

America

The background of the cover is a detailed engraving of the Great Seal of the United States. It features an eagle with wings spread, holding a shield on its chest. Above the eagle's head is a constellation of stars. A banner across the eagle's chest reads "E PLURIBUS UNUM". The entire seal is set within a circular frame. Overlaid on the bottom half of the seal is a black silhouette of a city skyline, including several rectangular buildings and a prominent water tower with a tall, thin spire.

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Wage Watch

TRACKING SEATTLE'S
SOCIAL EXPERIMENT
JOSEPH J. DUNN

At the still relatively young age of 43, I'm pleased to report that I am more than halfway to checking off one item on my bucket list, namely, a visit to all 13 U.S. presidential libraries. As of this writing, I have visited eight of them. Built with private funds and administered by the National Archives and Record Administration, the presidential library system is one of the great repositories of our national memory. Each center not only chronicles the life and work of one of the presidents who have served since Herbert Hoover, but also immerses the visitor in the always fascinating and often turbulent political times in which each man served. Each one is a civics lesson in three dimensions.

The most impressive library, architecturally speaking, is the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston. I. M. Pei's concrete and glass tribute to the virtue of courage, which J.F.K. prized above all others, sits at the farthest point of a small headland that juts out into Dorchester Bay. Its enormous glass pavilion faces the water and, symbolically, into the wind, evoking an image President Kennedy frequently deployed: "It is my firm belief that this nation should sail and not lie still in the harbor."

On March 30, 2015, a new building will be added to the already-impressive campus: The Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate, a 68,000 square foot tribute to the life and work of Ted Kennedy, whose career in the upper house spanned nearly five decades. (Full disclosure: A lifetime ago, when I was just out of college, I worked for the Massachusetts Democratic Party during Senator Kennedy's successful re-election campaign against a little-known businessman named Mitt Romney).

But unlike the presidential libraries, the institute will focus less on enshrining a political hagiography of its subject and will focus more on introducing its

visitors to the artistry and vicissitudes of the democratic process. According to the institute's web site, the goal is "to be one of the leading organizations working to turn the tide on civic education, providing a portal into the legislative process and a training ground for active, responsible participation in democracy, community and country." And while the late senator was the most prominent liberal Democrat of the past 40 years, the institute will be rigorously nonpartisan. In fact, two Republicans, including former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi, serve on its board of directors.

All of this comes just in the nick of time. According to a recent report in *The Wall Street Journal*, "about two-thirds of students [nationwide] tested below proficient on the civics portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress in both 2006 and 2010. Only 10 states require a social-studies test to graduate from high school." Those are sobering if unsurprising statistics. As public schools are forced to do more and more with less and less, civics education has fallen by the wayside, so "a facility that objectively teaches kids about the branches of government and the Senate's role as a deliberative body is welcome," as Senator Charles E. Grassley, Republican of Iowa, recently put it.

Perhaps those young people might teach the politicians a thing or two in the process. By almost any objective measure, the contemporary U.S. Senate is a dysfunctional and rancorous body, more a forum for invective than for wise deliberation. Unless that changes, the civic education students receive at the new institute will not fulfill its promise. Our future citizens need to see that their current leaders are actually living up to the democratic ideals etched into the marble. Actions speak louder than words, especially at the top. As Ted Kennedy liked to say, "A fish rots from the head down."

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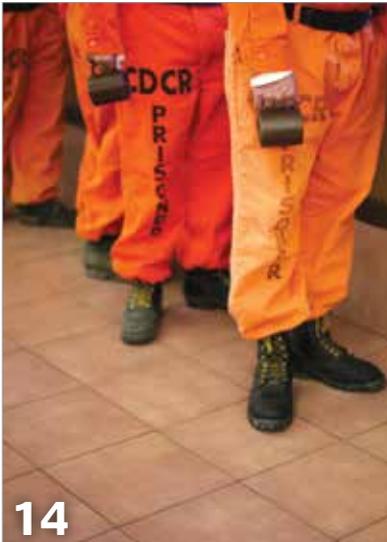
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ON THE WEB

John Carr, right, talks about the new Congress on "America This Week." Plus, the opening of the **George W. Hunt, S.J., Literary Prize**. Full digital highlights on page 37 and at americamagazine.org/webfeatures.



A ‘Francis Effect’ in Cuba

For the Rev. Cirilo Castro, the news that Cuban authorities had approved the construction of new churches came as a relief: instead of traveling miles to celebrate Mass in a converted garage, soon he will minister full time in a new church in the town of Sandino. Thanks to the recent resumption of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba—achieved in part through the intervention of Pope Francis—Father Castro, along with others, will be able to practice their faith openly without fear of reprisals.

The Cuban faithful have long been hoping for this. With the new church construction, Bishop Jorge Enrique Serpa Pérez of Sandino hopes to see the foundations for a renewal of faith laid down as well: “There is money to start; there is the construction material to start; there are the permissions to start; so everything is ready.” Conditions in the country first started to change after the 1998 visit of St. John Paul II, when Christmas was declared a national holiday and could be publicly celebrated for the first time since the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Today there are cautious hopes that the Catholic Church will be a beneficiary of the breakthrough in U.S.-Cuba relations, in which the Vatican played a crucial role.

As Father Castro says, “I hope the church doesn’t stay within the four walls, that it will go farther than that.” He hopes that in time, with the new churches, “there will be more people of faith.” A rebirth of faith in Cuba, an officially atheist state, would leave little doubt that the Francis effect has reached the peripheries of the church in the New World.

Keeping Sunday Sacred

It is not often that we in the United States take a lesson on workforce practices from our friends in France. The land of the 35-hour workweek is generally seen as antithetical to our country’s Weberian work ethic. But the current debate underway in Paris on Sunday business practices offers an opportunity for reflection.

France has traditionally reserved Sunday as a day for rest. Though this practice has roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is also a legacy of the French labor movement and has become a firm part of French culture. After first defending the tradition during his campaign, President François Hollande has now declared it to be antiquated and hopes that allowing more businesses to open on Sunday will help to jumpstart the economy. A surprising coalition of secular and religious groups oppose the measure. Hollande’s critics on the left worry about the creeping consumerism of

the West, while Cardinal André Vingt-Trois of Paris has endorsed the benefits of a “common day of rest.”

One does not have to be a Francophile to sympathize with these arguments. Yes, it is nice to have shops open on Sunday to run errands or stroll the mall, but the convenience usually comes at the expense of retail workers. In the United States workers must now abide by haphazard work schedules, which make it difficult to schedule childcare or outside schooling, in addition to working weekends and holidays.

France’s Sunday customs grew out of a desire to protect French workers who were forced to work seven days with no rest. Who will defend the rights of today’s workers? It is time to think again about what we mean by economic progress.

Neighborhood Watch

After each instance of gun violence in this country comes another chapter in the ongoing debate over how best to legislate gun control and ensure the safety of our communities. But the question remains: How do we prevent this violence in the first place? A study conducted in New Haven, Conn., by researchers at the Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars Program at Yale University suggests a seemingly simple solution: love your neighbor.

Researchers noted that gun violence can traumatize entire neighborhoods and communities, in addition to those individuals directly involved in the violence, but that tight-knit communities are better able to weather these traumatic experiences. In some ways, ongoing neighborhood violence creates trauma comparable to that endured by communities that experience natural disasters. So researchers looked at the way in which communities survive and recover from natural disasters in the hope that similar principles—encouraging social cohesion, resilience and capacity-building activities—can be applied to communities experiencing gun violence as well.

New Haven residents filled out surveys about the violence in their neighborhoods and about their connections to their neighbors. In many violent neighborhoods, few knew their neighbors, but two-thirds knew someone affected by violence. Yet many expressed a desire for increased communal events, youth programs and better relationships with police. Catholic communities can and should play a role in building connections like these within the larger social body. Such efforts can help to create resilient neighborhoods that are better able to move forward after violent situations. They will also be better positioned to prevent them in the first place.

Bodies in Christ

To a public accustomed to Pope Francis' emphasis on the poor and marginalized, the Vatican seemed off message in the lead-up to the Pontifical Council for Culture's plenary assembly on the theme "Women's Cultures: Equality and Difference." The English version of a promotional video for the event, featuring the Italian actress Nancy Brilli, was taken down after it came under heavy criticism for being too "sexy" and shallow and for ignoring the challenges faced by non-Western and poorer women.

The working document, released in anticipation of the gathering on Feb. 4 to 7, then came under fire for its description of plastic surgery as a "burqa made of flesh." At a Vatican press conference, Ms. Brilli herself defended the use of cosmetic surgery if it is done to make women feel better about themselves and not "to follow a standard imposed from outside."

There are valid criticisms to be made about the council's attempts to reach women. But the working document was drawn up mostly by women (15 women helped draft it), and the issues they raise are more nuanced than the sound bites would suggest. In the section on the female body, elective plastic surgery is described as "aggressive toward the feminine identity" and is placed in the context of a mass media culture that exalts a univocal model of womanhood that is exploited for commercial gain. While one might dismiss the use of cosmetic surgery as a first-world "problem" of the rich and famous, the personal and social forces that drive women (and men) under the knife cut across age, culture and economic status.

Nowhere is that more clear than in Brazil, which recently overtook the United States as the plastic surgery capital of the world. In 2013, 1.5 million cosmetic surgeries were performed in a country that has to import doctors from Cuba to serve in poor and rural areas yet has a surplus of plastic surgeons. Brazilians told a reporter from National Public Radio they save for years to "invest" in the implants, face lifts and tummy tucks they hope will get them ahead in the market for jobs and marriages. One charity in Rio even provides free or discounted operations to the disadvantaged, based on its founding belief that "the poor have the right to be beautiful too."

The question in Brazil, in the United States and all around the world is, how do we define beautiful? And what effect does this definition have on the psychological, physical and even spiritual health of those bombarded with images of

the "ideal" body? In the United States, ever-thinner women and toned men are held up in the popular media to devastating effect.

Many Americans struggle daily with body dissatisfaction, and at an increasingly young age; studies find that by age 6 girls are already expressing concerns about their weight, and at 10 years of age 80 percent of girls fear being fat. Teenage girls with low self-esteem are more likely to engage in risky behavior, including smoking, drinking and sexual activity. As many as 20 million women and 10 million men are affected by an eating disorder at some point in their lives, and each year an estimated 1,000 women die of anorexia nervosa.

Unattainable body ideals must be fought where they are most blatantly proposed—in the media—and the past year has seen some victories in this arena. Growing pushback against drastic image retouching has convinced several fashion magazines to limit their use of Photoshop. Last November a Victoria's Secret campaign with the tagline "the perfect body" was pulled back after an online petition criticized the ad for perpetuating "low self-esteem among women who are made to feel that their bodies are inadequate and unattractive." One of the most popular commercials televised during this year's Super Bowl asked different age groups what it means to throw, run or fight "like a girl," encouraging viewers to see young women as strong and self-assured rather than seeing the female body as just a pretty object to be manipulated or admired.

The church should support and exemplify this sort of body-positive messaging. The pursuit of unhealthy standards of beauty presents a serious challenge to the Christian vision. When Jesus is asked by the scribes which is the greatest commandment, his answer includes, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Authentic love, which empowers us to go out in love to serve our neighbors, is not vain or prideful; it is based on the knowledge that one is made in the image of God and loved unconditionally.

A society that tells women and men that they would be happier, more successful, more lovable if they only lost 10 pounds denies this reality. As the church seeks to communicate the Gospel through the tools of modern media, we must take care to represent the diversity of faces and figures that together make up the one body of Christ.



REPLY ALL

A Catholic Pragmatist

Re *Of Many Things*, by Matt Malone, S.J. (2/2): Given Father Malone's political training before joining the Society of Jesus, I'm surprised by his traditional Catholic interpretation of Mr. Cuomo's two famous speeches. Mr. Cuomo was the ultimate pragmatist, knowing he could do more good for the poor in New York as a compassionate governor than as a right-to-life candidate who would lose every election because he didn't represent the views of all the people.

Father Malone also points out the distinction between sinful conduct and "grave matters of life or death," using homicide, assisted suicide and rape as examples of what should be proscribed by law. He posits that Mr. Cuomo failed to explain why abortion was different than these other grave matters. Yet Father Malone doesn't mention capital punishment as one of his grave matters. Isn't

capital punishment as much a serious sin as abortion? Again and again, Mario Cuomo vetoed legislation favoring the death penalty. He stood up to the pressures of his party for three terms as governor of New York. In my view, his political courage and forthrightness make him one of the great American lay Catholics of this past century.

EDWARD J. THOMPSON SR.
Gettysburg, Pa.

Lay Voices

Re "How Not to Preach," by John J. Conley, S.J. (2/2): In general, I have found the homilies given by the two priests at the Episcopal church I attend to be far superior to most I heard during the almost 60 years of my life in the Catholic Church. I have especially appreciated the homilies of our woman priest.

Episcopal priests in general, and especially the women priests, are highly skilled at making the readings real in our own time and our own dai-

ly lives. Perhaps this is because they share many of the experiences of the laity, as married people, as parents, as grandparents. But women approach Scripture a bit differently than the men do, even in the Episcopal church. They see the feminine that is God, who made them male and female in God's image. When our woman priest gave a homily on Mary's visit to Elizabeth, her understanding as a woman, as a mother, came through loud and clear, with insights no male celibate could ever begin to grasp.

The Catholic Church not only bans women from the priesthood, it bans women (and all laypeople) from giving homilies. At the very least, this shoot-yourself-in-the-foot "law" should be changed, as there are many lay people, both men and women, who have better educations in formal theology and biblical scholarship than the average parish priest, and who have lived experience in the world that they lack. This would allow for far better homilies and

f STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to "Following Faithfully: The Catholic way to choose the good," by Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman (2/2).

This is a fraught issue. Most people think of their conscience as "whatever I think" or even "whatever I want." To say that it is supreme over the teaching of the church is to grant a devilish blank check to justify whatever we want. That is how most people twist this point nowadays in the West. To set up the conscience in competition with the church is to encourage that very misconception and a "who has the bigger stick" mentality—the very kind of triumphalism that many conscience-trumpeters think they are

escaping from the "bad" hierarchical church.

MICHAEL NEWHOUSE

Question: Are the U.S. bishops allowed to follow their conscience when they condemn the opinions expressed by Mr. Lawler or Mr. Salzman or Sister Elizabeth Johnson as being contrary to the Catholic faith?

FATHER SCOTT SINA

Thank you for publishing this information. When I have taught this to undergrads or shared it in discussions with adults, the reaction is frequently disbelief or that I am teaching inappropriately subversive material. The tradition of the centrality of the well-formed

conscience has been kept well hidden from Catholics, which is truly sad.

EILEEN DEVINE

Though the authors consistently cite the Father Ratzinger of Vatican II (who spoke merely as a theologian), they fail to cite the views of Cardinal Ratzinger of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, who spoke with much greater authority and who clarified points of the former in important ways. While conscience remains the supreme authority, it does not and cannot allow one to ignore authentic and especially definitive pronouncements of the church in areas of faith and morals.

ANDREW HART

Letters to the editor may be sent to **America's** editorial office (address on page 2) or letters@americamagazine.org. **America** will also consider the following for print publication: comments posted below articles on **America's** Web site (americamagazine.org) and posts on Twitter and public Facebook pages. All correspondence may be edited for length.

enrich the understanding of those in the pews instead of putting them to sleep.

ANNA CHAPMAN
Online Comment

The New Normal

As someone currently applying to Ph.D. programs, I think “Theology’s New Turn,” by Thomas P. Rausch (2/2), misses a primary point: the academy is somewhat self-propagating. People study under professors and then doctoral advisers who are interested in these topics and end up using them as a base. They work in these fields and then are hired because hiring committees concentrate on these topics. So it’s really more complex than this article makes it seem. These fields are still popular because this is where much of the work has been done since the 1980s. These “transgressive” fields may work toward becoming more transgressive, but many are so deeply imbedded as to be the norm. It’s honestly easier to get an adviser and a job doing queer theory than doing Neoscholasticism or hermeneutical phenomenology.

I do not say this because I dislike these fields (they produce both good and bad work) but because this article is misleading. Things remain the same. Graduate schools give offers to those working on topics of interest to their professors. Departments hire in fields they understand. Postmodernism is no longer on the outside; it hasn’t been for 30 years.

CHASE PADUSNIAK
Online Comment

Conscience in Community

Many responses to “Following Faithfully,” by Michael G. Lawler and Todd A. Salzman (2/2), equate individual formation of one’s conscience with individualism. If you carefully read the article and carefully understand the work of Bernard Lonergan, S.J., that understanding would be far from the truth. The formation of conscience is a dynamic interchange of the individual and the church. Our experience

and understanding should include the church’s teachings and other moral authorities, along with our own individual experiences and reflection. Also, the article includes reference to prudence, which is critical to good judgment. No matter how much you want to, you cannot wish away the role of subjectivity in moral decision-making and the development of conscience.

DAVID LAROCHE
Online Comment

Who Defines ‘Natural’?

Re “Has Natural Law Died?” by John J. Conley, S.J. (12/22/14): Citing natural law assumes that we fallible human beings have a complete understanding of the nature of the world, ourselves and the interactions of the two and our places in it. In some ways, in some uses, this is absolutely good and necessary. The equality of all human beings, the value of the body and the mind, the inseparability of both, the inherency of rights of all people on a level far deeper than state or religion—these are treasured aspects of natural law. Natural law that looks to the level of harm caused to the person or interactions between persons has a solid ground for justification.

But when natural law is cited as the reason that homosexuality is wrong, for example, the cart has been put before the horse. No one has managed to cite the

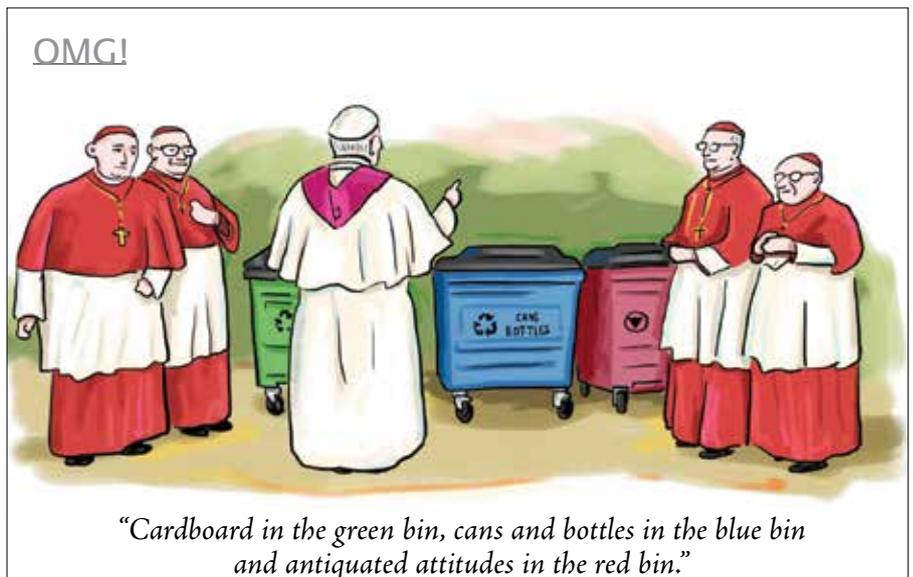
harm to persons or relationships caused by loving relationships between two members of the same sex. And certainly denying those relationships to others on account of natural law can cause harm.

Pornography, in contrast, is wrong on natural law grounds because it degrades the sacredness of the human body and prizes looking at human beings as objects for sexual pleasure rather than as persons. It does harm to interactions with human beings in the future by falsifying expectations of sexuality and interactions in the future. Its source and legacy are poisonous, so there are grounds for attack.

Homosexuality is condemned for breaking natural law, but no proof of the poison can be found. Instead, it seems that God has created people of this nature, and it is up to us to widen our understanding of nature to find out where they fit.

WINNI VEILS
Online Comment

CORRECTION: In “Pope Francis: Our Man in Havana,” by Tim Padgett (2/9), a quotation was attributed in error to John Suarez of the Directorio Democrático Cubano. Ana Garcia, not Mr. Suarez, said, “We’ve gone from a Catholic Church that helped bring down Communism in Eastern Europe to one that’s now propping it up in Cuba.”



CARTOON: WRITTEN BY JAKE MARTIN, S.J./ART BY BOB ECKSTEIN

SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS

Accountability of Bishops Will Be Major Focus of Vatican Commission

The accountability of bishops is a source of great concern” to the 17 members of the Commission for the Protection of Minors, said Cardinal Seán O’Malley, O.F.M.Cap., leader of the Archdiocese of Boston and the president of the body, at a Vatican press briefing on Feb. 7.

Marie Collins of Ireland, a survivor of abuse herself and a member of the commission since it was established by Pope Francis in March 2014, told reporters she wants “sanctions” for bishops who fail to follow the Holy See’s directives on child sexual abuse.

“There has to be consequences” for a bishop who fails in this area, Cardinal O’Malley agreed. The commission is working on a set of proposals to present to the pope “that would allow the church to respond in an expeditious way when bishops do not carry out their responsibilities.” Another commission member, Bill Kilgallon of New Zealand, told *America* that commission members “are nearing completion” on the proposal regarding accountability.

It is clear that the question of accountability is a make-or-break issue for the two survivors of abuse on the commission, Collins and Peter Saunders of the United Kingdom, founder of the U.K.’s National Association for People Abused in Childhood. They both said that they would not continue to be part of the commission if the issue of accountability is not resolved in the next year or two, but they expressed total confidence that Pope Francis would act decisively on their proposals.

“Pope Francis has given the commission a very free hand. We’re there to speak our minds, not to be ‘yes men’ for the Vatican,” Saunders said. “There’s a determination in the commission that what happened to myself and so many others like me should never happen again.”

To prove his point, he challenged the pope’s remarks on Feb. 4, when Pope Francis indicated some support for paternal spanking. “We need to speak to the pope about this issue. There is no place in this day and age for inflicting pain” on children, Saunders said. Corporal punishment is, in fact, one of the issues the commission will be addressing.

Saunders and Collins said they wished the commission would move

forward with greater speed. It has taken over a year to begin to work properly. “The church and the Vatican seem to operate on a different time dimension to the rest of us, but when it comes to time children only get one stab at childhood,” Saunders said. Both he and Collins were hopeful things will move ahead with speed now that the commission has its full complement of members from all continents.

Cardinal O’Malley hailed as “very important” a letter Pope Francis sent in February to the presidents of the church’s episcopal conferences and to superiors of institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life. He said, “It reveals how important child protection is in this pontificate.”

In his letter, Pope Francis asked the leadership of the Catholic Church “to cooperate” with the new commission “in the arduous task of working for the safety of children.” The pope re-



NEXT STEPS. Peter Saunders, left, and Cardinal Seán Patrick O’Malley, O.F.M.Cap., at a press conference on Feb. 7.

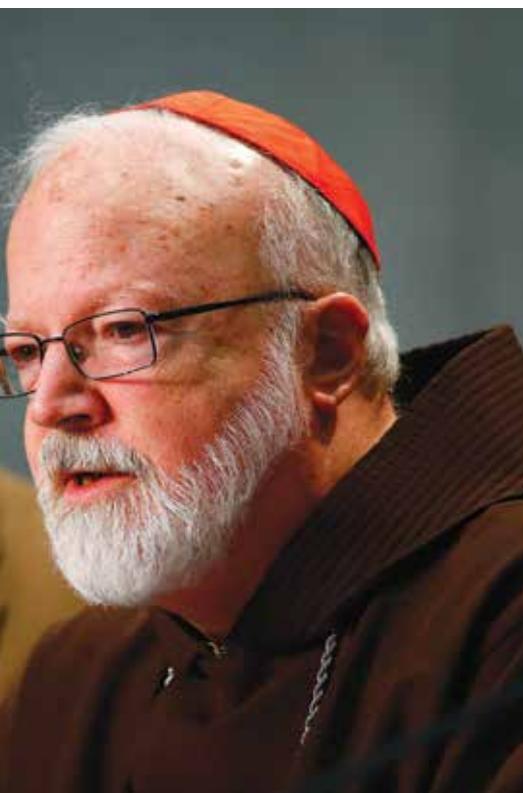
flected on his own experience meeting victims of sexual abuse by priests and told church leaders that these encounters “reaffirmed my conviction that everything possible must be done to rid the church of the scourge of the sexual abuse of minors and to open pathways of reconciliation and healing for those who were abused.”

GERARD O’CONNELL

WEST AFRICA

Ebola-Afflicted States Receive Debt Break

A recent International Monetary Fund initiative should ease the economic emergency in West African states most affected by the Ebola epidemic, but it will also serve as a template for responding to similar cri-



ses in the future, said Eric LeCompte, executive director of the Washington-based Jubilee USA Network.

The I.M.F. has organized a package of \$330 million in grants and financing to aid countries that have struggled for months to contain the virus and now face the challenge of recovering from Ebola's collateral economic damage. The plan includes \$100 million in I.M.F. debt cancellation and \$160 million in new I.M.F. loans for Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Another \$70 million in debt relief will be offered by governments who hold debt in the three countries. The new plan expands a debt-relief facility previously used to cancel debt after Haiti's 2010 earthquake. The Catastrophe Containment Relief Trust (C.C.R.T.) will become a permanent debt-relief facility for the world's poorest countries when they experience economic shocks caused by epidemics or natural disasters.

"This is tremendously significant," LeCompte told **America**. LeCompte, whose interfaith coalition seeks debt relief for the world's poorest nations, was especially cheered that the new I.M.F. package included large grants that cleared debt outright. "Since day one we've campaigned for a real debt-relief facility, transparency and more grants as opposed to loans," he said. The C.C.R.T., he explained, "isn't a full debt-relief mechanism, but it is a debt-relief facility with clear rules that will benefit the world's least developed nations when they experience shocks and crises."

He explained that under the terms of the new I.M.F. plan money that would have gone into servicing national debt in the three nations hardest hit by the Ebola virus will instead be redirected to building social infrastructure and improving public health capacity.

The World Health Organization reported in late January that the number of new Ebola cases in West Africa fell below 100 for the first time in seven months. But U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon reminded world leaders on Jan. 30 that "Ebola will not be gone from any country, until it is gone from every country" and that "success in the affected countries will also mean repairing the damage caused by Ebola."

"Children need to go to school, farmers need to return to their fields, markets and businesses must reopen," he said.

LeCompte compared the Ebola disaster to Hurricane Sandy's impact on the United States. The superstorm paralyzed America's Northeast and cost billions in damage and interrupted economic activity. But the United States has the resources to recover quickly from such a catastrophe, he said. High poverty, heavily indebted nations like Liberia don't.

Ebola not only claimed 8,000 lives in West Africa, he said; it brought the regional economy to its knees. Businesses, markets and schools closed down. Because of the crisis, the region's international debt grew even more unsustainable.

And much of the past debt burdening the region, according to LeCompte, was incurred during one-party rule or during periods of conflict; loan transparency and accountability in most instances was completely lacking. According to LeCompte, the principal on much of the debt has already been paid off. He hopes the I.M.F. move will press other international lenders to reconsider the current debt obligations of states hit by Ebola.

The World Bank has so far not adjusted the \$11 million in debt servicing it is scheduled to receive from West African states in 2015, an expectation described as "scandalous" by Tim Jones of the United Kingdom's Jubilee Debt Campaign. In a statement released on Feb. 5, Jones pointed out that the I.M.F. has made almost \$9 billion from its lending over the last three years. He added, "The I.M.F. can easily afford to cancel all the \$620 million debt of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone which will remain. It should do so. Moreover, other lenders should also cancel debts owed to them."

KEVIN CLARKE



EBOLA SURVIVOR. N'daye Conte arrives home on Jan. 14 after recovering from Ebola at Donka National Hospital in Conakry, Guinea.

PHOTO: UNPHOTO/MARTINE PEBRETT

Women Should Be 'Full Participants'

The challenge to find new ways for women to be “full participants in the various areas of social and ecclesial life...can no longer be postponed,” said Pope Francis, speaking on Feb. 7 with members of the Pontifical Council for Culture. The pope said a “more widespread and incisive female presence” in the church “is desirable, so that we can see many women involved in pastoral responsibilities, in the accompaniment of persons, families and groups, as well as in theological reflection.” He added that the “irreplaceable role of women in the family” cannot be forgotten. Women must not be left alone to carry the burden of deciding between the family and an effective presence in public life, Pope Francis said. “Rather,” he said, “all institutions, including the ecclesial community, are called to ensure freedom of choice for women, so that they have the possibility to take on social and ecclesial responsibilities in a way that is in harmony with family life.”

Assisted Suicide Gains

Assisted suicide is legal in only four states currently, but several other jurisdictions are considering legislation on the practice. A California bill resembles the Oregon law approved by voters there in 1994, but it has some significant differences. The California proposal does not include a conscience clause that allows doctors to refuse to participate in assisted suicide. The Oregon law also mandates referral for psychological counseling if either of two doctors examining the dying patient suspects the patient is mentally ill or suffers from impaired judgment. That stipulation is not included in the California proposal. In New York, where a bill patterned after Oregon’s assisted-suicide law has also been introduced, the Disability

NEWS BRIEFS

More than two dozen **undocumented students** at Catholic colleges sent a letter on Feb. 5 to 79 members of Congress who graduated from Catholic schools, urging them not to cut off funding for the president’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. + Church leaders criticized the **arrests of Christians** who had gathered on Feb. 5 at the Sacred Heart Cathedral in New Delhi to protest police inaction on recent attacks and desecrations at five Delhi churches. + House Speaker John Boehner, Republican of Ohio, announced on Feb. 5 that Pope Francis will **address a joint meeting of Congress** on Sept. 24, making him the “first leader of the Holy See” to do so. + Two bishops have joined some Philippine lawmakers in demanding the **resignation of President Benigno Aquino III**, after 44 troops were killed in a botched operation against Muslim rebels on Jan. 25. + There is nothing more scandalous than a nation made up of **Christians engaged in conflict**, Pope Francis said on Feb. 4, discussing the worsening conflict in Ukraine. + Meeting on Jan. 27 in Lebanon, Catholic and Orthodox patriarchs called for an end to **financing terrorists** and suggested that borders be closed when necessary to prevent the movement of terrorists.



Struggling in Ukraine

Rights Legal Center filed a suit on Feb. 4 to give New Yorkers the right to end their lives. Assisted suicide bills were also recently introduced in Maryland, Wyoming and Pennsylvania.

Romero Beatification

Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador will be beatified in San Salvador “certainly within the year and not later, but possibly within a few months,” said Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, the postulator, or chief promoter of the archbishop’s sainthood cause. Speaking to reporters on Feb. 4, the day after Pope Francis formally recognized that the slain Salvadoran archbishop was killed “in hatred of the faith”—and not for purely political reasons—Archbishop Paglia said the two de-

acades it took to obtain the decree were the result of “misunderstandings and preconceptions.” During Archbishop Romero’s time as archbishop of San Salvador—from 1977 to 1980—“kilos of letters against him arrived in Rome. The accusations were simple: He’s political; he’s a follower of liberation theology.” To the accusations that he supported liberation theology, according to Archbishop Paglia, Archbishop Romero responded: “Yes, certainly. But there are two theologies of liberation: one sees liberation only as material liberation; the other is that of Paul VI. I’m with Paul VI” in seeking the material and spiritual liberation of all people, including from the sins of injustice and oppression.

From CNS, RNS and other sources.

DISPATCH | CHICAGO

Amazing Grace in Action

Ever since the days of pioneer homesteaders, the Sisters of Loretto have lived amid the rolling hills of central Kentucky. They taught in rural schools, still operate a corn and soybean farm and offer retreats on their 780 acres of prime agricultural land.

The sisters would have liked to continue quietly caring for their land, but for the process known as fracking—the hydraulic fracturing of bedrock and insertion of massive amounts of water, chemicals and sand into the earth to release oil and natural gas. Fracking changes any landscape irrevocably.

As a result of the fracking boom, Williams Companies, a Tulsa-based pipeline concern, sought to construct a pipeline beneath the sisters' farmland in Nerinx. The pipeline would transport propane, methane and other toxic, flammable natural gas by-products. The sisters were concerned about leaks and contamination to the ground water or, worse, explosions, which have occurred elsewhere with other pipelines.

The Loretto sisters sprang into action. They showed up at public meetings singing "Amazing Grace" to draw attention to their anti-fracking, anti-pipeline message. They teamed up on a petition drive with the Dominican Sisters of Peace and the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, who also live in this area known as the "Kentucky Holy Land," collecting some 36,000 signatures. They traveled door-to-

door urging their neighbors to reject lucrative payments Williams offered for access to the land.

In a classic David versus Goliath struggle, the sisters managed to defeat the proposed Bluegrass Pipeline—at least for now. These mostly septuagenarian women have become a public face of opposition to fracking and to the oil and gas pipelines that fracking

The sisters managed to defeat the proposed Bluegrass Pipeline — at least for now.

demands. As the controversy continues over the proposed Keystone XL oil pipeline, which would cut through America's heartland, the Loretto sisters' example offers a powerful model for effecting change and an eloquent witness to care of the earth.

"The word *trust*, I think, is what binds us to this land," says Sister Maria Visse, who oversees the Kentucky motherhouse. "This is what we've been entrusted with. And so over the years, we've tried to respect what the land gives."

The women who once taught the children of European immigrant farmers are carving out a new educational role. "We are hoping to accomplish a process of education that will help people to understand what they're dealing with," Sister Maria says. "What are we doing to our natural resources? And who owns the natural resources? Corporations feel they own the air, own the land, own

the water, own it enough that they can pay to take a piece of it."

In large ways and small, Catholic sisters across the country are pointing to the future by practicing environmental leadership. The Sisters of Providence in St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind., have turned their once under-used college campus into a 343-acre organic farm.

At Mount St. Scholastica Monastery in Atchison, Kans., the Benedictine sisters drive a fleet of hybrid cars and have installed solar panels on the roof of the monastery. Benches on the monastery grounds are made of recycled trash. The Mount sisters are also raising bees to address the sharply declining number of natural pollinators.

Cabins used for retreats on the Loretto sisters' property are constructed out of cedar, poplar and oak collected from fallen trees in the surrounding woods. "In nature, everything can be transformed, everything has potential," says Susan Classen, who oversees the retreat cabins for the Loretto sisters.

The work of the Loretto sisters reminds us that humans are but co-tenants on this planet, living in communion with all other living things. Sister Maria calls our natural surroundings "a gift of creation." To disrespect that gift, she notes, is to "be divorced from God."

In his book *Always We Begin Again*, John McQuiston II offers people of faith a prescription to live by. "Everything we have is on loan," McQuiston says. "Everything we have is ours in trust, and must be returned at the end of our use of it...in as good or better condition than it was when given into our custody." We have only to look to the efforts of so many Catholic sisters to see that belief in action.

JUDITH VALENTE

JUDITH VALENTE, *America's Chicago correspondent*, is a regular contributor to NPR and "Religion and Ethics Newsweekly." Twitter: @JudithValente.



Saintly Sinners, Sinful Saints

One of the biggest surprises during my time at *America* came in 1995, when I was a Jesuit scholastic. Christopher Hitchens, the atheist and author who has since died, had just published a book-length attack on Blessed Teresa of Calcutta entitled *The Missionary Position*. Mr. Hitchens had received a great deal of attention for accusing Mother Teresa of accepting contributions from corrupt politicians. One of our senior editors, the late John W. Donohue, S.J., confided that he was going to write a response to Mr. Hitchens's book. "Great," was my less-than-Christian response. "Let him have it!"

Imagine my surprise when I read John's article "Holy Terrors" (5/13/95). Instead of a point-by-point defense of Mother Teresa (which John seemed to consider a task too absurd to be worthy of much attention), John took a different tack. His approach could be summed up as: If you think that was bad, then you don't know much about the saints.

"Mr. Hitchens," Father Donohue wrote, "seems to assume that no one who has ever made mistakes or even acted ambiguously deserves to be called saintly." John then listed some ignoble activities of many well-known saints, including the irascible St. Jerome and St. John of Capistrano, who "behaved at times more like George S. Patton Jr. than Francis of Assisi." My favorite example was St. Cyril of Alexandria, whom John described as "brave but sometimes overly vehement, indeed

violent." Cyril arrived at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) with a gang of "unruly followers" and sent one of his fellow archbishops, Nestorius, into exile. After Ephesus, Cyril seems to have led a quiet life. John quoted one of his former Jesuit teachers saying, "We don't know anything about the last 10 years of Cyril's life. Those must have been the years in which he became a saint."

I thought about John's article when the Vatican announced that Pope Francis would canonize Junípero Serra during the pope's visit to the United States in September. As we mentioned in a Current Comment (2/9), Blessed Junípero was an indefatigable missionary, but he also stands accused of approving some of the worst excesses of Spanish colonialism in 17th-century California. His legacy is further complicated by the fact that many critics conflate the following: first, what the colonists did; second, what Junípero approved of; and third, what Junípero himself did. What seems clear, at the very least, is that Junípero condoned the beating of local people by Spanish colonists.

Similar accusations were leveled in recent years against St. Thomas More in the popular novel *Wolf Hall*, by Hilary Mantel—now a play and soon to be a BBC-TV series. Mantel portrays the "Man for All Seasons" as a religious fanatic, schemer, misogynist and, in the words of Mantel's hero Thomas Cromwell, "a blood-soaked hypocrite" who tortures Protestants in his cellar. Writing in *The Tablet* (1/29), the Cambridge historian Eamon Duffy

disagreed, pointing out that for his time, More, though a relentless pursuer of heresy, would have been seen as a compassionate man. "More was neither blood-soaked nor a hypocrite," writes Duffy, "but he was a man of his times, not of ours."

Yet even the saints not accused of such terrible crimes—beatings and torture—did not lead perfect lives. The saints were human beings who, even after their conversions, sinned. They knew that better than anyone.

Canonization does not mean that the church is declaring that a person was perfect.

Canonization does not mean that the church is declaring that a person was perfect. At the same time, we must ask: Are there some things that should prevent a person from being canonized? The answer is yes. But what things? And how shall we evaluate yesterday's actions using today's moral calculus?

In the future, will some commonplace activities (to take one example, eating meat) seem monstrous, and thus a roadblock to canonization? Likewise, will some things that seem to bar a person from canonization today—say, Thomas Merton's late-in-life affair with a young nurse—seem insignificant?

Here's the honest answer: I don't know. The church will continue to canonize imperfect saints. Perhaps the more helpful question is: What do we want to praise and emulate, as well as avoid and condemn, when we meditate on the lives of these men and women? Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Blessed Junípero Serra, St. Thomas More and Thomas Merton, pray for us.

JAMES MARTIN, S.J., is editor at large of *America* and author of *Jesus: A Pilgrimage*.
Twitter: @JamesMartinSJ.

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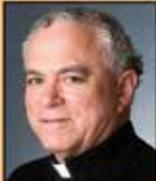
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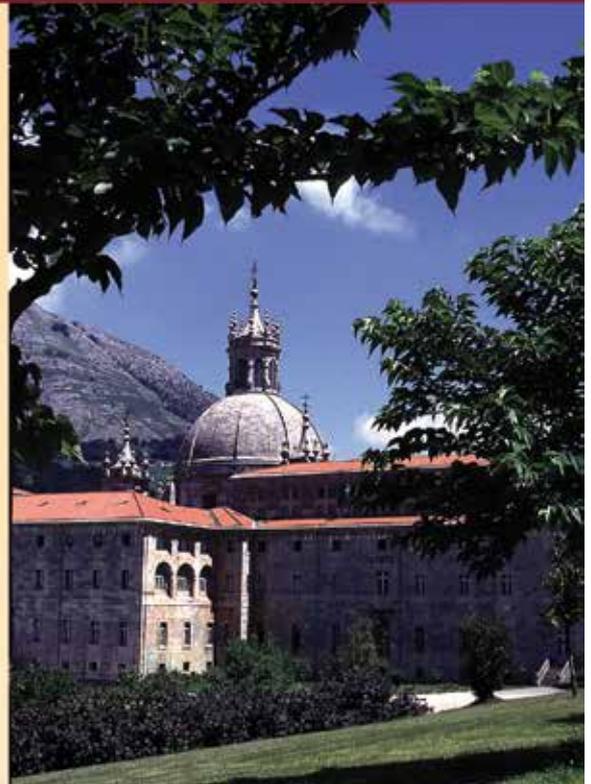
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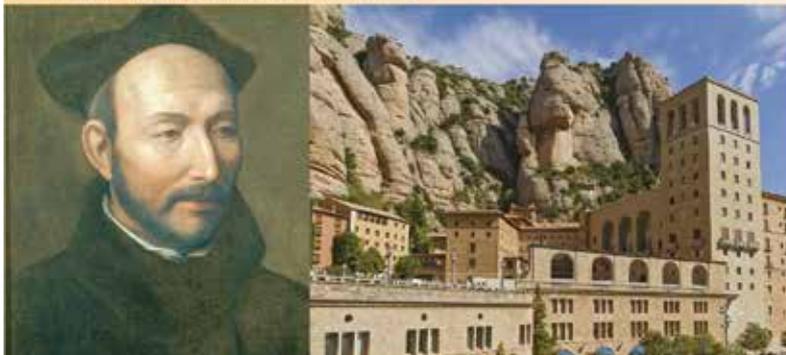


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Prison Addiction

Why mass incarceration policies must change

BY DENIS J. MADDEN

When I first returned to Baltimore in 2005, after working for nearly 10 years in the Holy Land, I spent some time just driving around the city to get reacquainted with it. I was immediately struck by the number of men, mostly young African-Americans, congregating on street corners or porch stoops in the middle of the day, a time when most people are at work. At that time, Baltimore City's unemployment rate was around 7 percent, not nearly as high as the 12 percent it would reach in 2010 or even the 7.8 percent reported in April 2014. And yet, even then, there was a pervasive sense of hopelessness and lost opportunity in those faces of men who had the odds so badly stacked against them—poverty, poor education, lack of employment, drug addictions and drug-related crime in their neighborhoods, and friends and family members who had been shot or imprisoned. For them to envision a brighter future, to see their way to a safer, more stable life, was nearly impossible.

Soon I would become aware of how our system of sentencing and incarceration contributes to all of this and helps to create a class of citizens who have little hope of ever advancing beyond their dreadful way of life.

While the issues of urban poverty and crime in the United States are complex, many people are starting to understand that there is one facet that is recognizable and that has reached epic proportions, so much so that workers in the field are labeling it a public health crisis: the mass incarceration of staggering numbers of people—primarily young African-American and Latino men—for nonviolent, mostly drug-related offenses.

It is a public health crisis because the effect of mass incarceration reaches far beyond the imprisoned individual. It tears apart families, sinking them further into poverty and leaving one out of every 28 children with a parent who is incarcerated, two thirds of whom are in prison or jail for nonviolent crimes. It creates a subclass of citizens who will have great difficulty finding gainful employment on their return to society. It disenfranchises citizens by taking away their right to vote, thereby stripping them of their ability to influ-

ence lawmakers for their own betterment and that of society itself. This public health crisis is such because of the failures of the correctional system to deal adequately with the substance abuse, mental problems and physical health issues of inmates. And instead of preparing inmates for successful reentry into society, it prepares them for reentry into prison, a fact evidenced by the raft of post-release court-mandated classes, drug screenings, meetings with probation officers and addiction recovery meetings, among other things.

The more than four-decade long war on drugs was meant to make drug abuse public enemy number one and also to direct federal resources to the prevention of new addicts and the rehabilitation of those already addicted. But a quick review of statistics is all that is needed to demonstrate the failures of this effort and the new addiction it has created: a penchant for locking people up in prison.

The United States has 5 percent of the world's population and nearly 25 percent of the world's prisoners. In 1974, 100 out of every 100,000 citizens of this country were in prison; today, there are roughly 700 people in prison or jail for every 100,000 Americans. The next highest incarceration rate occurs in the Russian Federation, which incarcerates 474 people for every 100,000 of its citizens.

There are now 12 times as many drug offenders in state prisons as there were 30 years ago. Drug offenders make up nearly half the federal prison inmates, most of whom are incarcerated for nonviolent trafficking or possession charges.

Despite similar rates of substance abuse among whites and African-Americans, the U.S. Department of Justice reports that almost twice as many African-Americans as whites are incarcerated for drug offenses. African-Americans make up 13 percent of the U.S. population but 45 percent of those incarcerated for drug violations.

It is now estimated that one in three African-Americans will spend time in prison during his or her lifetime; one in five will be incarcerated because of drug laws.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, two out of every three prisoners released will be rearrested within three years, and nearly half of those released from prison will be incarcerated again within three years.

The Sentencing Project reports that the number of inmates in privately run, for-profit prisons grew by 80 percent between 1999 and 2010, even though the total number of prisoners in the United States grew by only 18 percent.

MOST REV. DENIS J. MADDEN, *auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs.*



FIREBREAK. Prison inmates line up for breakfast at Oak Glen Conservation Fire Camp #35 in Yucaipa, Calif, in 2014.

These for-profit prisons use contracts to incentivize incarceration, and they impose “fines” on the contracting government if it does not provide the stipulated quota of inmates. They maximize their profit by offering lower pay to less qualified staff and providing fewer programs for training and rehabilitation.

The assault rate in private prisons is twice that in public prisons, and they are rife with documented physical and sexual abuse of inmates by the staff. Forty percent of juveniles sent to prison will serve their time in a private facility such as this.

We have created a subclass of citizens and now, so that we don’t have to deal with them directly, we are creating a for-profit industry, not subject to federal and state prison regulations, to house these citizens.

Why Look for Solutions?

Christ made it abundantly clear that he came “to seek and save the lost” (Lk 19:10). He has mercy on our sins; he brings life out of death. It is important that whenever we talk about prisoners we remember that “all have sinned” (Rom 3:23). If our own pride, greed and intemperance have not led us before a court of justice, it is, as the saying goes, “There, but for the grace of God, go I.”

Moreover, we have a responsibility to fight injustice, to ex-

tend mercy to those who have made poor choices and to help lead them on a path of dignity toward redemption.

At a recent U.S.C.C.B. briefing on Capitol Hill regarding mass incarceration, one of the speakers made reference to a part in the musical “Les Misérables” that shows remarkable parallels to today and which prompted me to reflect on it further. In “Les Misérables,” when Jean Valjean is released after being imprisoned for 19 years for a petty crime, he says with hope: “And now let’s see what this new world will do for me!” Yet he encounters a world filled with injustice and hopelessness. He becomes so desperate to escape his poverty that he steals household silver from Bishop Myriel, who had kindly offered him shelter.

Unfortunately, this is not so different from the situation that many convicted felons face today—citizens returning after being imprisoned for nonviolent crimes and then released to fend for themselves, while encountering one obstacle after another to doing so honestly.

There is another lesson to be learned from this story. When Valjean is caught for stealing the cup, the bishop shows mercy by going along with Valjean’s story to the police that the stolen silver was a gift—and he gives him even more! The bishop is not giving away just silver; he is concerned with Valjean’s rehabilitation and with the salvation of Valjean’s soul through

his reconciliation to God. His parting words ultimately set Valjean on a path of repentance:

*But remember this, my brother,
See in this some higher plan.
You must use this precious silver
To become an honest man.
By the witness of the martyrs,
By the passion and the blood,
God has raised you out of darkness:
I have bought your soul for God.*

It is a fact of life that people will make poor choices, either out of lack of judgment, lack of guidance or desperation. But just as Bishop Myriel showed mercy towards Jean Valjean and provided both the material and spiritual help he needed to set out on the right path, so too must we be able to lead those who have made poor choices to rehabilitation, redemption and reintegration.

In actuality, the path begins well before any serious criminal activity occurs. In this regard, the Catholic Church has a unique opportunity to be a conduit of merciful and transformative action through our Catholic schools. In a recent book entitled *Lost Classroom, Lost Community: Catholic Schools' Importance in Urban America* (University of Chicago Press), Margaret F. Brinig and Nicole Stelle Garnett, law professors at the University of Notre Dame, concluded that the presence of Catholic schools is positively correlated with neighborhood stability and lower crime. They also concluded that Catholic elementary schools help foster closer social connections and a greater sense of responsibility for the common good, what they call social capital.

Deterring criminal behavior and reducing rates of incarceration also require programs that equip people to overcome the challenges that result from a poor education, lack of marketable job skills and the legacy of physical abuse, chemical dependency and disease that often plague those who live in poverty and despair. Access to these programs should be easy and plentiful, which means they must be fully funded, professionally staffed and centrally located, and they must be visible and integrated into our systems and institutions so they can effectively reach those they are designed to serve.

The tide of public opinion and legislation seems to be turning favorably in this direction. A recent Pew Research Center survey shows that 67 percent of Americans believe the government should focus more on providing treatment for drug users, while only 26 percent feel it should focus on prosecut-

ing drug users. The survey also showed that in 2014, 63 percent of Americans supported the elimination of mandatory sentences for nonviolent drug crimes, up from 47 percent in 2001. Proposals like the Smarter Sentencing Act currently being debated by Congress, which would reduce mandatory minimum sentences for those convicted of federal drug offenses, are leading the way in trying to address the problems associated with mass incarceration by keeping more nonviolent offenders out of prison to begin with.

Those who do end up serving sentences in prison must get the help they need to be productive and law abiding citizens when they are released. This is so obvious that it seems strange to have to make such a statement. One need not condone actions that harm society, but we must seek responses that do not result in a recidivism rate of nearly 70 percent. There must be a clear path to overcoming dependency issues that includes being able to find housing, buy food and support children and finding acceptance and forgiveness from others. In so doing, we must seek to mine the potential given each person by God and to restore dignity and wholeness to their lives. This is critical not only for former inmates but for their families and our communities as well.

No one aspires to become a drug addict and go to jail. People do not freely choose to live where there are drugs being sold on the streets, gunshots being fired, the unemployed gathered at every corner and temptations to succumb to a full menu of vices at every turn. We are called to acknowledge that our society has set up a structure of inequality, where those who are poor or members of a minority group suffer disproportionately for their mistakes and are not given a chance to recover their footing in society. Our Catholic parishes can play a critical role here by exploring ways to help welcome back not former inmates but returning citizens.

In his recent visits to prisons in Italy, Pope Francis continually spoke about the challenges faced by inmates returning to society and the need for them to have hope. He called upon institutions to ensure that an "effective reinsertion in society" is not neglected, lest the penalty being served become just a punishment and instrument of social retaliation. And he emphasized that the dignity of the human person must be at the center of all we do—

that we must always have hope and give hope because God's love for each one of us is eternal and his forgiveness is inexhaustible. God "never condemns. He never forgives only, but he forgives and accompanies.... This is the love of God, and we must imitate him!" May we, like God, never tire of forgiving, of accompanying those who need forgiveness on a path to dignity and wholeness. 

The U.S. bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs is one of 43 members of the ecumenical group Christian Churches Together, which recently drafted a statement on mass incarceration denouncing its dehumanizing effect, its disproportionate toll on minorities and the poor, and its failure to restore inmates to being productive members of society.



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JAMES T. KEANE, GENERAL EDITOR

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A panel discussion of the practical considerations of healthcare access and the philosophical/religious questions underpinning the debate

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Senior Vice President, Community Health

& Values Integration, Centura Health, Englewood, Colorado

Dr. Charlene A. Galarneau

Assistant Professor, Women's & Gender Studies Department

Wellesley College

Dr. Paul Weithman

Professor of Philosophy, Glynn Family Honors Collegiate Professor

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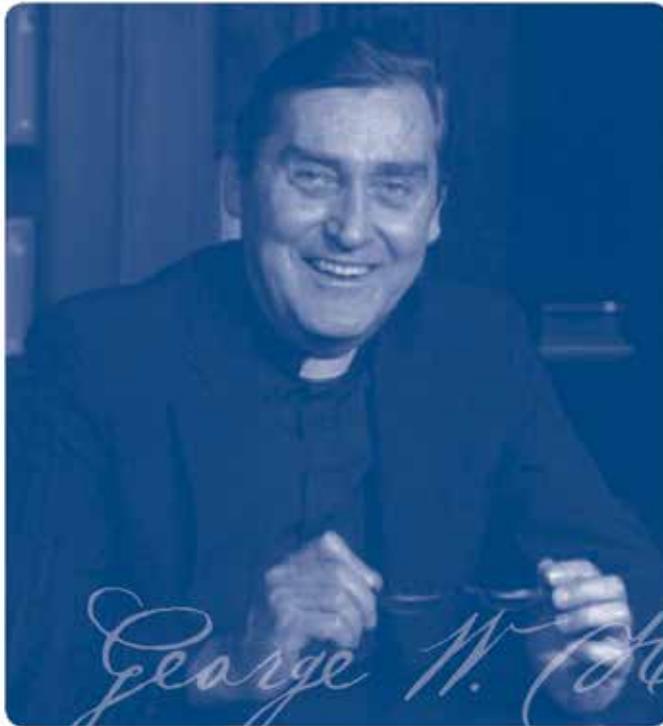
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THE LIFE OF GEORGE W. HUNT, S.J. (1937-2011)

George W. Hunt, S.J., served as the 11th editor in chief of *America*, the national Catholic review published by the Jesuits of the United States. A native of Yonkers, N.Y., Father Hunt entered the Society of Jesus in 1954 and was ordained a priest in 1967. He earned a theology degree from Yale Divinity School in 1970, later remarking that his decision to study Kierkegaard with Professor Paul Holmer was “the best and most fruitful decision in my entire academic life,” for it set the stage for a life-long study of the literary arts.

George W. Hunt, S.J., retired as editor in chief in 1998, at the conclusion of the magazine’s most prosperous year to-date. He remains the longest serving editor in chief in *America*’s history. Later that year, Father Hunt was named director of the Archbishop Hughes Institute for Religion and Culture at Fordham University, where he dedicated himself to “exploring the relationships between religion and other aspects of contemporary life.” George W. Hunt, S.J., Jesuit priest, author and friend, died in 2011 at the age of 74.

THE MISSION OF THE GEORGE W. HUNT, S.J., PRIZE

The Hunt Prize is to be awarded annually and is made possible through the vision and generosity of Fay Vincent Jr., former commissioner of Major League Baseball, who sought to honor his long-standing friend, Father Hunt. The mission of the Prize is five-fold:

- I. To promote scholarship, the advancement of learning and the rigor of expression;
- II. To support and promote a new generation of journalists, authors and scholars;
- III. To memorialize the life and work of George W. Hunt, S.J.;
- IV. To forge a lasting partnership between *America* and the Saint Thomas More Chapel and Center at Yale University;
- V. To support the intellectual formation of Catholic young adults.

CRITERIA

The Hunt Prize will be awarded to a single individual whose body of work has focused on one or more of the following topical areas:

- Catholicism and Civic Life
- Catholicism and Arts and Letters
- Modern American Fiction
- U.S. Sports
- U.S. History
- Jazz or Classical Music
- American Film and Drama
- Poetry
- Spirituality & Literature

Only English language works of which the nominee is the sole or principal author will be considered.

ELIGIBILITY

Recipients of the George W. Hunt, S.J., Prize must dedicate a substantial portion of their professional energies to writing and must fulfill the following additional criteria:

- He or she must be 45 years of age or younger on the day the prize is awarded;
- He or she should be familiar with the Roman Catholic tradition;
- He or she should be of sound moral character and reputation and must not have published works that are manifestly atheistic or morally offensive.

NOMINATIONS

Nominations for The Hunt Prize will open on George W. Hunt’s birthday, at 12 a.m. on January 22, 2015 and the nomination period will close at 11:59 p.m. on March 31. All submissions may be made at huntprize.org.

FORMAL AWARD AND CEREMONY

The winner will be announced in June 2015. The winner will be awarded a gift of \$25,000. Formal awarding will take place at the Saint Thomas More Chapel and Center at Yale University in September 2015.

The recipient of the award will deliver a lecture that is related to his or her primary works, and the lecture will be published as a cover story in *America* within three months of its delivery.

For more information: huntprize.org

Wage Watch

Tracking an important social experiment in Seattle

BY JOSEPH J. DUNN

The vote to raise the minimum wage and minimum compensation (wages, plus tips and employer's contribution to health insurance) by Seattle's city council is the most aggressive in a series of efforts to increase pay for traditionally low-wage workers. Congress shows no interest in changing the federal minimum wage, now \$7.25 per hour, even to the \$10.10 suggested by President Obama. But minimum wages rose in 13 states and several municipalities on Jan. 1, 2014, and in another four states at the midterm elections, either through cost of living adjustments or by legislative action.

Some local decisions may disappoint—like the veto by the mayor of Washington, D.C., of an ordinance requiring big box retailers to pay a minimum wage of \$12.50 per hour—but state and local government actions for better pay may

prove advantageous in the short term.

There are several reasons for this. First, local governments are better able to set a new minimum wage that reflects the cost of living in their area. Most would agree that it costs far more to live in a major coastal city like New York or San Francisco than in rural areas or even in many mid-sized cities and towns. The federal law lacks such finesse. Second, not all labor markets are the same. A city with a large population of retirees may offer different opportunities than a college town or an area where agriculture is the dominant industry. Third, local conditions can be more easily monitored as experience accumulates, and any needed adjustments can be made locally. Federal law is rarely so responsive. All of this is consistent with the principle of subsidiarity.

Seattle's law is novel in that it establishes two standards: a minimum wage, which is simply the amount of money in the employee's pay divided by the number of hours worked, and a separate, higher minimum compensation, which is the total of wage income plus tips and the employer's contribution toward

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the employee's health insurance plan. The minimum compensation requirement, in practical terms, is apparently meant to assure that small employers or those with mainly part-time employees contribute something to an employee's cost of buying health insurance individually.

Another Seattle novelty is the requirement that any franchisee of a corporation that employs 500 or more employees in the United States is also subject to the wage requirements for large employers, even if the franchisee is a single store that employs far fewer workers. In other words, if it looks like a McDonald's, it is a McDonald's, even though it may be a family-owned business that would otherwise be subject to the reduced requirements of an employer with fewer than 500 workers. This provision stretches basic concepts of corporate identity and seems to deny the franchisee equal protection under the law by putting one family-owned restaurant or store at a major disadvantage compared with a similar but non-franchised, family-owned competitor in the same industry. But that is for lawyers and judges to settle.

Side Effects

The new law sets big increases for low-wage workers. The minimum wage per hour for employers with more than 500 workers in the United States rises to \$11 on Jan. 1, 2015, and then increases annually through Jan. 1, 2017, by set amounts to \$15. Thereafter, the minimum is adjusted annually to keep current with the cost of living. For employers with 500 or fewer workers, the change is more gradual, starting at \$10 per hour in 2015 and reaching \$15 per hour in 2021. But the minimum compensation standard is \$11 per hour in 2015 and rises by one dollar per hour annually to \$14 in 2018. There are exemptions for salaried executive, administrative and professional employees, all of which terms are carefully described in the Washington State Minimum Wage Act.

For reference, a worker who is paid \$15 per hour for a 40-hour week receives \$31,200 per year before taxes are deducted. That is equal to the poverty level income calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau for a family of six including four children under 18 in 2013. For a single-parent family of three with two children under 18, the poverty threshold was \$18,769; for individuals, \$12,119.

What happens next? Minimum wage laws, like tax laws, are inherently experimental. They rarely produce only the predicted outcome. Side effects may be mild or severe. Maryland's legislature, for example, recently raised the exemption in its estate tax only a few years after increasing the tax rate on "millionaire" estates. The higher exemption was approved by a Democratic-controlled legislature and signed by Governor

Martin O'Malley, also a Democrat, because so many high-net-worth families were moving out of the state that the former tax increase was proving to be counterproductive.

The new minimum wage law is not an undiluted blessing.

Employees working 40 hours per week are indeed lifted out of poverty. But the Affordable Care Act's requirement that employers provide health insurance coverage for those who work more than 30 hours per week may induce some employers to prefer part-time help. Part-time workers receive the Seattle-mandated higher pay, but only for the number of hours worked. Without a second part-time

job, an escape from poverty may prove elusive for such workers. The combined employment impact of these two laws is difficult to predict.

Minimum wage laws rarely produce only the predicted outcome.

No Labor Lost?

There are always some cautions to observe with regard to minimum wage law. William Wascher of the Federal Reserve Board, along with David Neumark and J. M. Ian Salas of the University of California at Irvine, have studied the impact of minimum wage hikes on employment and systematically reviewed numerous other studies of this topic. Their conclusion in a 2013 National Bureau of Economic Research working paper is that "we continue to view the available empirical evidence as indicating that minimum wages pose a tradeoff of higher wages for some against job losses for others, and that policymakers need to bear this tradeoff in mind when making decisions about increasing the minimum wage."

Earlier research by Neumark and Wascher had found that raising the minimum wage does result in fewer jobs available for the lowest-skilled workers as employers adjust. The effect may not be immediate, but becomes visible as time progresses, possibly a year or more after the wage increase is set. Technology or new procedures may cause some job loss. The economists also cite substantial evidence that the lowest-skilled workers may lose out to workers with slightly higher qualifications.

An employer considering multiple applicants for a position that requires very little skill or training will still choose the worker with marginally better skills. When large minimum wage adjustments are made, as in the Seattle law, the higher wage may draw into the job market some people who had been ignoring entry-level jobs. Consider the middle-class grandmother, teenager or college student who is not interested in a job that pays \$8 or \$9 per hour but decides to go to work when the same low-stress, easy-training job pays \$14 or \$15 per hour. This "labor-labor" substitution hurts disadvantaged workers most.

The stated purpose of the law is to help tens of thousands of Seattle workers escape poverty. The dignity of earning their own way is restored. Earned income replaces government assistance, and some people will move away from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (more commonly known as food stamps) as their income surpasses the threshold for that program, which is 130 percent of the poverty line. If carefully managed, the higher pay will provide some discretionary income beyond basic living expenses, which can be saved (perhaps in a 401(k) plan), donated, spent on education or simply spent for one of life's little luxuries.

Some protest the law's intrusion into free market establishment of wages. But the same protest would apply to the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, which has for years allowed Walmart and other businesses to pay poverty wages while paying shareholder dividends from multibillion dollar profits and paying executives multimillion dollar bonuses. How does any free-marketer argue that a business that cannot decently support its various stakeholders, including employees, merits a federal tax subsidy of its operations through E.I.T.C.?

Nonprofit organizations may find difficulties, especially those that rely on revenue from federal programs. Robert Stack, president and chief executive officer of Community Options, a national nonprofit that provides services to people with severe developmental disabilities, wrote in a Wall Street Journal opinion piece (4/11/2014) that his agency would welcome an increase in the federal minimum wage—if the money could be found to pay it. His agency has a \$100 million budget—a huge sum of money. But most of that revenue is derived from Medicaid billable hours since most of the clients are indigent.

Almost every year, all of that \$100 million is paid out in wages and other operating expenses. That is the point of a nonprofit: there is no profit. Unless Medicaid increases the rates it pays to service providers like Community Options, they have no way to pay the new minimum wage. The government sets those rates, not the nonprofit. Nonprofit entities are not exempt from the Seattle law or most other minimum wage laws. The squeeze is obvious. Unless Medicaid rates are adjusted, Community Options will have to reduce services in communities with high minimum wages. Other nonprofits face similar challenges.

As more states and cities update their minimum wage laws, we can learn from both the successes and the failures. While the experiments are in progress, let us put aside our stereotypes and axioms to learn what works and what does not. That is essential. The experience, fairly measured, makes us better able to form, as Pope Francis calls for in "The Joy of the Gospel," the "decisions, programs, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor" (No. 204). 

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Good Sports

Getting closer to God through athletics

BY MARTIN SIEGEL

If a millennium from now someone were to examine the artifacts of our civilization, he or she would discover that in many places sports facilities were the largest and most prominent buildings. This discovery might lead to the conclusion that sports were one of the most powerful influences in our culture. And that conclusion would be correct.

Past civilizations left behind colossal cathedrals to glorify God because for them ultimate power resided in religion. We will leave behind colossal sport stadiums, because these are, for many, our cathedrals. Sport is our shared religion.

What power does sport manifest that has made it the “religion” of many contemporary people? To answer this question, we need to examine those powers that connect all human beings to their Creator and that express the essence of that Creator in daily life. I would like to examine five of these essential forces: breath manifests the original energy of the Creator; music expresses the energy of the Creator as sound; nature (or the created world) is the most extensive manifestation of the Creator that humans can experience; physical activities are the part of nature through which the energy of the Creator is manifested most intimately for human beings; through symbolic intellect human beings create forms to express their deepest knowledge to themselves and to each other.

Five Essential Forces

Sport may be the most powerful expression of these energies in the world today. Hence, the powerful hold of sport on human beings and the energy it evokes. Let us consider each of these forces in greater depth.

The energy that breath creates is the first and essential manifestation of the original creative energy of the Creator. Without breath, we could not survive for more than a few minutes. How human beings expend this energy shows powerfully how they live out the essence of their creation and their Creator.

Sport expresses this energy through the athletes and the fans who support the teams. The games and competitions showcase some of the most powerful and artful ways in which gifted human beings can use and experience this

energy. In sport, athletes can experience the manifestation of the Creator’s energy most powerfully and intelligently by showing how they can overcome other players who share the same capacity.

The fans are connected to this energy through the imagery that the competition creates for them. So, for example, when their team wins, the fans feel powerful and important, even though they know they had nothing to do with the result. The team has become a higher expression of themselves. Through this identification, the fans’ lives are elevated to a higher symbolic level, on which the essential forces of creation are expressed. This connection can move then to feel closer to the original Creator. This accounts for sport’s power over the imaginations of the fans.

Another way that people experience the energy of the Creator is through music, which is the energy of the Creator as expressed in sound. The most material reaction to music is dance. Moving the physical body to music joins the breath of the Creator as expressed in music to the power of the human body to move. There is the obvious music that we hear, but there is also the deeper level expressed in the rhythm of creation that cannot be heard. In sport the athletes are “dancing” (moving in a ritualized fashion) to this hidden music of creation. There is a powerful essential rhythm to the games and competitions in which all participants are dancing.

Through viewing the competitions, the fans participate in this essential dance by feeling its hidden music. This “rhythm” at the heart of the game allows fans to experience the deeper rhythm of the Creator as expressed through the game. The power of this rhythm joins the players and the fans into a dance, through which they are connected and together experience the energy of the Creator. This energy can feel like ecstasy when players and fans experience the highest form of this dance in an artful play or victory.

Physical activities are another way in which the essential energy of the Creator is expressed in sport. During sporting events, the players are using their original energy expressed through running, throwing, catching, seeing and coordinating with one another in the most powerful and effective ways. Thus they show one another the higher possibilities of physical activities or functions. They have taken the capacity with which all humans are endowed and raised them to their highest physical potential. This is what inspires the fans and others. The players are accomplishing their highest

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TEAMWORK. Gonzaga and Wichita State during an N.C.A.A. tournament basketball game on March 23, 2013

potential, and the fans are experiencing this vicariously. This offers what most humans desire: the capacity for self-transcendence. Fans and their communities are no longer just themselves. They have become larger than themselves through identification with the players, the games and the community through this experience of the game.

Sport provides a real and symbolic means through which individual life potential can be realized and experienced. This experience of individual and communal self-transcendence is the deepest desire of human beings.

The last essential way human beings express the energy of the Creator in sport is through what are called “plays”—the choreography of the original energy into a coherent and beautiful pattern. A well-executed play is akin to the great art forms that express the harmony in creation. When observing such a play, it is as if we are examining a great work of art or literature, a ballet or a symphony. In all these works, the harmony of all creation and its relationship to the Creator are expressed. When participating in or watching sports, people are experiencing the essential harmony of great art that is hidden behind its diverse expressions.

REUTERS/JIM UROUJAR

Winning: Not the Only Thing

Sport expresses the unity and harmony of the Creator, but it also expresses the diversity of life experience through winning and losing. How does this affect its capacity to connect the created to the Creator? There are two levels of human experience in this regard: competition and cooperation. Humans are attracted to both. One certainly understands that competition is only a subset of a higher unity that includes both opposing parts.

Since humans are limited, they want to succeed in materialistic terms. This dynamic is why winning a football game is important to the players and the fans alike. However, all participants understand that the game cannot be played unless common rules, which make the game possible, are agreed upon. These rules require winners and losers. The rules also require penalties. So even if people want to win, they know they can only win in the context that makes the game possible.

Yet after the game is over and the winning and losing have been decided, most people find their ultimate enjoyment in having participated in the game. They would cer-

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tainly like to win, but they know that playing the game is the most important thing because in the act of playing they experience the deep energies of the Creator and can connect to these energies. They can also connect to the supporters or fans of the other team because they recognize they are connected by the higher energy expressed in the game. The fans are passionate during the game, and they bond after it is over. The individual and communal identification with the team provides a vocabulary for deeper bonding through which people can talk to each other about their loyalties to their teams.

We need particular symbols to give unique expression to who we are as individual teams, cities or nations. But we also need ways to see how these symbols can be a means to relate to each other effectively. Sport provides this opportunity.

Perhaps the forces that draw us to sport can draw us back to religion, which, for many today, has become disconnected from the essential forces that connect us with our Creator. Perhaps religions can learn from sport: so many of the great expressions and themes of religion—prayer, sin, repentance, revival, salvation, community and eternity—can be examined through the metaphors and experiences that sport provides. By making these connections, the power of traditional religious activities and institutions can be renewed in more powerful ways that relate to the human experience in the world today. A

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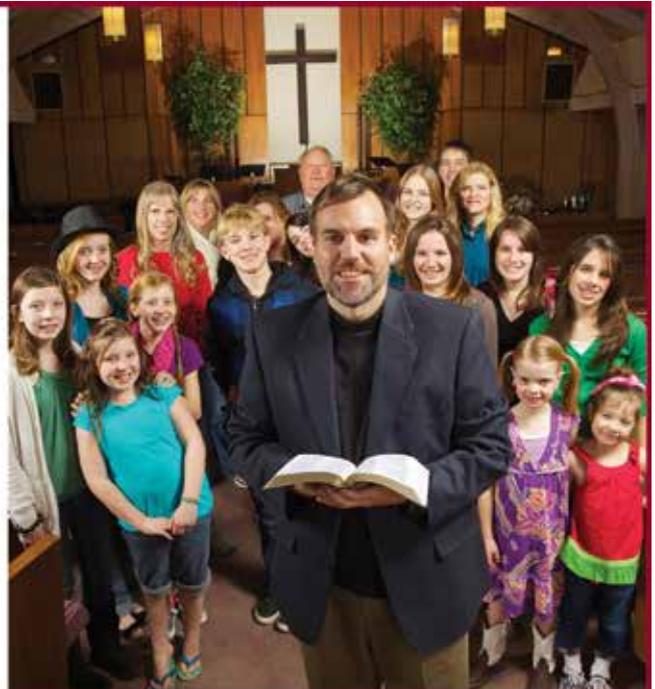
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Reaching the Peripheries

Two key concepts in the renewal of the Catholic Church that Pope Francis is undertaking are decentralization and peripheries. Both appear in the apostolic exhortation “The Joy of the Gospel,” the programmatic document for his pontificate. In that magisterial text he talks about “the need to promote a sound decentralization” in the church (No. 16) and “to obey the call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the peripheries in need of the light of the Gospel” (No. 20).

Since becoming pope, Francis has given substance to both concepts. He has promoted decentralization, together with synodality, by giving a greater role to the Synod of Bishops. His own active participation in the synod’s council goes in the same direction. Decentralization is also at the heart of his decree that the pallium be given to metropolitan archbishops in their home dioceses, not in Rome. And it is the rationale for his decisions to canonize Joseph Vaz in Sri Lanka and Junípero Serra in the United States, rather than in the Vatican.

The concept of peripheries comes to center stage whenever Francis has to make decisions about foreign trips. He gives priority to situations of conflict, poverty or natural disaster or to places where Christians are in a minority and it is vitally important to foster friendship and dialogue with other religions. Hence his decisions to visit the Holy Land, Turkey, Korea, Albania, Sri Lanka, the Philippines,

Uganda, the Central African Republic, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay and the city of Sarajevo.

The concept of peripheries has also been a decisive factor in Francis’ selection of new cardinals, enabling him to reach communities that are experiencing poverty, conflict and tensions or that have never before received a red hat, including Myanmar, Tonga, Haiti and Burkina Faso.

While the peripheries concept strongly influences Francis’ decisions regarding foreign trips and new cardinals, the concept of decentralization has yet to have a similar substantial impact on church life worldwide, though this could change significantly within five years.

There are, in fact, several areas where Francis could promote decentralization. Right now he is reforming the Roman Curia; the crucial question here is which issues need to come to Rome for decision and which could or should be left to the local churches. This has been a bone of contention between Rome and local churches in the past, but if resolved in a way that reflects Francis’ vision, it could bring significant changes in church governance.

Senior levels of the Roman Curia have been consulted on this fundamental issue, but I am not aware of any such soundings of bishops’ conferences. The question could surface at the consistory of cardinals from Feb. 12 to 13, which Francis convened to brief the cardinals on the reform of the Curia.

A second, more specific area where

decentralization could take place is in the process for marriage annulments. This would involve giving authority to the local church to resolve cases. The issue was raised at the 2014 Synod of Bishops on the Family and will return at next October’s synod. Francis has established a commission to study this question. One can expect movement here.

These two examples are only part of the broader question of decentralization and collegiality that Francis raised in “The Joy of the Gospel,” where he says, “The papacy and the central structures of the universal church need to hear the call to pastoral conversion” (No. 32).

Recalling that the Second Vatican Council stated that “like the ancient patriarch churches, episcopal conferences are in a position ‘to contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realization of the collegial spirit,’” Francis observed that “this desire has not been fully realized, since a juridical status of episcopal conferences which would see them as subject of specific attributions, including genuine doctrinal authority, has not yet been sufficiently elaborated.”

Pope Francis intends to give such juridical status to episcopal conferences. He is convinced that “excessive centralization, rather than proving helpful, complicates the church’s life and her missionary outreach” (No. 32). This decision could cause a seismic shift in the governance of the Catholic Church and bring dividends in the ecumenical field.

Francis gives priority to situations of conflict, poverty or natural disaster.

GERARD O’CONNELL

GERARD O’CONNELL is *America’s* Rome correspondent. *America’s* Vatican coverage is sponsored in part by the Jesuit communities of the United States. Twitter: @gergyrome.

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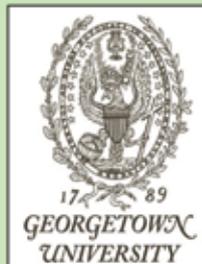
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Raising Peter

What my son taught me about my faith

BY MARY BETH WERDEL

When my oldest son Peter was almost 4 years old, we arrived at Sunday Mass, hurriedly walking in a few minutes late, when he noticed the prayer candles in the back corner of the church. He was mesmerized. He asked, “Mommy, what are those?” As the mother of a child who had been labeled as having a significant delay in the way he was acquiring language, I was happy to hear a non-routine, real question stemming from his curiosity. However, as the mother of a family who was already walking into Mass late, hearing my child talk in an outdoor voice, drawing further attention to our family’s tardiness and increasing our disruptiveness, I was embarrassed.

“Those are prayer candles, Peter,” I said softly. He stared at the flickering votive candles, flames dancing in no particular order, though I could only imagine he was looking for some order to the movement of light as he stared. “Mommy, I’m going to go blow out those candles,” he responded in the most determined manner. Of course, this made perfect sense, as his only point of reference for such things was birthday candles that he always had been encouraged to blow out. However, there was no bone in my body that was going to let him do the

MARY BETH WERDEL is assistant professor of pastoral care and counseling at Fordham University in New York City.



same with prayer candles.

“No, Peter, those are not birthday candles, they are prayer candles. People light those in memory of a loved one they are praying for,” I said. “We can’t blow out those candles. Those are people’s prayers.”

Peter was silent for a moment. He then responded, “But I want to blow out those people’s prayers.”

The following Sunday Peter again indicated that he wanted to blow out people’s prayers. I again tried to help him understand that this was completely wrong. The Sunday that followed was the same. Eventually Peter stopped asking me to blow out people’s prayers. However, the phrase remained with me, rattling in my consciousness. In moments of quiet prayer, I found myself meditating on the phrase. Is this what Peter was doing, in the best sense of the phrase, for the first few

years of his life? Was Peter blowing out my prayers?

Peter’s Complexities

I found out I was pregnant with Peter on my 31st birthday. To say I was happy would be a gross understatement. I was amazed. Peter was born full term, with a full head of hair and a sweet smile. One nurse told me he was the cutest baby in the nursery. Of course I agreed.

Peter had a few challenges when he was born. He was never able to nurse, even after we had his frenulum cut. Because of this he struggled to gain weight the first month. He also had a hard time calming down to sleep and demanded to be held during all of his naps until he was almost eight months old. At first I thought I was doing something wrong. Why couldn’t I get my child to sleep? I was reassured, however, when my mother-in-law, a seasoned mother of five, watched Peter for a few hours. After, she exclaimed, “He doesn’t sleep!”

When Peter was 3 months old, my husband came across an article on early signs of autism. He emailed it to me. “Do you think this could apply to Peter?” I read it and went about my day. Peter admittedly did not make great eye contact. But autism? Not Peter. He was the cutest baby in the hospital.

When Peter was 10 months old I found out I was pregnant again. Peter started to acquire language during my pregnancy. He seemed to talk only in

questions. It was cute. Since he was my only child, I knew no other way for children to acquire language. I grew accustomed to the way he was talking, and I simply translated everything he said. When he woke up, he would come into my bedroom and say “Are you awake?” as a way of communicating to me that he was. He did the same with food: “Are you hungry?” And with activities: “Do you want to paint?” I knew what he meant to say. Wasn’t that enough?

William was born when Peter was 18 months. Peter wanted nothing to do with William. He seemed unable to share space, almost frightened by William’s movements and sounds. As William grew, we noticed how differently the two were developing. For instance, Peter never crawled appropriately. We thought it was because we had hardwood floors and few carpets, so there was not enough traction to be on his knees. But when William was playing on the same floors, we realized it was not the floors keeping Peter from crawling. It was something else.

I started to do research. A few months after his second birthday, while Peter still wore a bib because he drooled so much, the word autism

came across my radar again. I read incessantly any article I could find, sharing each one with my husband. I spoke to both my mother, who works with people with autism, and my husband’s mother, an elementary school teacher. Everyone I spoke to replied the same: “Not Peter. He’s just really smart.”

Peter is really smart. By age 2 he could count to 50, knew all of his letters and had memorized over 50 books. But he never pointed, never requested anything, did not know how to wave hello or goodbye. He didn’t show me toys or engage me in his play. However it was his language that was the most peculiar by far.

One night I found an article in The New York Times written by a college professor about her 2-year-old son who, among other things, talked only in questions. Her son’s diagnosis: autism. I was heartbroken.

I stopped listening to other people and started listening to Peter. A team of educators and therapists evaluated him. Within a few months he received speech and occupational therapy, special educational instruction to develop mature play and social skills and eventually physical therapy. With the help of others, I started to understand Peter

and help him move toward a more relational, organized and sensory integrated way of being in the world.

Motherhood and Faith

In times of stress one often turns to faith for guidance. But my connection to organized church was struggling. Peter could not handle the stimulation of church. When it came time for the bells to ring during Mass, Peter would cover his ears and scream. In an attempt to help Peter understand the bells, the pastoral associate let him touch them after Mass. But the next Sunday the fear response was the same. One thing was clear: The bells I heard in my ears were not the same sound Peter was hearing.

So we bought Peter a headset he could wear during Mass. It was not plugged into anything but something to dull the senses. We had many looks of disgust from parishioners who I can only assume thought Peter was listening to an iPhone. But I was not going to let other people’s unawareness keep my family from Mass; Peter’s fear, maybe. One Sunday we were in the car on the way to Mass when Peter started screaming, “Mommy do you have my headset?” On a scale of 1 to 100, his anxiety at that moment was a 99. I was forced to reflect. What was I doing? How is Mass helping Peter? What place of horror and fear is he associating with church? What was he learning about his parents and their ability to keep him safe? What was I really asking of him?

We stopped attending church as a family for about a year. Off and on we would try again. It wasn’t until Peter was 3 that his senses seemed to integrate enough to handle the stimulation at Mass. It wasn’t until he was 3 that we could be at church as a family. When we returned, I experienced church with a new set of eyes: Peter’s.

Faith and Integration

With distance I was able to reflect back on my experience with the church over

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the year. I wondered, if Peter's senses never integrated, would I have lost my connection to organized faith altogether? Thankfully for my family, such a question would remain hypothetical. But what about other people's families who may not have that luxury, too far in the trenches of the reality of raising a child with sensory integration concerns or autism? What becomes of the church for them?

I recognized important, interconnected lessons about normalcy and hospitality over that year. First, I came to realize that when I prayed for my children, often what I was really praying for, and what I hear many other parents praying for as well, is "normalcy." I, like so many other parents, prayed that my children would be like other children. Even when Peter was labeled at 2 as a child with a disability, I was still praying for him to become nondisabled. Until he did, I thought, we could never fully integrate into the church; for I had believed that the best and most inclusive church ex-

periences were extended to families that were considered "normal."

I wonder now, is church only for neurotypical families? What is happening to all the non-neurotypical children and families? If autism is diagnosed at a rate of 1 in 88 children, by praying for normalcy, by believing in it, hoping for it, is one setting oneself up to leave the church? For the families who do not leave, is there really a church there to support and integrate their child? Is there a church community that does not pity this child but loves this child with no conditions?

My prayers have changed since raising Peter. I pray now for Peter to flourish and that I will be provided with the eyes, ears and heart to respond to Peter in ways that will help him do so. To do this I recognize I must first love Peter unconditionally, just the way he is. For, in order to truly love someone, does it not demand acceptance and understanding? Otherwise we love not the person, but an imagined figure.

I no longer pray for normalcy. I am starting to believe that praying for and including that term sets up a system that by its nature demands exclusion. Instead I pray that Peter and I will grow more relational. I want Peter to feel love and express love. And I pray that one day Peter and others like him will be met by a living church that meets all with relational community and unconditional love.

I see now why I could not let go of Peter's phrase. For it was still talking to me. It was helping me to grow in understanding, in faith and in love. I pray now in thanksgiving and in gratitude for the fact that Peter has blown out my old prayers of normalcy and re-ignited them as prayers of relationship and love. And I pray that with education—on autism and sensory integration, on a theology of hospitality and on a perspective of love—others, like myself before them, will find a space in which they feel safe enough to let a little boy blow out their prayers. ▲

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March 13-15
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Non-silent Retreat for Women & Men
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 Take time to reflect on our faith, how we have changed, and how we live out God's love.

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Prayer and the Practice
of Medicine
Non-silent Retreat for Women and Men
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March 27-29
Palm Sunday Weekend Retreat
Silent Retreat for Women and Men
 Pastoral Team
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April 10-12
Kairos Continues
Non-silent Retreat for Women & Men
 Mr. Michael Shaughnessy and Kairos Alumni/ae Team
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April 24-26
Recovery Retreat
We Stand at the Turning Point
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 Sr. Pat Galli, R.S.M.
 Find the freedom of knowing our own limitations.

IDEAS | JON M. SWEENEY

A SAINT IN THE CITY

St. Francis of Assisi visits New York

The world's most popular saint has much to say for our times and was, in a way, "saying" some of it in Brooklyn this winter. This is not magical realism, but a point of fact. An exceedingly rare exhibit of textual artifacts related to the life of St. Francis of Assisi and the formation of the Franciscan order was on display for one month at Brooklyn's Borough Hall. The stated purpose of "Friar Francis: Traces, Words, Metaphors" was to bring the saint's message to ordinary people, which helps explain the non-curatorial, easily accessible venue. The exhibit was not on tour. When they packed everything up in mid-January, it was straight back to Assisi.

This extraordinary collection of early books, letters and papal documents was carefully presented upstairs in Borough Hall in what is known as the Courtroom—an old appellate courtroom once used for filming episodes of "Law & Order," now mostly reserved for ceremonial functions. How appropriate, then, that one of the first texts on display was an early copy of Francis' letter to government officials, written in 1220, in which he asks them to allow their subjects time during the workday to take a break and "offer their prayers and thanksgivings to the one, all-powerful God."

This letter, among the few

we know for certain Francis wrote, was central to his commitment that the spiritual life is much more than what goes on inside of us. Francis believed that salvation extended to more than human souls. His spirituality had little to do with practices that make us feel better. He consistently taught—here, even to "mayors, councilmen, magistrates, and governors"—that we are all responsible for supporting the salvation of those in our care.

Sitting near that prophetic letter was a rather different example of early Franciscan spirituality. I lingered long at the late 15th-century codex, a gor-

geous example, of *The Little Flowers* on display. A late medieval text penned by Franciscans well after Francis' death, *The Little Flowers* cemented the legends of this unusual man, who loved birds and exhorted fish, who reached out not only to lepers but to robbers, and who was able to broker peace between a wild animal and a frightened town. This is also where we find stories of Francis' holy foolery, as when he instructs his brother friars to preach in their underwear, then does so himself, and his dedication to strict poverty. Millions of people have come to love Francis through *The Little Flowers*. It has been read by more people than all other Franciscan books combined. Perhaps pondering that lovely early example of it drew even more to him and the Gospel he lived and loved.

Also well-displayed and described in

"The Canticle of the Creatures by Saint Francis of Assisi at Brooklyn Borough Hall"



PHOTO: "THE CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES BY SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI AT BROOKLYN BOROUGH HALL" USED WITH PERMISSION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK ©2014. CITY OF NEW YORK. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

the courtroom were 18 other items, including the earliest extant copies of the biographies of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano and St. Bonaventure, and an exquisite early copy of Ubertino of Casale's *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu Christi*, a work that exhorts any would-be religious change-maker to remember that Jesus must remain at the center of any reforming movement. Seeing these three displayed so close together gave me pause.

Thomas of Celano's *Life* was published only two years after St. Francis' death, and it is surely the closest biography we have to the real man. But three decades later, Bonaventure became minister general of the Franciscan order, wrote a new life of Francis and ordered that all the earlier biographies be destroyed. Thank God they were not, and this one even made it to Brooklyn. After Bonaventure, serious dissension took place within the order between friars who wanted to remain faithful to the original ideals of their founder, a small group, and the majority faction who wanted to make changes. Ubertino of Casale, who was born at about the time Bonaventure's *Life* was published, became the leader of the faithful remnant. He became almost fanatical in the strictness of his idealism.

None of the textual artifacts on display contained the actual autograph of St. Francis, but some were written during his lifetime, including two letters from Pope Honorius III to the friar from 1220 and 1222. Special attention was given throughout the exhibit to emphasize the human Francis rather than the canonized saint, and as a result it was also easy to begin seeing a man who stood apart from his era. We see him playing with animals and worrying about their safety, asking worldly leaders to allow their subjects to take time from work to pray and worship God, and who was such a lover of people that he needed to be reminded by Pope Honorius, 11 years after his first

rule had been approved by a previous pope, that there should be at least one year of testing before a man could be admitted to the order. Francis was known for accepting everyone.

The exhibit also featured the papal bull of April 1230 from Pope Gregory IX, another character central to the story of Francis' life, who probably would not have been elected pope had he not been Francis' close associate. The bull assigned the Hill of Paradise, formerly a much-despised place, as the setting for a new basilica to honor the recently deceased, canonized friar. The name referred to what then became the Basilica of San Francesco, one of the great pilgrimage places in all Christendom to this day. Reading that bull one could only wonder in amazement what Francis would have thought of what they did with his legacy after he was gone. He might have felt uncomfortable in the basilica that many of us have admired.

In one more case sat the most original document in the exhibit: the 1253 will of "Picardo and Giovannetto, children and heirs of the late Angelo son of Pica, agreeing to the division of all their movable and immovable property." Angelo is believed to have been Francis' brother; Picardo and Giovannetto would therefore have been Francis' nephews. This was prime evidence that the man we so often reduce to an image on a holy card was a real man who left family behind when he heard God speaking, saying, "Go and rebuild my church."

There was no catalog. And I was disappointed how descriptions of items often stuck to generalizations. For instance, as I scrutinized that

copy of *The Little Flowers*, I noted that it measured about 6" x 8" and was 2 1/2" thick, but I wanted to know details of binding, parchment, provenance and so on. This was no museum. But that was also its charm. The Brooklyn Borough president was proud to have overseen the coming of St. Francis to New York. He said, "Brooklyn is well-versed in making history, and history is certainly being made with our first-ever public display in the United States of the manuscripts of St. Francis of Assisi, a figure universally known and appreciated regardless of the borders drawn among our various affiliations." And he was right.

JON M. SWEENEY is the author of *When Saint Francis Saved the Church and translator of Francis of Assisi in His Own Words.*

[Rooster, rooster]

Rooster, rooster,
golden coxcomb

wait not for the sun to rise.

Crow for Peter
through the darkness,

pity him who thrice denied.

Rooster, rooster,
Peter's broken.

Darkness shrouds all earthly scapes.

Time to crow, for
even Peter

may just yet be saved by shame.

BY TIMUR KIBIROV
TRANSLATED BY JAMIE OLSON

Timur Kibirov is the Russian author of 13 poetry collections, and won the Anti-Booker award (1997). This poem is from his collection *Greek and Roman Catholic Songs and Nursery Rhymes*. Jamie Olson, teaches English at St. Martin's University and writes about literature and culture on his blog *The Flaxen Wave*.

EXAMINING OUR SOCIAL SINS

Lent is a time dedicated to evaluation and reflection, conversion and return to God. But what does it mean to embrace honestly an examination of conscience at a time and in a world where racism, violence and environmental degradation are so present?

Over the last few months, our attention has been drawn to events that reflect persistent structures of inequity and injustice in our society. Because we are all interrelated in ways that are not always easily recognized, few are willing to take responsibility for the abiding reality of social sin. It can be so satisfying and self-gratifying to assess our lives and actions by what we have done that we ignore the evangelical challenge to confess our responsibility for what we have failed to do.

That is why I believe that our prayer, penance and almsgiving this Lent should begin with an examination of conscience, one that forces us to confront our own complicity in the structures that permit and perpetuate the particular sins we see on the news and witness in our communities. Here are just three examples.

Racism. The recent deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and 12-year-old Tamir Rice at the hands of police officers have thrown our nation into a heated discussion about the treatment of men and women of color, especially by law enforcement. While the tragedies of lives ended prematurely are always particular and uniquely painful, the persistent injustice of the racism that provides the condition for gross inequality is all too common. Part of what permits its continuation is the unacknowledged

white privilege and supremacy in the United States.

We must ask ourselves how we choose to view the world and whether we intentionally or inadvertently overlook how things really are. Those of us who are white (especially white men like me, who are beneficiaries of gender privilege too) need to recognize the unfair privileges from which we benefit in the United States. The benefits are often masked over by omission, by the lack of negative or oppressive experiences, by the absence of the skeptical gaze or the dismissive posture or the guilty-by-color association, by never having been targeted or judged because of the color of our skin. Others do not have these privileges. Racism cannot be addressed until those of us who benefit from it, knowingly and unwittingly alike, acknowledge our privilege and own our responsibility to work toward surrendering it.

Violence. I have never shot or stabbed or seriously punched anyone. But still I can recognize ways that I contribute to the prevailing culture of violence. Typically, unless we are direct victims of violence or know someone who has been, we are likely to go about living life as guilty bystanders. We are desensitized to the violence that is a daily reality for many people around the world. We are often willfully ignorant of the physical, emotional, psychological and sexual violence in our own communities. By not talking about violence, by not asking questions

about human trafficking, by not thinking about what is happening beyond the comfortable borders of our own experience, we may still not be shooting or stabbing or punching another, but there is much that we have nevertheless failed to do.

The environment. Rumors of Pope Francis' forthcoming encyclical on care for creation have generated much speculation and curiosity. In some circles, the mere notion has led commentators to dismiss or negatively pre-empt whatever call to action and challenge to conscience the pope may present. It can be easy to be "for the environment" in word only, without the moral fortitude and will to put that talk into action. How do I make decisions about what to buy, what to eat, where to go, how to travel and how to live with the rest

of creation in mind? What about the rest of the human family, particularly the poor, who suffer disproportionately from climate change and pollution? We can advocate for changes in corporate and government policies that better protect our planet, but do we?

These are just a few of the many aspects of our common life that call us to reflection; one could easily add sexism, poverty, homophobia, poor care for the elderly, religious intolerance or any of the many other systemic evils in our world. This Lent, may we spend some time evaluating not just what we have done but what we continually fail to do. It is never too late to repent and be faithful to the Gospel.

Racism cannot be addressed until those of us who benefit from it acknowledge our privilege.



DANIEL P. HORAN, O.F.M., is the author of several books, including *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton* (2014).

BOSS TWEED'S LOST WORLD

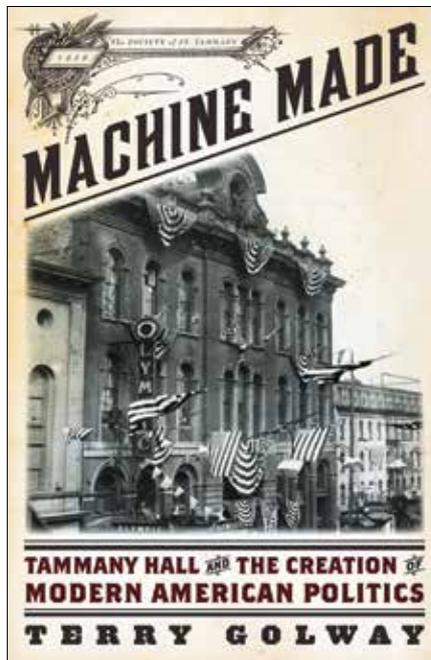
MACHINE MADE Tammany Hall and the Creation of Modern American Politics

By Terry Golway
Liveright, 400p \$27.95

At first Tammany Hall was, well, a hall. It was the Manhattan clubhouse and meeting place for an organization that had been named (for reasons obscure) after a legendary 17th-century Indian chief in Pennsylvania who was later—even more strangely—identified as “Saint Tammany.” The building served as an informal gathering spot where the endless talk that is part of politics could be carried out in congenial surroundings. It was the scene of strategy sessions, large and small, including once even the national convention of the Democratic Party. But soon enough the words “Tammany Hall” came to designate more than just a place. It was the powerful political machine that operated out of those four walls, reaching far beyond them to influence the life of the city, state and nation.

It is this second meaning that Terry Golway, a journalist, public policy center director and former *America* columnist, describes in his highly readable history of the Hall, the first complete treatment of the subject in more than 20 years. The book is a revision of his doctoral dissertation, done at Rutgers, and the research on which it is based is every bit as thorough as one would expect from such an endeavor, evident in the 35 pages of notes and bibliography. These will not get in the way of the general reader, though they will be helpful to anyone wanting to pursue particular personalities or subjects in greater detail. The Society of Saint Tammany began its life in 1788 (the year before George Washington became president), and Golway tells its story from

then until the Hall loses its oomph after the arrival of the New Deal. There is a very poignant final scene, as a group of old-timers reassembles in 1973 to auction off the remaining worldly possessions. One pays \$2 for the long-neglected poker chips, and another pays \$10 for the pool table, only to discover that he can't get it down the stairs.



While it prospered, however, Tammany was a powerful agent in defining American democracy, especially for generations of immigrants (mostly but not exclusively Irish) who were often viewed with suspicion by the already-established forces in society. Guided by a succession of shrewd captains—the colorful but corrupt William Marcy Tweed; the dour but effective Charles Francis Murphy (known as Silent Charlie)—who came to define the urban political boss, the organization picked candidates and then marshaled voters, street by street, to ensure success at the polls. Just as important, its authority was undimin-

ished between elections. One hapless mayor, thrust into office by Tammany, was asked whom he would appoint as police commissioner. “I don’t know,” he replied. “They haven’t told me yet.”

That kind of back-room wheeling and dealing made Tammany an obvious target for reformers, who congratulated themselves on their higher, purer motivations—all very disinterested, don’t you know. In New York, as elsewhere, these coalesced into so-called Good Government clubs, sneered at by the Tammany gang as Goo-Goos.

The Hall’s more direct, unabashed, “transactional” view of politics began with the recognition that people had needs and interests, some of them quite basic, and there was nothing wrong with using government to meet those needs. In fact, in a democracy, there were many things right with it. A contemporary in another city had expressed the fundamental morality of it all: “I think that there’s got to be in every ward somebody that a bloke can come to, no matter what he’s done, for help,” said the Boston ward boss Martin Lomasney. “Help, you understand; none of your law and justice, but help.” If the voters subsequently expressed their gratitude—for the job that put food on a family table, sometimes for the food itself—what exactly was the problem? Chicago’s Richard Daley made the same point a generation later. When a crony was criticized for helping his friends, Daley snapped: “What’s he supposed to do? Help his enemies?”

Tammany achieved the peak of its influence in the period between the two world wars, the era of Governor Al Smith (the Happy Warrior) and Senator Robert Wagner, author of legislation that guaranteed the right of union organizing and father of a future mayor. This was also the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt (Smith called him Frank), a man whose patrician background had made him an unlikely ally and beneficiary. But it was Roosevelt’s New Deal that ultimately

undercut the Hall's effectiveness. The government agency now replaced the party machine as the locus of power; the trained professional social worker supplanted the ward captain as the likeliest source of "help." Emerging mass culture took its toll too. Movies, radio and television satisfied a desire for entertainment that had once been vividly available in the torchlight parade and the rousing stump speech. Because of racial and ethnic change in the city, as everywhere in the country, old alliances and antagonisms faded, even as new ones formed.

Golway is a surefooted guide through the triumphs of the Hall, but the organization's sad end—definitely a whimper, not a bang—raises a final question about his subtitle. Tammany may have defined "modern American politics" in its heyday, but those politics seem much less "modern" the

deeper we get into the present century. Effective political organizing today is done through electronic and social media, not through the face-to-face contact on which all of the Hall's success depended. Extended voting periods even reduce the significance of election day itself. No longer is there a single moment when all citizens can come together to participate in the great public liturgy of democracy. Whether such options increase or (ironically) decrease participation is an open question, I think. As so often, something is gained, but something is also lost. As an analysis of that world we have lost, Golway's account of Tammany can remind us of the need to hold on to the basics in a democratic system. That will always be an important reminder.

JAMES M. O'TOOLE is the *Clough Millennium Professor of History at Boston College.*

KYLE T. KRAMER

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

THE REAL COST OF FRACKING

How America's Shale Gas Boom Is Threatening Our Families, Pets, and Food

By Michelle Bamberger and Robert Oswald
Beacon Press. 256p \$26.95

Like most of the developed world, America has made a Faustian bargain with fossil fuels. We have traded the immediate benefit of cheap, abundant energy for environmental costs that are generally borne elsewhere by others, now or in the future. In *The Real Cost of Fracking*, Michelle Bamberger and Robert Oswald—a veterinarian and a professor of molecular medicine at Cornell University, respectively—take a closer look into what some of those costs may be and who bears them.

As the authors explain clearly in

the extensive appendix, fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, is a nonconventional means of fossil fuel extraction from shale formations. It combines horizontal drilling techniques with the high-pressure injection of water and chemicals to fracture rock formations and liberate natural gas and oil.

Though not without controversy, fracking has been hailed as a silver bullet for domestic fuel production. It reduces our dependency on foreign supplies, lowers fuel prices and makes America a major player on the world energy stage. Because the molecular structure of natural gas makes it

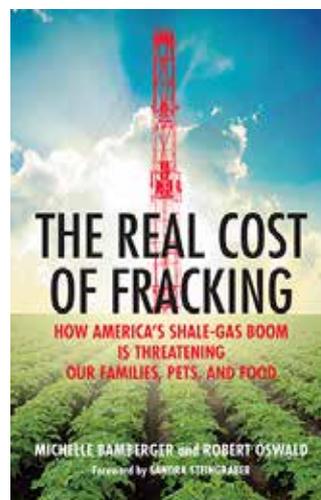
a less carbon-intensive fuel per unit of energy than coal or oil, America's shale gas boom has even been touted as a way to reduce global warming due to carbon pollution—although the methane leaks in the production process may cause equivalent problems in their own right.

Bamberger and Oswald make no claim to put forth an airtight scientific argument proving the destructive effects of fracking. Instead, they document in-depth personal interviews with several rural families living in close proximity to drilling sites. These heartbreaking anecdotes demonstrate strong (though not conclusive) correlations between the onset of drilling and the onset of a raft of health issues for the family members, their pets and their livestock.

Josie and Jeff Bidermann, for example, raise horses, boxers and bulldogs south of Pittsburgh. When drilling commenced on a neighbor's property, their water well and spring dried up and their healthy, two-year-old stud boxer became ill and died shortly after drinking from a puddle of drilling wastewater spilled on the road at the end of their driveway.

The Bidermanns' neighbors, Sarah Valdes and her children, began experiencing headaches, nosebleeds, rashes, fatigue and gastrointestinal upset after their well water quality became degraded; Mrs. Valdes's 13-year-old son David became chronically ill and was tested as having higher arsenic levels than an industrial worker. Eventually Sarah vacated her home, which she had spent over a decade renovating and which

was subsequently vandalized; she cannot sell it and struggles to pay both her mortgage and rent.



These and other stories share many similar themes. Health issues arise in people, pets and livestock shortly after shale gas drilling commences nearby. Drilling companies generally admit little or no responsibility or else pay settlements linked with gag orders. Affected homeowners can rarely prove their cases because predrilling tests were not conducted on their air and water, and most cannot afford necropsies on their affected animals. Shale gas drilling is exempt from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulation, and patchwork state laws vary widely in latitude and enforcement, leaving individual citizens little protection or recourse.

Bamberger and Oswald recognize that in our energy-hungry economy, shale gas drilling is here to stay. Having uncovered such strong links between fracking and health issues, however, they conclude their argument by calling for a version of the precautionary principle: as with new drugs, a reason-

able burden of proof should largely be on the drilling companies to demonstrate the safety of their methods. Drilling companies should provide upfront disclosure about the proprietary chemicals used in the drilling and fracturing process and should finance thorough pre- and postdrilling tests of air and water quality. More research must be done on the health effects of fracking chemicals—in combination and in various concentrations.

Finally, however, the authors point out that even if drilling can be conducted with a greater degree of justice and protection for those living close to drilling sites, fracking, like all fossil fuel production, is not a long-term solution for our energy needs. Ultimately, our economy will have to make a transition to renewables, both because even the newly abundant shale gas is still in finite supply and because the carbon pollution from burning all these reserves will wreak havoc on our climate.

Bamberger and Oswald readily

admit that their evidence, however compelling, is limited and anecdotal. Perhaps the vast majority of those living around fracking sites experience no harm whatsoever and simply enjoy the royalties they receive. It is impossible to judge because so few come forward to share their experiences. But even if the stories the authors relate represent a minority group, those hardships still beg for redress, and they still call into question the unambiguously rosy picture of fracking painted by the extraction industry.

The Real Cost of Fracking is hardly pleasant bedside reading, but it is well written, and, most important, it spurs a necessary public conversation about our country's newfound love affair with hydraulic fracturing. As beneficiaries of cheaper gas, all of us must ask ourselves whether the hidden costs are worth it.

KYLE T. KRAMER is executive director of the *Passionist Earth and Spirit Center* in Louisville, Ky.

FOLEY POETRY CONTEST

Poems are being accepted for the 2015 Foley Poetry Award.

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RISE AND FALL IN THE EAST

THE VISITOR

André Palmeiro and the Jesuits In Asia

By Liam Matthew Brockey
Harvard University Press. 528p \$39.95

In 2009, Liam Matthew Brockey published his fascinating *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579-1724*. Here he greatly expands his territory, covering the larger picture of the Jesuit Asian missions not only in India, China and Japan, but also those of East Africa, which once formed part of the Jesuit Province of India, with its headquarters in Goa.

As in his first book, Brockey examines not only the great questions of mission strategy, European imperial expansion, encounters with cultures very different from those of Europe and so forth, but also with the nuts and bolts of the administration of these enterprises. Here he does this through an examination of the career of André Palmeiro, S.J. (1569-1635), who in 1617 was sent as visitor (a kind of inspector) first to the Province of Malabar, later to the Province of Goa and ultimately to the Province of Japan and the Vice-Province of China.

In Brockey's telling, Palmeiro was a man of firm convictions who had a clear sense of his task, which was to ensure that Jesuit missionaries lived up to the discipline and spirit of their faith and their order. Aware that at first he knew little about the missions and less about the cultures in which they worked, he was willing to examine mission practice and to listen to the missionaries themselves as they sought to come to terms with their tasks. In India he was confronted with the example set by the Italian Roberto de Nobili, S.J., who not only immersed himself in Sanskrit and two South

Indian languages, but dressed as a holy man in an attempt to win over high caste converts. Palmeiro generally approved of his approach, and his contact with this kind of cultural accommodation served him well when Rome moved him to Macau as visitor of the East Asian missions in 1624. There his predecessor Alessandro Valignano, S.J., working with Matteo Ricci, S.J., had already developed a kind of accommodation to Chinese cultural ways that was to become rather more controversial than de Nobili's.

This, of course, is a well-worn topic, familiar to many as an example of Jesuit open-mindedness, tolerance and even modernity, which by the early 18th century would be condemned by Rome—the enlightened Jesuit development of the China mission thus thwarted by Eurocentric narrowness. Brockey, however, is quick to warn us that this view is little better than parody (reading history backward, he calls it) by lifting the story out of its setting and placing it in a modernity that had yet to be developed and thus turning the Jesuits into clichés for our own times.

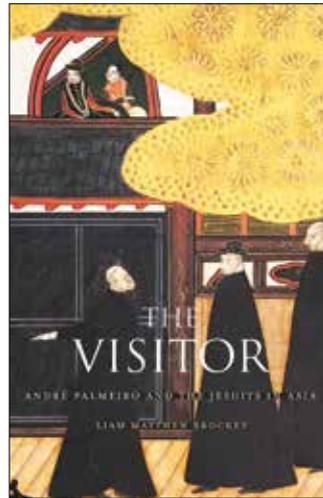
Yet the problems of accommodation were (and remain) very real, and no Asian scholar I have read has dealt with them as intelligently and sensitively as Brockey does here. As de Nobili immersed himself in Indian languages and culture, Ricci mastered Chinese and presented himself as a *xiru*, “Western learned man,” or as Brockey puts it, “Western

Confucian.” This not only meant translating Christian words and ideas into terms drawn from the Chinese classics (*Shangdi*, “Lord Above,” or *Tianzhu*, “Ruler of Heaven,” to stand for “God,” for example), but it also meant adopting ways at variance with Jesuit simplicity. Jesuit dress was plain, simple black; but Chinese scholars wore luxurious silk and changed their robes to suit the needs of different occasions.

As Brockey rightly points out, these questions are those of translation, broadly conceived. Nor, it might be added, are they simply pre-modern or religious problems. Today, for instance, it's easy enough to discover from the dictionary that “human rights” is *renquan* in Chinese, or that “democracy” is *minzhu zhuyi*.

But of course the real question is how far Chinese understandings of those terms coincide with those of a foreign audience. As Brockey points out, in Japan, rather than taking over classical terms like these, the Jesuits often turned to neologisms, thus insisting on Christian difference and uniqueness rather than appealing to an imagined sameness drawn from antiquity (“Christian,” for example, became *Kirishitan*). Eventually, after a conference near Shanghai in 1628, the visitor banned the use of *Shangdi*, to the delight of some and the distress of others. (In 1877, a Protestant Shanghai Missionary Conference was to seek—unsuccessfully—a solution to precisely the same questions). It's impossible in a brief space to do justice to Brockey's analysis of this and other questions.

By this time, whatever the successes of the Jesuit mission in China might have been, a great disaster was over-



taking the missions in Japan. Though earlier this had seemed the great success story of the Asian missions, in 1614 Christianity was proscribed, and the Tokugwa shogunate moved to eradicate it.

It was a long battle that saw the arrests of many missionaries (primarily Jesuits, but also Franciscans and Dominicans) and their converts and that saw the devising of sadistic tortures and long-drawn out executions, lasting for days. Though Palmeiro the visitor never got to Japan, having arrived too late in Macau, the horrors endured there by Christians remained with him, and his death in 1635 may have been hastened by the news that the Jesuit Cr stov o Ferreira renounced the faith after prolonged torture. Western readers may be familiar with this period from Shusaku Endo’s searing novel *Silence* (1966), to which Brockey pays tribute, which inspired James MacMillan’s Third Symphony and, after many years of promise, will

finally be brought to the screen by Martin Scorsese this year.

What are we to make of all this? Brockey insists that it is wrong to see the Jesuits and their mission as an advance guard of European modernity or of a new sense of globalization. For all his willingness to examine other cultures, Palmeiro considered it his task as visitor to insist on the Christian and specifically Jesuit nature of his charges, which in those days meant a Eurocentric and specifically Catholic view. Furthermore, by the time of his death, great changes were taking place in maritime Asia. Above all the Portuguese empire, on which the Jesuits depended (often uncomfortably), would see the rise of powerful new challenges, particularly from Dutch imperialism, followed by that of Britain and France.

Indeed, during the great Shimabara rising of 1639, the Dutch, eager to ingratiate themselves with the Tokugawa, helpfully bombarded the

Christian rebels. Granted, remnants of the Jesuit missions lived on in India above all, in Indochina and in China itself, at least until the middle and late 18th century. But the dissolution of the Jesuits in 1773 meant that when they were restored in 1814, and a new wave of missionary activity came in the 19th century, much of the enterprise would have to be reconstructed on new terms.

Brockey’s is a fascinating and rewarding book. Two tiny quibbles. First, though there are a few maps, there is no listing of the pages on which they appear. Second, on page 431, the abbreviation VOC rather suddenly appears. No doubt any real scholar would recognize that it stands for Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, or [Dutch] United East India Company, but I didn’t, and it took me some hunting to find out.

NICHOLAS CLIFFORD is a historian who taught at Middlebury College for many years.

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Readings: Gn 22:1–18, 44–46; Ps 116:10–19; Rom 8:31–34; Mk 9:2–10

“This is my beloved Son. Listen to him” (Mk 9:7)

The first thing Abraham had to do was listen to God, but Abraham also had to be willing to hear God, no matter the word spoken. And the word Abraham first heard from God, the command to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, remains even now at some level inconceivable and incomprehensible. Why would God ask Abraham to kill the child in whom the divine promises of Israel were embedded?

Yes, we know from the text of Genesis that it was a test. Abraham heard the voice of God and an outrageous request, yet the patriarch trusted God. This was a test for Abraham, not God, for God knew Abraham would obey, but Abraham’s willingness to listen would reveal the true nature of God.

The voice of God that Abraham heard was true both times. If Abraham had not heeded the voice of God initially, would he have realized that God had truly spoken a second time, when he told Abraham not to sacrifice his son Isaac? What if Abraham had listened to the first voice alone and rejected God’s directive to spare Isaac? Not only would Isaac have died, but the true nature of God would not have been revealed. There is no question that the mystery and unknowability of God are wrapped up in the narrative, but this challenging narrative demonstrates Abraham’s will-

ingness always to be attentive and obedient to God’s will.

We do not know how fearful Isaac was or if he understood what was taking place. Ancient and medieval Jewish commentators like Philo, Josephus and Rashi proposed that he might have been 7 years old or 25 or even 37 when the Akedah took place—but when Isaac calls out “Father!” and asks where the lamb is for the burnt offering, Abraham remains faithful saying, “God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son.”

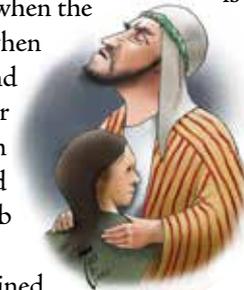
Abraham’s faithfulness rained down God’s blessings on him, for God said to Abraham, “Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you.” Yet Abraham’s obedient listening had an impact far beyond his own family and people, for he was also promised that “by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.”

Jesus, too, always heard the voice of God the Father and remained obedient to it. For Jesus, the threat of sacrifice went beyond Isaac’s questioning to the reality of Calvary, yet Jesus trusted that God, “who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us,” will always, as Paul says, be “for us.”

Still, when Jesus in the Gospel of Mark told his apostles that he must suffer and die, Peter rejected Jesus’ word outright, even though Jesus’ narrative

of suffering concluded with the resurrection. Peter and the other apostles rejected God’s way of suffering and sought the glory that they knew was the essence of God. And it was. For “six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.” These chosen apostles stood in the midst of glory, terrified, and heard, like Abraham, the voice of God: “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”

But the God who showed them a vision of heavenly glory and spoke to them out of the glory was the same God who spoke to them when Jesus said that he would suffer



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Listen for God’s voice. What do you hear?

and die. When you listen to God, you do not get to pick just the “good stuff,” the words that appeal to you: God asks that you listen always.

But trials, tests and suffering are not the end of the story. Paul asks us in Romans, “What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?” The end of the story is God’s glory, but it requires hearing God’s voice in the midst of trials, suffering, pain and loss, even when it seems to be God’s voice commanding the suffering. Be patient and listen again, for the voice of God desires only our blessing. **JOHN W. MARTENS**

JOHN W. MARTENS is an associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn. Twitter: @BibleJunkies.

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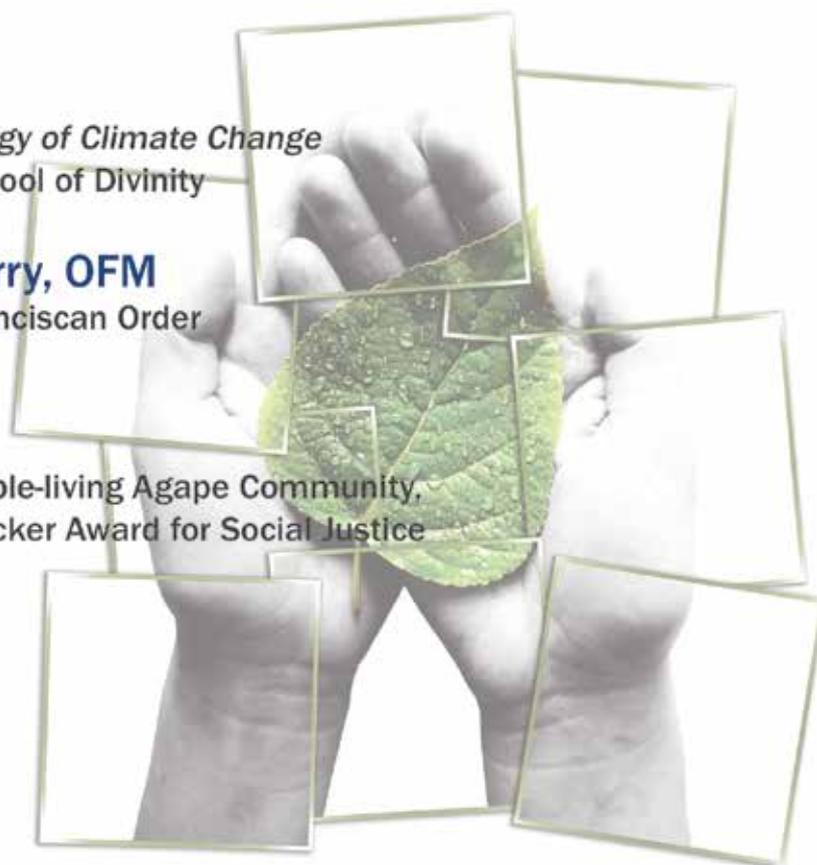
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