

ITEM #96 (The Future Epoch of the Church)

The journal *First Things* is a publication of the Institute on Religion and Public Life. Its headquarters are in New York, But its contributors are throughout the United States and elsewhere. In the current issue (June/July 2022-It publishes ten issues a year) it contains an article “A Gentler Christendom” by Ross Douthat, with a response by Edmund Waldstein and reply by the author. Ross Douthat is a columnist for the *New York Times*. Edmund Waldstein, O. Cist., is a monk of Stift Heiligenkreuz.

All three articles are well worth reading in full: the original article by Douthat (“A Gentler Christendom”), the response by Waldstein (“All We Need Is Everything”), the closing response by Douthat (“The Shadow of Everything”). In brief, Douthat argues that in the past when Christianity has become too strong, it has been an unfortunately excessively strong Christianity as regards the pluralism of the contemporary society, whereas Waldstein argues that it has not been strong enough against the pluralism of a contemporary society.

In this context I would like to recall the new epoch of the Church on which George Weigel thinks the Church is entering: the fifth in its history. And Weigel identifies this epoch as an epoch of Evangelization, when the Gospel will be the constant focus of the Church’s activity. And I made the further suggestion that, given the widespread disbelief in the Real Presence, that this focus be centered in the United States and elsewhere as necessary, on the preaching of Christ on His Real Presence in the Eucharist. **(James Swetnam, S.J., June 13, 2022)**