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Overview & Acknowledgements

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MEDIATING CATHOLICISMS

Studies in Aesthetics, Authority, and Identity

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MATHEW N. SCHMALZ

Mediating Catholicisms: Overview & Acknowledgements



Mathew N. Schmalz is Founding Editor of the *Journal of Global Catholicism* and Professor of Religious Studies at the College of the Holy Cross. He received his B.A. from Amherst College and his Ph.D. in the history of religions from the University of Chicago. He has published more than fifty articles and essays that engage global Catholicism (particularly in South Asia), Catholic theology and spirituality, Mormonism, and The Watchtower movement. He is co-editor of *Engaging South Asian Religions: Boundaries, Appropriations, and Resistances* (SUNY, 2012, with Peter Gottschalk) and author of *Mercy Matters: Opening Yourself to the Life Changing Gift* (OSV, 2016). Schmalz has also written more than one hundred opinion pieces that have appeared in *On Faith*, *Crux*, *The Huffington Post* and in the print editions of *The Washington Post*, *Commonweal Magazine*, *US Catholic*, *The National Catholic Reporter*, *the Providence Journal*, and *the Telegram & Gazette*. He has provided expert commentary to *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *ABC's Good Morning America*, *NPR*, *CNBC*, *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, and *U.S. News & World Report*, among others.

Catholicism is often understood to be the quintessential example of a “mediating” religion. Through the sacraments, as well as through the hierarchical structure of the church, power—power, both secular and sacred, is mediated, restructured, and reproduced. But as the articles in this special issue remind us, Catholicism itself can be and is mediated—in this case through a variety of communicative technologies, both new and traditional. Such is inevitably the case, whether one conceptually considers Catholicism as a monolithic whole or as a diverse assemblage of practices that assume different shapes contours depending upon social or cultural context. The articles in this edition of the *Journal of Global Catholicism* (JGC) probe a number of important questions: What aspects of Catholicism do these kinds of mediation reveal? How do the workings of media technology change—and are reciprocally changed by—idioms of Catholic expression? And how do the variety of audiences of such mediations appropriate and meaningfully redeploy elements of Catholic thought and practice?

This special issue was conceptualized, developed, and edited by Marc Loustau. Since Marc Loustau is also an original editor of the JGC, these articles move forward various themes in previous issues particularly relating to the cross-cultural diversity of Catholic thought and practice. Much credit goes to the scholars who contributed such insightful articles, which were revised after presentation in a number of scholarly venues including the Annual Conference of the American Anthropological Association and a recent conference in Québec City, also organized by Marc Loustau, that examined Catholicism’s relationship to and with a variety of media expressions and technologies. Credit also goes to Ms. Danielle Kane for editing the articles with her characteristically keen eye and professionalism. Finally, many thanks to the publisher, Thomas Landy, director of the McFarland Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture, whose support makes the *Journal of Global Catholicism* possible.