Evangelii Gaudium:

“Jesus can also break through the dull categories with which we would enclose him and he constantly amazes us by his divine creativity. Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today’s world. Every form of authentic evangelization is always ‘new.’” (#11)

In his Foreword to Discovering Pope Francis: The Roots of Jorge Mario Bergoglio’s Thinking, Pope Francis writes: “Precisely at this time, for the sake of evangelization, theologians and philosophers must engage in research, dialogue, and, above all, in prayer to develop a creative synthesis that proposes the attractiveness of Christ to a world that desperately needs his mercy.”

As we continue to be inspired and motivated by Pope Francis’ global vision of evangelization and implement that vision in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, I encourage you to make the effort to understand, with the help of some of the resources mentioned, the intellectual, spiritual, ecclesial and experiential foundations of Pope Francis’ rich and compelling approach to global mission.

2Brian Y. Lee and Thomas L. Knoebel (editors), Austen Ivereigh, Discovering Pope Francis: The Roots of Jorge Mario Bergoglio’s Thinking, 27
3Brian Y. Lee and Thomas L. Knoebel (editors), Pope Francis, Discovering Pope Francis: The Roots of Jorge Mario Bergoglio’s Thinking, xiii.