

Tuesday digest

December 13, 2011

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New today (and yesterday) from the *Century*:

- The editors on [the war that isn't ending](#): "In 2008, President Obama accused his predecessor of taking his eye off the ball—the fight in Afghanistan. But the case for a military presence in Afghanistan was already waning."
- John Buchanan on the Christmas story, [a this-worldly story](#): "The colonial Puritans did a lot of good things, but banning Christmas was not one of their better ideas." (subscription required)
- Carol Howard Merritt on the [young clergy crisis](#): "More than half of our small congregations cannot afford a full-time pastor, and many associate pastor positions were cut during the recent economic downturn. These are churches where seminary graduates would normally be heading, so what are the congregations doing instead?"
- A [follow-up post by Merritt](#): "As we wander through this desert, where's the milk and honey? What is God calling us to do, and who is God calling us to be?"
- Steve Thorngate on how Marcia Pally's *New York Times* piece [erases the mainline](#): "Anytime you say something is new while also ignoring something old,

it begs the question of what labels you use and how slippery their definitions are."

- Henry Langknecht [blogs the lectionary](#): "The annunciation is analogous in my mind to the story of God's invitation to Abram to leave Ur and head to Canaan. Both stories have a bare, binary feel to them. These are hinge moments in the unfolding of God and God's mission with and for the world. Abram, yes or no? Mary, yes or no?"
- John Petrakis [reviews the Steve McQueen film *Shame*](#): "You might assume that an NC-17 movie about sex addiction starring the striking Michael Fassbender and featuring rampant nudity and graphic depictions of various sex acts would have a certain erotic allure. You would be wrong." (subscription required)
- "[Emmanuel](#)," a poem by Angela Alaimo O'Donnell

In the news:

- [American Cardinal John Foley dies at 76](#)
- [Christmas symbols are in the eye of the beholder](#)
- [Russian Orthodox voices join cries of election fraud](#)
- [How much 'Tebowing' is too much?](#)
- [Conservatives rate 'naughty and nice' Christmas retailers](#)
- [Pope Benedict XVI to visit Cuba, Mexico next year](#)
- [Buying the Crystal Cathedral: Great deal or big gamble?](#)
- [Churches in Congo slam presidential election process](#)