America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

FEB. 25, 2013 $3.50

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

THE EDITORS

THE 28TH AMENDMENT

Section 1. The second article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.

Section 2. Congress shall have the power to regulate the sale and possession of firearms in any State, Territory, or possession of the United States.

OF MANY THINGS

In the minds of many Americans, Justice Antonin Scalia is a fanatic. He wants "to turn back the clock," we are told, to use his seat on the Supreme Court to impose his narrow-minded morality on the rest of us. Justice Scalia, however, while undoubtedly a social conservative, probably decides cases the same way his colleagues do: by applying a standard of constitutional interpretation as impartially as he can.

For Mr. Scalia still believes in what the Jesuits taught him in civics: The executive branch executes, the legislative branch legislates and the judicial branch interprets. Is that naïve? Perhaps. What is more naïve, however, is the notion that we can turn our courts into a third house of Congress without creating a dangerous imbalance of power. Yet partisans on both sides would like to do just that, to resolve public policy questions through judicial fiat. That is undemocratic, says Mr. Scalia; judges should interpret, not legislate.

But just what method of interpretation should be used? Justice Scalia calls his method "original meaning." Put simply, the idea is that the Constitution should be interpreted to mean what reasonable people would have understood it to mean at the time that its various bits and pieces were adopted. Note that "original meaning" is different from "original intent," which Mr. Scalia thinks is not really knowable. In other words, "original meaning" is not an attempt to get inside James Madison's head. Justice Scalia is simply saying that in a democracy, the standard of constitutional interpretation should center on the voter: What would the voters who voted for a particular constitutional provision have understood it to mean at the time that they voted?

Mr. Scalia refers to his method as "the lesser evil," especially in comparison with the principal alternative: the "living Constitution." The "living Constitution" is the idea that the Constitution is an organic entity, that it "evolves," along with the nation's moral standards. Since the Constitution is somehow "alive," it can mean different things to different generations. The problem, according to Justice Scalia, is that if the Constitution means whatever a judge wants it to mean, then we have a kind of judicial tyranny on our hands.

People who oppose Justice Scalia's approach argue that his method results in decisions that simply conform to his personal prejudices. But if Mr. Scalia really wanted to impose his own views, the more subjective "living Constitution" method would be the way to go. Mr. Scalia's method, moreover, does not always produce rulings that conform with his personal opinions, and they can just as easily disappoint his supporters. Pro-choicers, for example, get angry when he says that there is no right to abortion in the Constitution; pro-lifers get angry when he says that there is no "right to life" either. If people want to outlaw abortion or the death penalty, or repeal the Second Amendment, which we advocate in this week's editorial, Mr. Scalia says, "Then do what we do in a democracy: go out and vote for it." If we do not like the meaning of something, vote to change it, but do not let unelected judges decide the matter for us.

On the whole, that approach strikes me as reasonable. "But," you might say, "what about civil rights and all those objectively good things that the courts have brought about? Using his method, wouldn't Mr. Scalia have voted against Brown v. Board of Education, for example?" No, Mr. Scalia has said. If the Court had applied his method, Brown would never have been necessary because "separate but equal" would never have been declared constitutional in the first place. But all that is beside the point. We probably should not decide the best method of constitutional interpretation according to whether it produces decisions that we personally like. That, after all, is what people are constantly accusing Justice Scalia of doing.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

America

Published by Jesuits of the United States

President and Publisher
John P. Schlegel, S.J.

Editor in Chief
Matt Malone, S.J.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

Managing Editor
Robert C. Collins, S.J.

Digital Editor
Maurice Timothy Reidy

Literary Editor
Raymond A. Schroth, S.J.

Poetry Editor
James S. Torrens, S.J.

Associate Editors
Kevin Clarke
Kerry Weber
Luke Hansen, S.J.

Editor at Large
James Martin, S.J.

Art Director
Stephanie Ratcliffe

Assistant Editors
Francis W. Turnbull, S.J.
Olga Segura

Columnists
Angela Alaimo-O'Donnell
Colleen Carroll Campbell
John J. Conley, S.J.
Daniel P. Horan, O.F.M.
James T. Keane
John W. Martens
Bill McGarvey
Margot Patterson
Michael Rossmann, S.J.

BUSINESS DEPARTMENT

Chief Financial Officer
Lisa Pope

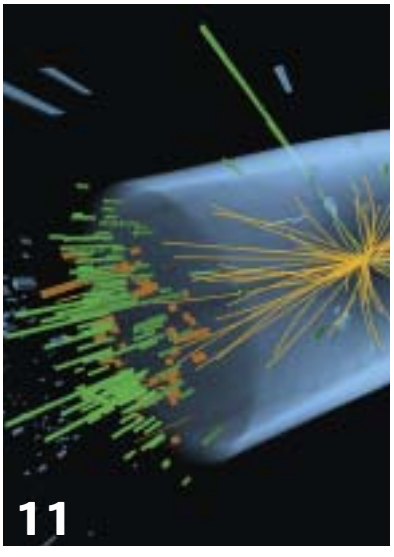
106 West 56th Street
New York, NY 10019-3803

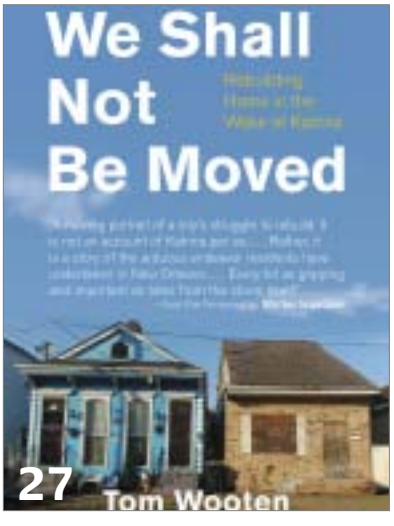
Ph: 212-581-4640; Fax: 212-399-3596

E-mail: america@americamagazine.org; letters@americamagazine.org
Web site: www.americamagazine.org.
Customer Service: 1-800-627-9533

Contents

www.americamagazine.org VOL. 208 NO. 6, WHOLE NO. 5001 FEBRUARY 25, 2013





ARTICLES

COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

BOOKS & CULTURE

ON THE WEB

Adam D. Hincks, S.J., right, talks about his vocation as a **Jesuit and physicist** in a special video. Plus, an archive of **America** articles on the **immigration** debate. All at americamagazine.org.

Repeal the Second Amendment

Plagued by rising levels of violent crime, in the autumn of 1976 the District of Columbia enacted one of the nation's toughest gun control laws. The law effectively banned handguns, automatic firearms and high-capacity semiautomatic weapons. Police officers were exempt from the provisions of the law, as were guns registered before 1976. Over the following decade, the murder rate in Washington, D.C., declined, then increased, shadowing a national trend. Overall, however, the new law helped to prevent nearly 50 deaths per year, according to one study published in The New England Journal of Medicine. "We knew there were problems we couldn't wipe out," said Sterling Tucker, chair of the district council at the time, as he reflected on the law 22 years later. "But we had a little more control over it."

On June 26, 2008, in a closely watched, far-reaching decision, the Supreme Court of the United States struck down the D.C. law, ruling that it violated the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which states: "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed." In the court's majority opinion, Associate Justice Antonin Scalia wrote: "We are aware of the problem of handgun violence in this country, and we take seriously the concerns raised by the many *amici* who believe that the prohibition of handgun ownership is a solution.... But the enshrinement of constitutional rights necessarily takes certain policy choices off the table."

Justice Scalia was right. Even those who subscribe to methods of constitutional interpretation other than Mr. Scalia's brand of modified originalism must concede the basic point: The Second Amendment impedes the power of the government to regulate the sale or possession of firearms. Unfortunately, the grim consequence of this constitutional restriction is measured in body counts. The murder of 20 elementary school children and six adults in Newtown, Conn., in December was merely the latest in a string of mass shootings: Virginia Tech, Fort Hood, Tucson, Aurora, Oak Creek. In the last 30 years, there have been 62 mass shootings (each leaving at least four people dead) in the United States. Since the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School in Columbine, Colo., there have been 130 shootings at schools; nearly half involved multiple deaths or injuries.

True, stricter gun laws would not have prevented all these tragedies. But it is very likely that stricter measures could have prevented at least some of these incidents and could have minimized the number of casualties involved. Two facts should be kept in mind. First, the easier it is to get a gun, the easier it is to make use of one. Second, a violent act involving a gun is far more likely to result in fatalities or multiple casualties than a violent act involving some other type of weapon. The notion, therefore, that there is no meaningful correlation between the nation's relatively lenient gun control laws and the extent of the nation's gun violence simply defies common sense. It also contradicts the empirical evidence. Experts at the Harvard School of Public Health found that when gun availability increases, so do gun homicides. In the United States, there are approximately 300 million guns in civilian hands, the highest per capita rate in the world (88.8 guns per 100 residents, well ahead of Yemen, No. 2 with 54.8). Though the United States represents less than 5 percent of the global population, Americans own 40 percent of the world's civilian-owned firearms.

Each year in the United States, approximately 30,000 people, or 80 per day, die from gun violence. True, guns do not kill people; people kill people. In the United States, however, people kill people by using guns. The murder rate in America is 15 times higher than in other first-world countries; the majority of these murders are committed with guns. As for the notion that guns are necessary in order to defend oneself from an intruder with a gun: One study of three U.S. cities revealed that injuries involving guns kept at home almost always resulted from accidental firings, criminal assaults, homicides and suicides by the residents, not self-defense scenarios. In October the American Academy of Pediatrics reminded us, "The safest home for children and teens is one without guns."

The facts, however, do not appear to shake a deeply held American belief in the near-unconditional use of force as a means to an end. The culture of violence in America has spawned a deadly syllogism: Guns solve problems; we have problems; therefore, we need guns. Yet consider the tragedy in Aurora. Imagine if just 10 other people in that movie theater had been carrying guns. In the confusion of the onslaught, would fewer people or more people have died when those 10 other people opened fire in the dark? More important, is this really the kind of world we want to live in, a world in which lethal power can be unleashed at any moment at any corner, in any home, in any school?

We do not have to live in such a world. Both Australia and Britain, for example, experienced gun massacres in 1996

and subsequently enacted stricter gun control laws. Their murder rates dropped. Yet in the United States, the birthplace of pragmatism, our fundamental law proscribes practical, potentially life-saving measures.

Americans must ask: Is it prudent to retain a constitutionally guaranteed right to bear arms when it compels our judges to strike down reasonable, popularly supported gun regulations? Is it moral to inhibit in this way the power of the country's elected representatives to provide for the public safety? Does the threat of tyranny, a legitimate 18th-century concern but an increasingly remote, fanciful possibility in the contemporary United States, trump the grisly, daily reality of gun violence? The answer to each of these questions is no. It is time to face reality. If the American people are to confront this scourge in any meaningful way, then they must change. The Constitution must change. The American people should repeal the Second Amendment.

We acknowledge the gravity of our proposal. The Bill of Rights enumerates our most cherished freedoms. Any proposal to change the nation's fundamental law is a very serious matter. We do not propose this course of action in a desultory manner, nor for light or transient reasons. We also acknowledge that repeal faces serious, substantial political obstacles and will prove deeply unpopular with many Americans. Nevertheless, we believe that repeal is necessary and that it is worthy of serious consideration.

Our proposal is in keeping, moreover, with the spirit in which the Constitution was drafted. The Bill of Rights belongs to a document that was designed to be changed; indeed, it was part of the genius of our founders to allow for a process of amendment. The process is appropriately cumbersome, but it is not impossible. Since its adoption in 1787, the American people have chosen to amend the Constitution 27 times. A century ago, leaders like Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson raised serious questions about the Constitution. Amendments soon followed, including provisions for a federal income tax, the direct election of U.S. senators, women's suffrage and the prohibition of alcohol. The 21st Amendment, which repealed prohibition, established the precedent for our proposal.

Yet that kind of thoughtful, critical engagement with our fundamental law, the kind of spirited debate that characterized early 20th-century America, is not evident in contemporary American discourse. In the national imagination, the Constitution is too often thought of as a kind of sacred text. Yet neither our founders nor our forebears held to that view. The Constitution is mere human law. It is excellent law, but it is not divine law; it is not revelation. We should be wary of amending the Bill of Rights. We should also be wary of idolizing it. The Constitution is the man-made law of a self-governing people; the people, therefore, are entitled to ask basic, critical questions about it. In our time, is a given constitutional provision a good law or a bad law? Does it promote the common good? The secular dogma of constitutional immutability must yield to careful, critical inquiry.

In the most comprehensive statement on gun violence to come from the U.S. bishops's conference, in 1975, a committee identified "the easy availability of handguns in our society" as a major threat to human life and called for "effective and courageous action to control handguns, leading to their eventual elimination from our society" with "exceptions…for the police, military, security guards" and sporting clubs. While this course of action, as the District of Columbia discovered, is constitutionally proscribed, reasonable restrictions on handguns are morally licit in the Catholic tradition. Indeed, we may have a moral duty to enact such laws.

In a recent interview, Tommaso Di Ruzza, the expert on disarmament and arms control at the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, explained that an individual does not possess an absolute natural right to own a lethal weapon: "There is a sort of natural right to defend the common interest and the common good" by the limited use of force, but this applies more to nations with an effective rule of law, not armed individuals. In the wake of Newtown, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan said that "the fight for greater gun control in the country" is a pro-life position. "The unfettered access to assault weapons and handguns, along with the glorification of violence in our 'entertainment' industry…is really all part of a culture of death," Cardinal Dolan said.

Repealing the Second Amendment will not create a culture of life in one stroke. Stricter gun laws will not create a world free of violence, in which gun tragedies never occur. We cannot repeal original sin. Though we cannot create an absolutely safe world, we can create a safer world. This does not require an absolute ban on firearms. In the post-repeal world that we envision, some people will possess guns: hunters and sportsmen, law enforcement officers, the military, those who require firearms for morally reasonable purposes. Make no mistake, however: The world we envision is a world with far fewer guns, a world in which no one has a right to own one. Some people, though far fewer, will still die from gun violence. The disturbing feeling that we have failed to do everything in our power to remove the material cause of their deaths, however, will no longer compound our grief.

The Supreme Court has ruled that whatever the human costs involved, the Second Amendment "necessarily takes certain policy choices off the table." The justices are right. But the human cost is intolerable. Repeal the Second Amendment.

VATICAN

Benedict Announces First Papal Resignation in 600 years

The announcement of the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI came as a shock around the world. Saying he no longer had the strength to exercise his ministry over the universal church, Pope Benedict XVI announced on Feb. 11 that he would be resigning as of Feb. 28. "After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry," the pope told cardinals gathered for an ordinary public consistory to approve the canonization of new saints.

Pope Benedict, who was elected in April 2005, will be the first pope to resign in almost 600 years.

He told the cardinals, "In today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the bark of St. Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me." The pope has had increasing trouble walking in the past year, often using a cane and always being assisted getting up and down steps.

In a statement released on Feb. 11, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, said: "The Holy Father brought the tender heart of a pastor, the incisive mind of a scholar and the confidence of a soul united with his God in all he did. His resignation is but another sign of his great care for the church. We are sad that he will be resigning but grateful for his eight years of selfless leadership as successor of St. Peter.

"Though 78 when he was elected pope in 2005, he set out to meet his people—and they were of all faiths—all over the world," Cardinal Dolan said. "He visited the religiously threatened—Jews, Muslims and Christians in the war-torn Middle East, the desperately poor in Africa, and the world's youth gathered to meet him in Australia, Germany, Spain and Brazil."

Archbishop Vincent Nichols of Westminster, England, president of the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, said the pope's announcement "has shocked and surprised everyone.

"Yet, on reflection, I am sure that many will recognize it to be a decision of great courage and characteristic clarity of mind and action," Archbishop Nichols said.

The option of a pope to resign is explicitly written into the Code of Canon Law. It says a pope may step down but stipulates that the decision must be made freely and "duly manifested."

Fulfilling that canonical requirement, Pope Benedict announced, "Well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of St. Peter, entrusted to me by the cardinals on 19 April 2005, in such a way, that as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of St. Peter, will be vacant and a conclave to elect the new supreme pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is."

It is up to the dean of the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, to make preparations for a conclave to elect a new pope.

H.H.S. MANDATE

Courts Will Have Final Call

The latest round of proposed federal rules covering religious institutions seeking an exemption from a requirement to provide contraceptive coverage in health insurance makes it clear that there is no inclination at the Department of

Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican on Feb. 4.

Health and Human Services to accommodate for-profit secular corporations in the same way as nonprofit religious institutions. For-profit secular entities that object to this requirement on moral grounds may find their only option is to push their case in court, where the history of accommodating a business owner's religious interests differs significantly from the way the religious rights of churches have been treated.

An updated version of the H.H.S. rules published on Feb. 1 redefined the criteria by which nonprofit religious institutions may be either "exempt" or "accommodated" in opting out of new mandates. The Affordable Care Act requires all health care insurance plans to include coverage—at no cost to the employees—of contraception, sterilization and drugs some consider to be abortifacients. The new proposal is the latest H.H.S. effort to define who qualifies to opt out of that requirement on religious grounds.

"I think the final resolution will be with the courts," said Cardinal Francis George, speaking in Rome on Feb. 7. "The bishops have made it very clear that the institutions for which we are responsible simply will not cooperate, and then it will be up to the government to decide what it wants to do, and I think that's where we are and that's where we will stay."

More than 30 lawsuits challenging the previous round of the rules have been filed by nonprofits including Catholic dioceses, universities and the Eternal Word Television Network. Most of those cases await decisions. The courts have granted injunctions allowing 11 companies to sidestep the mandate while their cases proceed in court. Three companies have been told they must comply with providing contraceptive insurance while their cases proceed.

In a statement on Feb. 7, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, said the latest revision of the mandate fell short of addressing the U.S. bishops' concerns. The cardinal acknowledged that the latest proposal concerning the contraceptive mandate in the Affordable Care Act indicates that the Obama administration "seeks to offer a response to serious matters which have been raised throughout the past year."

He noted that the bishops "look forward to engaging with the administration, and all branches and levels of government, to continue to address serious issues that remain. Our efforts will require additional, careful study."

He added, "We will affirm any genuine progress that is made, and we will redouble our efforts to overcome obstacles or setbacks."

Cardinal Dolan faulted the latest revision for maintaining an "inaccurate distinction among religious ministries," noting that H.H.S. "offers what it calls an 'accommodation,' rather than accepting the fact that these ministries are integral to our church and worthy of the same exemption as our Catholic churches." Cardinal Dolan said "gaps in the proposed regulations" make it unclear "how directly these separate policies would be funded by objecting ministries, and what precise role those ministries would have in arranging for these separate policies." This lack of clarity, he said, provides "the possibility that ministries may yet be forced to fund and facilitate such morally illicit activities."

IDENTITY CRISIS: Dominican Sister Mary Diana Dreger, a physician, sees a patient in Nashville, Tenn., in 2011.

Ending Abuse A Long Effort

The Catholic Church's efforts to prevent clerical sexual abuse and protect children around the world will be "a long-term effort," said the Rev. Robert W. Oliver, a Boston priest who began work on Feb. 1 as the promoter of justice in the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. Speaking at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University on Feb. 5 of the role of the media in the crisis, Father Oliver said, "Those who continued to put before us that we needed to confront this problem did a service." When one first hears of a case of abuse, he said, "every single one of us begins with denial," which is why the entire church, at all levels, must make a concerted effort to educate its members about the reality of abuse and the best practices for protecting children. Hans Zollner, S.J., president of the directors' committee of the Child Protection Center, said that in responding to the scandal and preventing abuse, "the road will be long and difficult because of resistance, conflicts and tensions" as well as "inertia, discouragement on the inside and attacks from the outside."

Vietnam Activists Nominated

The Rev. Thadeus Nguyen Van Ly, a 65-year-old Catholic priest and human rights activist, and the Most Venerable Thich Quang Do of Vietnam have been nominated for the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize. Father Ly has been a prominent human rights defender since the 1970s, campaigning for religious freedom, democracy and a free press in Vietnam. He has been imprisoned off and on for more than 15 years, most recently in July 2011 after a temporary medical parole. He is partially paralyzed as a result of several strokes and suffers from a brain tumor. The Most Venerable Thich Quang Do is a Buddhist monk, human rights activist and Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church, once the largest Buddhist organization of southern Vietnam. Thich Quang Do spent 10 years in internal exile and was given a five-year prison sentence in 1995 for organizing a humanitarian relief mission.

Central African Appeal

Caritas Internationalis, the church's global charitable agency, is launching an appeal to help communities in the Central African Republic that are still reeling from attacks on towns and communities by rebels. The rebel forces started to advance in northeastern C.A.R. in December 2012. A ceasefire was reached in January, but the situation remains precarious. The United Nations has condemned the use of child soldiers, rape, sexual slavery and the killing and maiming of civilians in the country. "Once more people of the Central African Republic, women, children and young people in particular, have found themselves facing distress, famine and cut off from access to health care and hygiene facilities," said Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga, president of Caritas Central African Republic. Caritas is asking for $635,000 for a six-month effort to provide families with food and other items, medical and psychological support as well as improving infrastructure and livelihoods.

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

The rite stuff

On Jan. 29 at St. Mary Cathedral in Austin, Tex., representatives of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and four Protestant denominations in the Reformed tradition signed an agreement that recognizes the **validity of one another's baptisms.** ⬩ The New Jersey **Death with Dignity Act**, a bill that would allow assisted suicide in New Jersey, made it through a legislative committee on Feb. 7 and will now be considered by the full assembly. ⬩ The Bishop of Durham, the Right Reverend Justin Welby, has officially become the **new archbishop of Canterbury** after the "Confirmation of Election" ceremony at St. Paul's Cathedral in London on Feb. 4. ⬩ An official with Belgium's Mechelen-Brussels Archdiocese said on Feb. 6 that **"dozens of churches" faced closing** and that the city's largest Catholic landmark, St. Catherine Church, was expected to be turned into a fruit and vegetable market. ⬩ In the span of just 15 days, two **priests have been gunned down** in Colombia: the Rev. Luis Alfredo Suárez Salazar in Ocaña on Feb. 2, killed apparently by stray bullets intended for another target; and on Jan. 16 the Rev. José Francisco Velez Echeverri in Buga, apparently a robbery victim.

MICHAEL ROSSMANN

Are We There Yet?

I recently took a cross-country bus ride that was anything but comfortable. After those in my row had experienced bloodshed—the bus bounced so vigorously that a man was thrown up in the air, hit his head against the luggage rack and gushed blood just a few feet from me—and a whole lot of sweat in this bus without air conditioning during summer, I laughed to myself that we had nearly completed the trifecta of blood, sweat and tears. Then night came, and babies started crying because they could not sleep. Perfect.

But something else happened on that bus trip. After many of us first vented our frustration over our shared misery, several of us laughed at just how ridiculous it was. And we bonded. We did not enjoy comfort on that ride, though we started to enjoy the contact with those who were previously strangers but now seemed to be fellow soldiers in a battle together.

This was not an isolated experience. I've amassed thousands of miles "flying Greyhound" across the United States; and while a plane can get me to my destination much faster and more comfortably, the trip also tends to be easily forgettable. I remember very little of the small talk I have made on countless flights, though I vividly remember many of the characters I have met on buses: the driver who regaled me with stories from the road for six hours, the 18-year-old preparing to be deployed to Iraq, the man who told me T.M.I. (too much information) about his love life.

These experiences are like those that make me appreciate staying with a family rather than sleeping at a hotel when I am on the road. Having my own space, free from disturbances, at a hotel is certainly comforting, whereas staying with a family I've just met can lead to some uncomfortable moments—especially if they are not coffee drinkers and I'm unable to get my fix in the morning!

Still, I almost always find those stays with families to be far more satisfying. I might feel awkward staying in a room decorated with the mementos of another person's life, but I am frequently amazed by the goodness and generosity of complete strangers and often leave a city with a richer experience than if I had stayed in a hotel. The joy of forming relationships through shared contact outweighs the possible discomfort.

I've amassed thousands of miles 'flying Greyhound' across the United States.

Of course, we are human beings, not machines, and most of us cannot deal with constant discomfort. At times, we need simple pleasures. After living in Tanzania for some time now, I would give a kidney for some deep dish pizza or simply to blend in rather than sticking out as one who is obviously an outsider.

That said, always choosing the easy or comfortable option might not be what brings us the most satisfaction, most especially because the comfortable route frequently reduces the amount of contact with other people—beautiful, hurting, hilarious humanity.

When I read in the Gospels about thousands following Jesus for days, I often forget that this was a time without air conditioning, deodorant and public restrooms. This would have been miserable! At the same time, it is apparent that those who hung on Jesus' every word were not in misery; despite difficult conditions, they could not get enough of who he was to them. Contact with Jesus made all other matters insignificant.

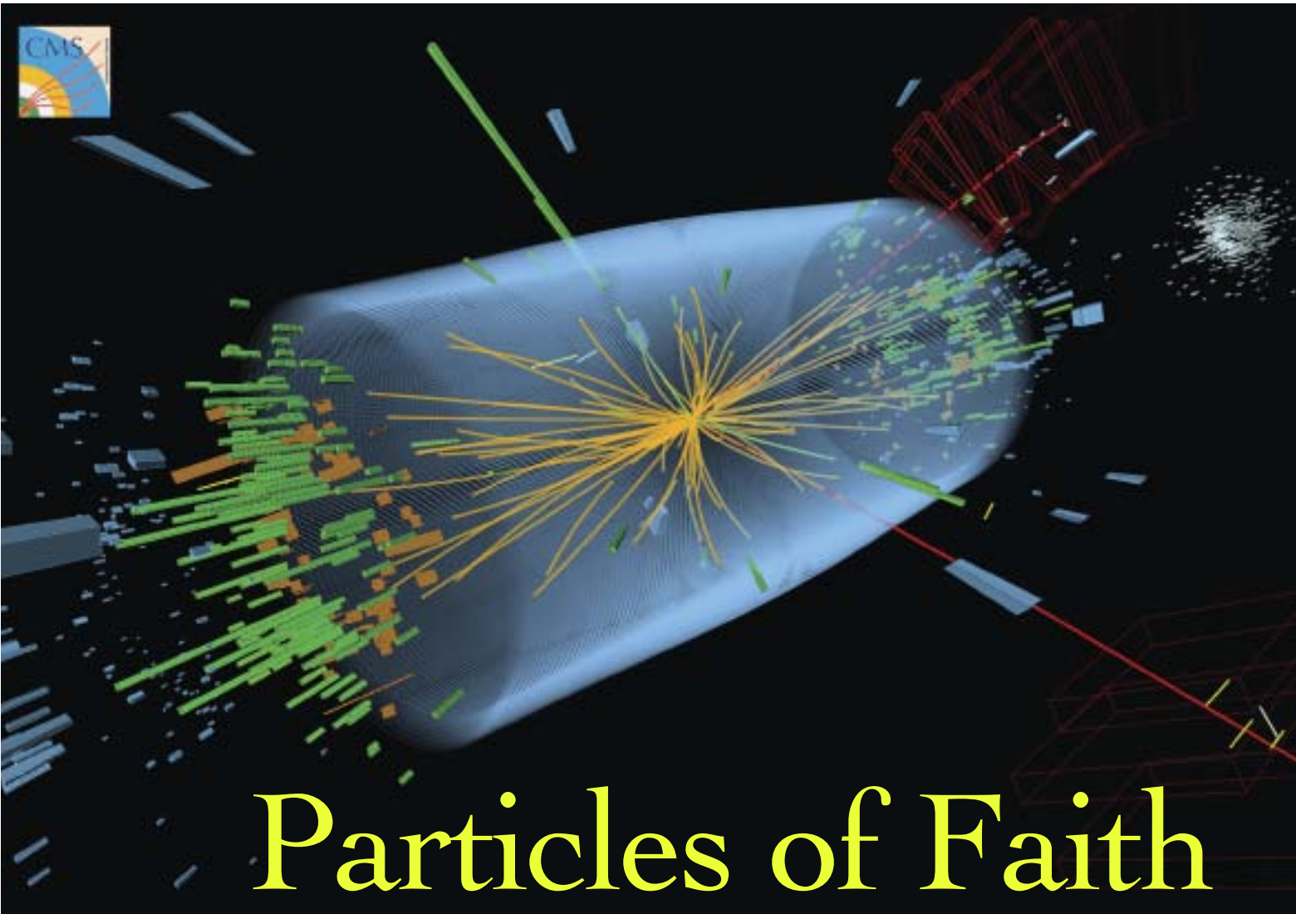
It's not surprising that for thousands of years people have found going on pilgrimage a privileged way to connect with God. We can still find God in comfortable places; though when many things are out of my control, as they are when on pilgrimage, then I'm more likely to let God be God and open myself up to those who enter my life.

I'm not suggesting that we start clothing ourselves in camel's hair and eating locusts and wild honey à la John the Baptist. Being uncomfortable is by no means inherently holier than being comfortable. Still, in choosing how we spend our time, where we stay or how we travel, we might ask ourselves: How might this promote or prohibit my contact with other children of God? Could this lead to new friendships, spontaneous conversations or shared laughter?

People can be annoying; and when you pack many on a public bus, we can be a sweaty lot.

When you share blood, sweat and tears with others, however, you certainly know you're not alone in this world. Contact with others—even when it is uncomfortable—is what really brings joy.

MICHAEL ROSSMANN, S.J., *teaches at Loyola High School in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.*



Particles of Faith

Seeking God in small things

BY ADAM D. HINCKS

Last year, a rare event occurred: Particle physics made headlines around the world. Scientists at the European Organization for Nuclear Research, or CERN, reported a major discovery. Using the Large Hadron Collider, a particle accelerator near Geneva that is arguably the biggest and most complex science experiment in human history, scientists came upon a new particle they believe to be the Higgs boson.

This tiny but important entity has been nicknamed the "God particle," which is one reason it received so much attention in the popular press. When the news broke last spring, I was contacted by my archdiocese to field questions from a news broadcaster, presumably because the discovery of a "God particle" fueled expectations of friction between religion and science. Early in the interview, however, it became apparent that the journalist was dis-

GOD PARTICLE? Electrons and muons spread as the Higgs boson particle decays.

ADAM D. HINCKS, S.J., *a philosophy student at Regis College, University of Toronto, has a doctorate in physics from Princeton University. When he was an undergraduate, he spent the summer of 2003 at CERN helping to test instrumentation for the LHC.*

appointed that my comments were far from reactionary. Not surprisingly, my segment was cut from the news story that finally aired.

Naïve sensationalism aside, it is worth reflecting anew on the relationship between faith and natural science, for the two do not exist in isolation. There really is an important connection between God and the "God particle." But before exploring this exactly, a primer on the science behind the news stories will be helpful.

The Capstone of Particle Physics

Particle physics is the study of the building blocks of the material world. As we all learned in school, the atom is not the smallest particle in nature. It consists of a nucleus, containing positively charged protons and electrically neutral neutrons, surrounded by negatively charged electrons. These subatomic particles were discovered near the beginning of the 20th century, but they were only the first of many. Over the next few decades, more and more were spotted in the laboratory until a veritable zoo of particles had been identified. Physicists began studying and classifying their properties, and eventually a theory describing the fundamental particles and their interactions emerged.

This theory is now called the Standard Model. To the electron it adds two heavier cousins, the muon and the tau. Protons and neutrons are combinations of the colorfully named up, down, charm, strange, bottom and top quarks. Neutrinos, which we can only barely detect with the most sensitive instruments, turn out to be omnipresent—every second, trillions of neutrinos generated inside the sun pass through your body without your feeling a thing. Photons, gluons and the W and Z bosons mediate the forces that govern how particles interact with one another.

Like all good theories, the Standard Model not only explains known phenomena, but has predicted new ones. It predicted, for example, the existence of the top quark and tau neutrino, which were only seen for the first time in 1995 and 2000, respectively. One prediction, however, has been awaiting confirmation since the early 1960's: the existence of the Higgs boson, named for Peter Higgs, one of the handful of scientists who introduced it into the theory.

Far from being superfluous to the Standard Model, the Higgs boson is its capstone, for it is the only obvious way for the theory to explain why many particles, such as the electrons, protons and neutrons that make up our own bodies, have mass. The trouble is, if the Higgs boson exists, it can be spotted only at very high energies—energies that have only recently been made accessible by the Large Hadron Collider. The announcement last year that the Higgs boson has probably been discovered marks the beginning of the end of a 50-year quest.

If the Higgs boson really has been found, it is not the end of particle physics. The universe has plenty more puzzles up its sleeve. For example, the Standard Model does not account for gravitational forces, nor does it give us any clear candidate for what makes up the dark matter and dark energy that fills about 95 percent of the universe. But the detection of the Higgs boson represents a significant step forward in understanding the world we live in and is a triumph of natural science.

Two False Leads

It is partly due to the Higgs boson's centrality in the Standard Model that it was nicknamed the "God particle" in a 1993 popular science book by Leon Lederman, a Nobel laureate, and Dick Teresi, his co-author. At the same time, the moniker is half whimsy. The authors claim that their original name, "the godd--n particle," chosen because of the experimental difficulty of discovering it, was rejected by their publisher.

Though physicists generally ignore Lederman and Teresi's neologism, the press has eagerly taken it up. A news story with "God particle" in the headline is much more likely to be read than one about the blandly named Higgs boson. Thus, the nickname does a service to physics by helping to popularize an important discovery that might not otherwise have received the attention it deserves. On the other hand, it can encourage shallow speculation on the relationship between faith and science. Two lines of thought are particularly alluring but ultimately misleading.

First, likening the Higgs boson to God can encourage the notion that God is just one physical cause among many. In the past (so runs the narrative), we may have invoked a deity to explain why things have properties such as mass, but as science becomes capable of explaining more and more, the need for this hypothetical deity dwindles. Discovering the last component of the Standard Model is treated as a final step in the process by which science elbows aside any need for God. This notion was brought up centuries ago by St. Thomas Aquinas, when he wrote about God's existence. If we can find natural causes for all that happens, he asked, what need is there for God?

The answer is that this is a category error. Natural causes presuppose the existence of nature, and it is the existence of nature that God causes. Whether nature itself actually needs a cause is a valid question, but it is not a question for natural science. Given the existence of an intelligible nature, of course natural science will be capable, at least in principle, of explaining everything that happens in it—including the Higgs boson responsible for the mass of particles. But God, by his very essence, is not a part of nature. God's creative power should not be confused with the explanatory power of physics.

The second mistake, made particularly by religious

believers, is to search for a sort of mystical short-cut to God in nature. Perhaps, it is thought, God will be revealed in a new way by studying the "God particle." Could it be the entity that links the spiritual realm of God to the physical realm of human existence? Vague hopes surface that the finger of God will suddenly be made visible in a science laboratory. It should not take much thought to see that this approach suffers from the same misapprehension as the triumphalistic scientism we saw above—except now it is supposed that God elbows his way into physical explanations of the universe. At the end of the day, however, the Higgs boson is a physical entity just like any other physical entity. It does not bring one any closer to God or any farther from God than the piece of paper this article is printed on.

Non-Overlapping Magisteria?

One obvious way forward is to treat faith and natural science as completely unrelated fields of human inquiry. Stephen Jay Gould famously articulated this position by speaking of religion and science as "non-overlapping magisteria." While this may be an attractive idea, if only for its diplomatic value, it is too simplistic. Religion and natural science may each have their own proper subject matter, but it is not true that these domains do not overlap at all. God is present in both. Theology (to restrict our scope somewhat from religion in general) is most properly the science of God, but of a God who creates the material world and can be partly known through God's effects in creation. The natural sciences most properly study the physical world, but this world is contingent on God's creative act for its existence and does not bear its ultimate meaning within itself. The God studied by theologians and adored by people of faith is the same God who creates the Higgs boson.

What, then, is the authentic relationship between faith and science? Or, to return to our original question, what does faith have to do with the Higgs boson? First of all, Gould correctly posited that faith and science have their own proper domains. The scientist, when doing science, should not be concerned with describing God or trying to prove or disprove his existence. Nor should the theologian, when doing theology, be formulating theories about the Higgs boson. If either breaches his or her discipline, he does not become a cleverer practitioner of his own field but a hopelessly backward amateur in another. What is really needed is intelligent dialogue.

Traditionally, philosophy (which included the natural sciences) was considered the handmaiden of theology. Today we need to be guided by this metaphor more than ever. The theologians who study how God works in creation need to have some idea of what creation contains and how it works. Consider the service astronomy has provided to theology. It has purified our understanding of how God has ordered the cosmos. Together with the historical and anthropological sciences, it has aided theologians in devel-

oping more profound and theologically correct exegeses of the biblical creation narratives. Sometimes, however, it seems that theology does not consult her handmaidens with as much vigor as she ought. How many theologians, for instance, are engaged in systematically working out what the scientific theory of evolution brings to bear on Christianity? Physical science, by its very nature, has no ability to alter dogmas of faith, but its insights, applied with sobriety and integrity, can lead to deeper and richer expressions of what we already believe.

Let us now look at the relationship from the other side. Whereas science ought to be a handmaiden to theology, the converse is not true. It is quite possible for science to chug along happily oblivious of God and religion. The scientists at the Large Hadron Collider will keep learning about the Higgs boson whether or not they acknowledge the transcendent. It would be a mistake, however, to think that because natural science itself is indifferent to all but the empirically verifiable, the men and women who do science should share this indifference. By our nature, we desire not only to know how things work, but also what their purpose is. The intelligibility of the natural world, the very condition that makes science possible, inflames our minds with wonder and curiosity, pointing beyond science to the deeper question of what the world means—a question patently beyond the scope of the natural sciences. The fact that we are capable of describing the universe—that we can grasp through human reason how particles acquire mass and thereby predict the existence of the Higgs boson—indicates that there is a rationality to the universe that transcends the world of sights and sounds, inviting us to open ourselves to this wider reality. In the end, the person who limits himself to the realm of matter may become a successful scientist, but will not be a successful human being. To be fully human, the scientific enterprise cannot reject the realm of faith *prima facie*. To do so would risk severing it from the very Rationality that is at its heart.

ON THE WEB
Adam D. Hincks, S.J., on his Jesuit vocation.
americamagazine.org/video

Science and faith are, then, related: not because they are in competition for the same answers but because they are complementary enterprises in the human search for meaning. Scientists must recognize that a real intelligibility exists that transcends their methodology; and theologians must turn to science, seeking deeper understanding of faith from this noble and indispensable handmaiden. God does not deliver handwritten messages into particle accelerators, but by a creative act God holds the Higgs boson in existence—a particle that scientists can study and understand, and which at the same time is part of a universe charged with meaning that science itself cannot exhaust. A

An Uphill Battle

When immigration contradictions hit home

BY ROBERT VERECKE

Heartbreak Hill is a famously punishing stretch of the Boston Marathon, as anyone who has run the race, or watched it, can tell you. Just on the other side of this long steep climb through Chestnut Hill, Mass., lies St. Ignatius Church, where I have been pastor for almost 25 years. The building lies on the periphery of the Boston College campus and draws parishioners from all over the metropolitan area.

One of these parishioners is a man I will call Jay. He is not only a member of our Latino community but an energizing force in the parish. Jay has been an active participant in the *coro* that sings for our Spanish Mass for the past few years. He plays the bass and never misses a Sunday. But that changed last fall.

One day I noticed that Jay was not playing with us at liturgy. His presence was sorely missed, not just for his playing but for his thoughtfulness. He would always get to the church early so he could set things up, for example. I wondered why he wasn't there this particular Sunday. I wondered too why his wife hadn't come with their newborn and young son. Later in the week I received the news that Jay was facing deportation. He had been stopped for a minor traffic violation and his undocumented status had come to light. He was immediately detained and jailed. An error in judgment that might have resulted in a ticket or warning for most of us had brought Jay a life-changing sentence.

In addition to being a faithful parishioner and musician at St. Ignatius, as well as a loving husband and father, Jay is also an excellent mechanic, with his own garage. He took pity on me once when he saw how banged up my car was and did all the repairs for next to nothing. Jay and his family had managed to create a meaningful life here in the United States, despite their undocumented status.

Like so many of our Latino brothers and sisters, he had become a contributor to the local economy, the life of the community and the church. But because he is illegal—or more properly, *sin documentos*—he does not have a prayer. Our bewildering and complex immigration system at present offers him no path to citizenship and no way out of his illegal status. I never realized that Jay was one of the many people who bear the weight of being labeled as "undocumented." Not that it would have made a difference. The only document that mattered to me as his pastor was the one that he received at his baptism. Jay was simply a brother in Christ, *un hermano en Cristo*. That was all the documentation he needed.

St. Ignatius is one of those very dynamic parishes with beautiful liturgies, excellent preaching and many diverse programs in spiritual development, faith formation and outreach. When I became pastor of St. Ignatius—a parish of mostly middle to upper-class families with more graduate degrees than you can count—I never imagined that one day I would also pastor parishioners who were predominantly Spanish-speaking, few of whom had the economic or educational advantages of our English-speaking parishioners.

For the most part, the coming together of these two communities in our midst has broadened our perspective on the church. And the growing number of Latino parishioners surely reflects the changing demographics of the U.S. church at large, where 40 percent of all Catholics, and half of those under the age of 25, are Spanish-speaking. Their customs, language,

ROBERT VEREECKE, S.J., *is pastor and director of religious education at St. Ignatius Church, Chestnut Hill, Mass.*

COMPOSITE IMAGE: CNS/AMERICA

music and style of worship have enriched the parish community enormously. Whether through the bilingual celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe, mariachis and all, or the rituals accompanying the Day of the Dead, *El Día de los Muertos*, our Latino parishioners' expressions of faith have challenged the rest of us to see and experience the body of Christ in a more multicultural way.

But then there is the Heartbreak. What for me began as the joy of celebrating colorful and spirited liturgies in Spanish (and I confess a welcome respite from the often more somber rituals and seemingly unintelligible prayers of the new English version) has now drawn me into the heartbreaking sorrow of seeing the lives, livelihoods and families of very good people torn apart by our current immigration policies. What happened to Jay and his family over the past days is not an isolated heartbreak. It is happening to others in faith communities around the country and could happen again within ours.

Something has begun to change for us as a parish community. We have always had impressive outreach programs. We serve the homeless, the hungry, refugees and many others in need. We have a sister parish in West Kingston, Jamaica, where we are building a playground in an otherwise devastated neighborhood. All of these are wonderful charitable works. But now, given the harsh and punitive realities facing our Latino brothers and sisters, the cries for justice and compassion are coming from within, from families who are not just distant beneficiaries but who belong to the heart of our parish community.

ON THE WEB
America's coverage of the immigration debate.
americamagazine.org/immigration

Although my heart wants only to be thankful for so many gifts I receive as pastor of a wonderful parish, it also breaks for one of the "least of my brothers" whose life will never be the same and whose family was without him during the holiday season. After being held in a local detention center, Jay was deported to Guatemala. His children, who are all U.S. citizens, joined him there soon after. His wife remains in the United States, for now, trying to put the family's affairs in order before she travels to be with her family in Guatemala.

As I reflected on the Gospel for the last Sunday of the liturgical year, I could not help but read its message as one of "truth spoken to power." I cannot help but think of my Latino brothers and sisters who are trying to speak the truth of their lives to the powers that be. Like Jesus who carried his cross up the hill of Golgotha, Jay and so many of our undocumented brothers and sisters are carrying theirs up their own Heartbreak Hill. A

An Unwelcome Anniversary

Pro-life activists of a certain age remember Jan. 22, 1973, with photographic precision.

Then an undergraduate at Penn, I was typing an article on organic farming in the offices of The Pennsylvania Voice, the alternative newspaper. The Supreme Court had just delivered the decision in the Roe v. Wade case that instituted a regime of virtual abortion-on-demand. A fellow editor argued that since the decision had been made by the margin of seven to two, we just had to accept it: "The abortion debate is over." Another editor kindly pointed out that I strongly opposed abortion and that it must be a difficult day for me.

I was in fact a recent convert to the cause. I had started my college years on a pro-choice syllogism: 1) My religion opposes abortion; 2) I personally oppose abortion; 3) I don't want to impose my religion on others; 4) Therefore, abortion should be legal. My syllogism soon collapsed. A lecture by an agnostic biologist on fetal development convinced me that the humanity of the nascent child was not a matter of sectarian doctrine. A symposium on logic indicated that by my own pro-choice logic, I would have to become an anarchist, since there was virtually no civil law not opposed by someone on the basis of religious conviction.

But there were also Pascalian reasons of the heart. During my collegiate summers I worked as a counselor at a day camp for people with mental disabilities. My solidarity with them instinctively made me a defender of their lives. Then as now, campaigns in favor of abortion, infanticide and euthanasia viewed the disabled as targets of choice.

Forty years later, the shock of Roe v. Wade remains. Its blanket dismissal of the claims to legal protection for human beings on the eve of birth still scalds. But Roe did not and could not have the last word.

As the pro-life movement continues its resistance, the case against abortion has become stronger than ever. The omnipresent sonogram has graphically advanced it. Expectant couples decorate their refrigerator doors with the latest snapshot of Emma's or Ethan's adventures in the womb.

Recently, an English couple planning an abortion because of fetal disability changed their mind when they saw their child "smiling" in a sonogram. It has become increasingly difficult for us to recognize the humanity—indeed, the complex personality—of the child in the womb and then claim to be agnostic about when human life commences.

If abortion remains the central issue, the landscape of our battle has changed over four decades. Euthanasia and infanticide are no longer distant threats. In Belgium recently, a doctor euthanized two deaf brothers who feared that they would become blind. There was neither intractable pain nor terminal disease. In the tony Journal of Medical Ethics, two ethicists recently coined a new euphemism for infanticide: "post-birth abortion." And they're for it. As always, it is the disabled who perish as the goalposts of personhood are shoved further away.

The pro-life movement has become intertwined with the effort to defend the rights of conscience. It is no accident that our bishops' noble campaign to defend religious liberty is very much a crusade to oppose legal efforts to force health care workers to participate in abortions, nursing homes to facilitate physician-assisted suicide, pharmacists to distribute abortifacients and employers to finance the destruction of human life and of the very capacity to give life. Decades ago, the campaign to legalize abortion and euthanasia appealed to privacy. But it has since become an effort to make every citizen an accomplice in the culture of death under the rubric of access.

> Protecting the vulnerable is the pre-eminent civil rights issue of our age.

For those of us called into the pro-life movement, the defense of the right to life of the innocent can never become just one cause among others. It is the great cause, as compelling as our ancestors' struggle against slavery or on behalf of labor. As our bishops have reminded us, the struggle to protect the lives of the vulnerable at the dawn and dusk of existence is the pre-eminent civil rights issue of our age. When the right to life recedes, the entire edifice of human rights buckles.

As we turn 40, we will not be silent. We cannot be. The great cause still beckons.

JOHN J. CONLEY

JOHN J. CONLEY, S.J., *is the Knott Professor of Philosophy and Theology at Loyola University Maryland.*

TELEVISION | JAKE MARTIN

TV GUIDE

The surprising depth behind HBO's 'Enlightened'

Perhaps I am cynical, or perhaps it is simply because I live in California, but the term *enlightened* primarily evokes images of Lululemon yoga pants, chi excavation and quasi-Eastern sayings wrapped up firmly in the latest issue of O, the Oprah magazine, which sits untouched on the floor of a bright shiny S.U.V. So when I read that HBO had given the green light to a series titled **Enlightened** back in 2011, my pupils reflexively headed northbound.

Other than its title I knew nothing about the show, and that, I thought, told me everything I needed to know. I have spent a short Jesuit lifetime hearing words like "enlightened" sprinkled in conversations that usually also contained phrases like "I'm spiritual but not religious." My response, more accusatory than inquiring, is often: "Are you just trying to get out of Mass?"

The "spiritual but not religious" incantation is not one embraced by people in the business of religion, like myself, and so I was more than a little suspicious when first reading about "Enlightened," which recently began its second season. But the reality of the situation is, in the Kardashianized world that is American television, there is little that resembles spiritually enriching programming, let alone anything remotely like religious programming, save perhaps episodes of "The Flying Nun" on Me-TV. So I chose to be open-minded, as they say, and gave "Enlightened" a shot. Begrudgingly I watched and begrudgingly I admit: "Enlightened" is good television. Very good television.

PHOTO: LACEY TERRELL/HBO

SPIRITUAL SEEKERS: Luke Wilson as Levi Callow and Laura Dern as Amy Jellicoe in "Enlightened"

The show follows executive Amy Jellicoe (Laura Dern) upon returning from a holistic treatment center after suffering a nervous breakdown. Amy is attempting to apply her newly acquired spiritual skills in order to be an "agent of change" for herself and the world around her. All the archetypal quasi-spiritual signposts are there: the meditation in lotus position, the yoga, the Buddha bonfire, the self-help speak. All of it seems as if it's meant to be a colossal joke, and yet somehow—remarkably—it isn't.

The success of the show primarily comes from the fact that, while it acknowledges the sometimes absurd components of contemporary spirituality, it recognizes and respects its adherents and their quest for a deeper, more purpose-filled life. The American bourgeois world that Amy inhabits is saturated with fear, apathy and rampant materialism, and while she may be at turns domineering, controlling and prone to rages, the life she is carving out for herself seems far more authentic and full than that of those around her.

Amy misses the mark frequently; she pushes, pulls, cries, screams and alienates, but through it all—or because of it all—allows herself to be transformed. This can frequently make for television best watched through splayed fingers and squinted eyes, cringing with and for Amy. We care about this kooky heroine who, like the canary yellow dress she dons in the midst of the deathly gray confines of her corporate cell, is an unavoidable presence: a life force that cannot be extinguished.

"Enlightened" was created and conceived by Dern and Mike White, who plays the role of Tyler, the love-starved social misfit and Amy's frequent comrade in arms in her latest crusade for change. White also pens most of the show's well-written and multi-layered episodes, with a wit and a gentleness that speaks of someone quite familiar with the terrain of the spiritual realm. The show is clearly a labor of love for both, as Dern—who once upon a time was a Hollywood "It" girl along the same lines as Jennifer Lawrence and Kristen Stewart today—has found a career revival of sorts (she won a Golden Globe last year for Best Actress for the show) and her work clearly shows the joy and intensity that results when a great artist meets great material.

Dern's real life mother, Academy Award nominee Diane Ladd, portrays her on-screen mother and gives an exceptional account of the quiet desperation and endemic fear underneath the shiniest of middle class facades. In one conversation Ladd's Helen tells her daughter, "Most people don't like their job; I didn't like mine." To which Amy responds: "You didn't have a job, you were a stay-at-home mom." The silence that follows that exchange is insightful, heartbreaking and hilarious.

Luke Wilson, as Amy's ex-husband Levi, puts a very realistic glean on "functioning addiction," always managing to get through the day as it were, but forcing those who care for him and his own self-worth to pay a hefty fee in the process. When Amy and Levi go for a weekend river rafting excursion, Amy, in a moment of cockeyed optimism, tosses his stash of drugs into the river. Not soon after this pharmaceutical exorcism, Amy finds herself holed up in a roadside motel, watching Levi go on one cocaine infused rant after another before finally passing out in her arms; a painful reminder of that most ubiquitous of self-help platitudes: You cannot change someone who does not want to change.

Which brings us back to that other well-worn maxim: "spiritual, not religious." Amy is very much a product of the self-help-recovery model of spirituality from which this creed, and others like it, emerged. The phrase—stemming in large part from a desire not to repel those in the early stages of recovery who also have an aversion to organized religion—has been appropriated to serve numerous agendas of varying credibility, which has led to it frequently being met with the aforementioned eye-rolling and derision by traditional churchgoers like me.

But platitudes, however insufferable, do not just come out of a vacuum; rather they are always the consequence of something. In the case of "spiritual not religious," it is oftentimes the result of very real hurt, pain and suf-

fering inflicted by those who should have known better. Religion is a powerful force, and just as it has had, and can have, a remarkable impact on many lives for the better, so too can it cause unspeakable harm when mishandled. So perhaps the phrase "spiritual but not religious" should be understood not as a way to get out of our Sunday obligation but as a way of saying that sometimes, for those who need to get to God, the best place to start is as far away as possible from a church, or the Catholic Church.

ON THE WEB
Browse **America**'s film reviews.
americamagazine.org/film

But if Amy is the model for the new non-ecclesial movement of spiritual development, "Enlightened" inadvertently demonstrates the beneficial role organized religion can play in giving shape, direction and purpose to a scattered constellation of spiritual tenets. Amy's lack of discretion, lack of emotional grounding and need for a moral locus would be best served by the application of some sort of underlying theological principle, but that would hardly make for good television. And so it would seem that, in the world of television at least, "spiritual but not religious" will have to work for the time being. And for "Enlightened" it does—quite nicely, indeed.

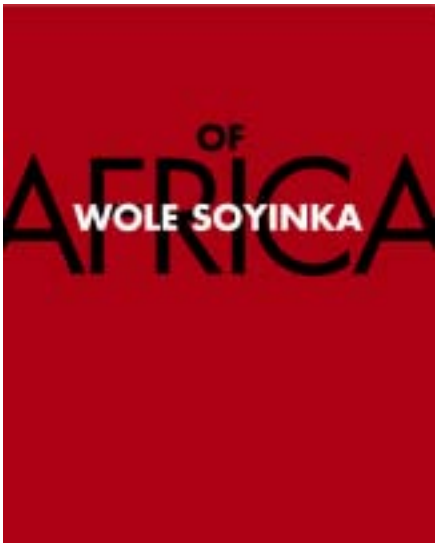
JAKE MARTIN, S.J., *is a first-year theologian at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, Berkeley, Calif., and the author of* What's So Funny About Faith?: A Memoir from the Intersection of Hilarious and Holy *(Loyola Press).*

BOOKS | MARK G. HENNINGER

RUNNING FROM REALITY

OF AFRICA

By Wole Soyinka
Yale University Press. 224p $24



Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka, known as Wole, born in 1934, is a Nigerian writer, playwright and poet. Recipient of the 1986 Nobel Prize in Literature, he has fought for years for human rights and was imprisoned by his government during the civil war in Nigeria and Biafra for almost two years in the late 1960s. He is currently professor in residence at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. He writes with insight, blindness, humanism and anger in this wonderful and disturbing essay *Of Africa*. In less than 200 pages, in small-book format, he writes with passion and elegance about his beloved and bedeviling Africa—the good, the bad and the ugly.

In the first chapter, "Dark Continent? Or Beholder's Cataract?," he begins by examining how others have pictured Africa, "fictioning" it. He speaks of the "children of Herodotus," the Greek historian, archetype of outsiders projecting onto Africa various fictions for countless conscious and unconscious reasons. But then, Soyinka asks, "Could it be that Africa yet awaits discovery?"

He also examines the internal fictioning by the first generation of African leaders after independence and sees the same dynamics at work: a politics of exclusion, the demonizing of ethnic groups and lust for power. Liberation slogans have cloaked conduct consolidated by colonial fictioning, with the same mentality of domination and exploitation, and political one-party rulers have divided one ethnic group from another. "The first-comers in the stakes of power after colonialism have made this the consistent policy of governance: Actualize power, then fictionalize the people." One sees the simple lust for power directed toward a politics of exclusion, cloaked in a language of liberation and development. Examples could be multiplied as in Kenya, where leaders have been playing off the tribes of the Luo and Gikuyu against each another for years for political gain.

History is a key theme, along with the need to face reality. The millennium-old Arab slave trade of black Africans with its racism must be faced, for the past lives in the present. A sanitized history of Arab slave owners in north and east Africa lives in Arab attitudes today in the Sudan toward the Africans in Darfur. The resulting genocidal onslaught on Darfur by the Janjaweed Arab raiders is partly motivated by racism. This cannot be ignored. Political correctness kills.

Fictioning has another deadly consequence, territorial borders:

> The concerted fictioning of Africa by imperial powers, known by the more familiar name—partitioning—is simply a continuation of the superimposition of speculation, interest, or willed reality over history and fact by direct means.... Africa remains the monumental fiction of European creativity. Every so-

called nation on that continent is a mere fiction perpetrated in the cause of external interests by imperial powers, a fiction that both colonial rule and post-independence exertions have struggled and failed—in the main—to turn into an enduring, cohering reality.

Soyinka challenges African leaders to face up to the task of re-examining existing borders. He knows this runs up against the leaders' will to power and control, as well as the self-interest of many in the international community; but until the fiction of these borders is faced and dealt with, Africa will continue to be convulsed by interborder ethnic conflicts.

But he also sees hope: "Africa is much grander than the sum of her politics." This change in perspective from large geopolitics to rich humanism is immensely appealing. He praises Léopold Sédar Senghor, the poet-statesman, for his generous humanist vision, celebrating a universal synthesis of shared values deeper and more binding than the politics of exclusion. This is what Soyinka fervently believes in; this is what Africa has to give to the world. It "pulsates as the potential leaven in the exhausted leaven of the world." In answering the question, "What is Africa?" he claims one thing it is not: hegemonic. The aggressive hegemonic impulse, the imperative to dominate, is lacking in African culture. Tolerance is a hallmark of African culture, he claims, and also of African religions.

Humanism, not religion: this is the message of the second part of the book. But the author approaches this through "the near invisible religion of Orisa" (that is, nearly invisible to adherents of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as well as Buddhism and Hinduism and the secular segments of the West). It is one of numerous traditional African religions and is found in Soyinka's own Yoruba culture, geographically located in southern West Africa, specifically in west Nigeria, the Republic of Benin and in Togo. In this religion there are many orisa, that is, deities or spirits, manifestations of the one Olodumare, or God, each governing various parts of the physical world and human life. It has many adherents around the world, the most well-known to Westerners being its South American and Caribbean offshoots such as Santería and Candomblé.

Soyinka believes that Orisa is representative of many non-hegemonic humanist African traditional religions, and that it can act as an arbiter in a world torn apart by exclusivist, power-driven religions. Here he castigates Christianity and Islam (Judaism, strangely, hardly makes an appearance). Soyinka has been hurt and is angered by both the Christianity of his youth and the Islam of the present.

But with regard to the deities or spirits of Orisa, he no more believes in their actual existence than in the man in the moon. They furnish a better mythology than the warring gods of Christianity and Islam. The possibility that a God of love may actually have made a revelation in human history is not on this radar screen. To a Western academic like myself, all this is quite familiar, and in fact the attempt to reduce religion to a human projection is not African, but comes from the colonizing West.

I noticed a telling change of optic in this section. Soyinka writes of his own childhood experience of traditional healers, incantations, herbs and potions with real tenderness, linked to family associations and with a beautiful depth of humanity for this (vanishing) world, under threat today as much by pop culture, modernization and science as anything else. Soyinka's humanism sings and is splendid.

But the optic changes when he writes of Christians and Muslims, mere players on a large impersonal, violent geopolitical stage. It was disturbing to detect in this paean to tolerance no hint of appreciation for the lived daily experience of Christians and Muslims, the struggles and hopes of ordinary people bound up in their religious faith. I felt my own childhood experiences of first communion, incense in church and singing denigrated. Yes, Africa and its treasures are yet to be discovered by the West, but Christianity and Islam and their treasures are yet to be discovered by Soyinka. Rage also blinds.

MARK G. HENNINGER, S.J., *a professor of medieval philosophy at Georgetown University, has also worked in Africa.*

BRIAN ABEL RAGAN

COMMUNITY DISORGANIZING

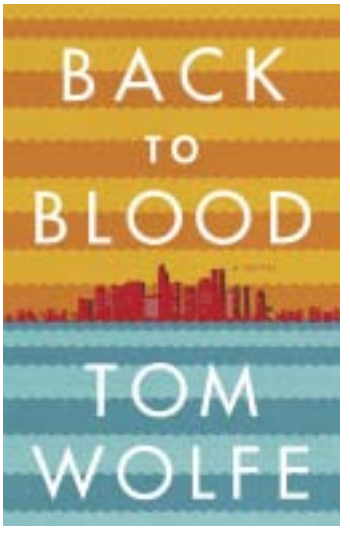
BACK TO BLOOD

By Tom Wolfe
Little, Brown and Company. 720p $30

Tom Wolfe's new novel, *Back to Blood*, has been described as a Miami novel, or a novel about immigration, but in some ways it seems like a capstone to all of Wolfe's career. It is not his best work—that is still to be found in his nonfiction—but it is a tighter and more effective work than his most recent fiction. The setting is new, but Wolfe's interests are constant. Some, like the suspicion that modern art is just a fraud, may seem like mere hobbyhorses by now. Other issues, however, remain as fresh as ever. More than any other writer, Wolfe takes the view that no matter how much they deny it, most people are locked in a competition for status.

The markers of status may be trivial and worthy only of satire, but the struggle is real and deadly serious. Status is so important because Wolfe questions the idea that has become central to the American understanding of the self, which is individuality. American literature, mass culture and psychology in its popular forms all extoll the individual, who finds or creates his own identity, and either has no need for society or positively rejects its intrusions on him.

In Wolfe's view, however, identity is always formed by society. The free spirit of the 1960s counter-culture can play that role only with the support of the others "on the bus." The heroes of the space program developed "the right stuff" only because they were formed by a culture that made calmly joking while lying atop an eight-story pile of explosives seem natural. When he began writing fiction, Wolfe began grappling with the question: if identity is social, what happens to a person who loses his society?



The central figures of all Wolfe's novels face losing the social network that has created their identities and must find a new way, quite literally, to be. That is the predicament of Nestor Chamacho and Magdalena Otero, the young Cuban-American protagonists of *Back to Blood*. Nestor is happy in two social networks: the close-knit, middle-class Cuban community of Hialeah and the Miami police force. Then what might be seen as acts of duty and prowess endanger his positions in both worlds. First the Cuban community sees him as disloyal, and even his family shuns him. Then an incident that inflames the black community results in a suspension from the force, and Nestor becomes desperate. Magadalena willingly leaves the world of Hialeah, first by dumping Nestor. But she finds it hard to find a new identity, since the worlds of money (new and old), art and style see her only as a beautiful accessory, not as a potential member.

What can people use to define themselves when their societies collapse? The modern world's stock answers do not seem to work. Money is both disappointing and fleeting. Sex, as an end it itself, leads to disappointment and degradation, here exemplified by Magdalena's "porn doctor" employer/ lover and his patients. (In keeping with a materialist view of human coupling, Wolfe uses the language of an anatomy text to describe bodies, which gives his ample discussion of sex a taste of saltpeter.) Art for its own sake is just a scam. What is left?

His Victorian models might have invoked providence, but God is not among Wolfe's large cast of characters. From the days when Wolfe was describing the drug culture of the 1960's as a spiritual movement andcalling the Me Decade the Third Great Awakening, he has

had a keen eye for the religious element in American culture. He now sees only its absence.

Perhaps that is because Wolfe's research has been incomplete. In *I Am Charlotte Simmons*, the central character has a strong religious background, but seems stuck at the "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep…God Bless Mommy" level in her relationship with God. On a real campus, she would have found a Christian fellowship, which would have given her both spiritual support and a social network. In Miami, Wolfe seems not to have noticed any religious life beyond a few Santeria trappings. Instead, we begin the novel in the mind of a representative of the part of our culture from which religion has most thoroughly evaporated—the dying WASP ascendancy—and in the other characters we see only the scantest vestiges of belief that might make sense of the world.

What makes sense of the world when religion disappears? Wolfe's answer, in its most simple form, seems to be manliness. In *A Man in Full*, manliness was fused with religious stoicism, and some of that language appears in *Back to Blood* as well. It remains, however, an idealized version of masculinity. The characters that Wolfe most admires—and he seems not to have a deep affection for any of his creations—are those men who stick to a code of prowess and honor even when society abandons them. Hector is able to do that, being at his best a cop first and everything else second. He is most truly himself when he takes on the manly role of protector of the weak.

This view of human personality explains why Wolfe's portraits of women are at best problematic. Even though Magdalena at one point invokes the manly ideal of "honor," she is in fact always defined by her relationship with one man or another. The social world that defines most women in Wolfe's work boils down to one man, and they find no code to cling to beyond it. *I Am Charlotte Simmons* is in the end such a sad book because the character who announces her own identify in the title ends the book knowing who she really is: "JoJo Johanssen's girlfriend."

While one may wish that Wolfe would try to describe women who find the same sort of integrity that a few of his male characters achieve—one may also wish that his research had included as many megachurches and Cuban parishes as strip joints and art shows—Wolfe remains one of the writers by which our times will deserve to be remembered.

ON THE WEB
The Catholic Book Club discusses *The Patriarch*, by David Nasaw.
americamagazine.org/cbc

BRIAN ABEL RAGAN *is professor of English at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.*

VINZI PROVENZA

THE BIG EASY'S COMEBACK

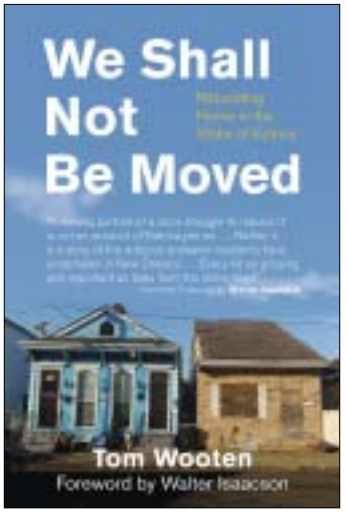
WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED
Rebuilding Home in the Wake of Katrina

By Tom Wooten
Beacon Press. 256p $25.95

THE FIGHT FOR HOME
How (Parts of) New Orleans Came Back

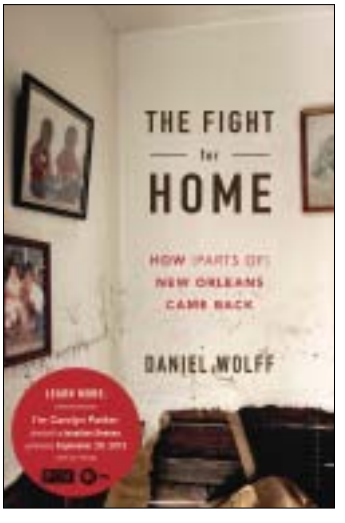
By Daniel Wolff
Bloomsbury. 352p $26

Those of us who endured the rebuilding process after Hurricane Katrina cannot help but empathize with Northeasterners reeling from Sandy. We know what it is like to see our world upended, we know the disruptions that lie ahead, and we wouldn't wish such a fate on the devil himself. Please pardon us, then, if some of us feel the tiniest twinge of satisfaction that the world has been reminded that not even the nerve center of America's power elite is immune from confronting the issues Katrina briefly placed before the public.



New Orleanians are deeply sensitive about the ambivalence the rest of the country sometimes shows us. We pounce with unseemly zeal on outsiders who casually refer to Katrina as a "natural disaster." Them's fighting words in the Crescent City, and the utterance of this cliché in any Katrina-related conversation invariably presages a long harangue about the engineering flaws in the metro area's federally-constructed levees that we had been told for decades were adequate to the task of defending the city against Katrina-like storm surges. But what galls us most is the lingering notion that our city must justify its continued existence. In an era in which the zeitgeist demands that everything must pay for itself, many Americans seem wary of public investment in disaster prevention and recovery.

Two recent additions to the Katrina bookshelf by Tom Wooten and Daniel Wolff focus primarily on the complexities confronted by ordinary individuals rebuilding their homes and entire neighborhoods in the fog of confusion that surrounded local civic life in the years immediately following the flood. Both authors frame their narratives around the struggles, setbacks and triumphs of several locals who are more or less representative of the city's working and middle classes. Many of these people had little or no experience in community organizing or neighborhood planning. They stepped forward during a period when New Orleans seemed rudderless, its municipal government sending mixed signals about the direction recovery would take.



The city's vaguely Old World social fabric has always meant that for all its neighborhood pride and family cohesion, neither grassroots organizing nor progressive-style central planning has ever quite taken root. Consequently, local authorities flailed about for months after the storm, initiating a series of poorly conceived planning efforts, each of which met with public disdain or confusion before being dropped.

The most notorious of these was the first one: the Bring New Orleans Back plan, devised by a blue-chip commission of local grandees. Barely five months after Katrina, this panel's report landed on the front page of the newspaper with large green dots superimposed over a map of the city in neighborhoods the plan suggested would have to prove their viability before building permits would be issued.

To this day, mere mention of the Big Green Dots is enough to drive many New Orleanians into fits of apoplexy. The administration of then-mayor Ray Nagin almost immediately backed away from the proposal, any possible merits of which were made moot by the simple political reality that the public would not countenance the abandonment of any neighborhood. Both Wooten and Wolff strongly convey to the reader the intense fear and mistrust felt by large swaths of the populace during these months. Over and over we read of locals haunted by the conviction that bulldozers would soon arrive to scrape clean their entire neighborhood and snatch away what remained of their world. (Both authors do well in pointing out the surprisingly high rate of home ownership in even the notoriously impoverished Lower Ninth Ward.)

"Developers," a concept invoked as a power of almost mystical proportions, quickly became the bête noire of thousands of traumatized citizens convinced that their little patch of the world would soon be socially engineered out of existence to the benefit of land speculators. It is a testimo-

ny to the chasm that exists between social classes, to say nothing of the legacy of racism, that these fears acquired such currency so quickly.

As local authorities appeared to botch the planning process and the state's primary mechanism of relief, the Road Home program, proved itself a bureaucratic nightmare, it was left to newly minted neighborhood activists to step into the breach. In *We Shall Not Be Moved*, Tom Wooten introduces the reader to a half-dozen or so private citizens who spearheaded new neighborhood associations, created resource centers to assist homeowners, revitalized church ministries and led the community planning process from the bottom up at a time when no other entity appeared capable or trusted enough to do so. Their collective efforts would be instrumental in the professional drafting of a unified master plan ratified by voters and the city council several years later.

Wooten ably conveys his admiration for his subjects, yet one sometimes wishes his protagonists seemed more vivid. The book too often lacks texture in its portraits of these leaders, and their struggles start to blend together rather too much. Daniel Wolff is more successful in this respect, and *The Fight for Home* is generally a more engaging read, although the author displays a penchant for quoting his subjects—including a black pastor, a group of quasi-anarchist volunteers and two ordinary working-class families—at perhaps too great length. But in their unfiltered comments and monologues, we see once and again both a deep mistrust toward developers and frustration at being hung out to dry by the authorities.

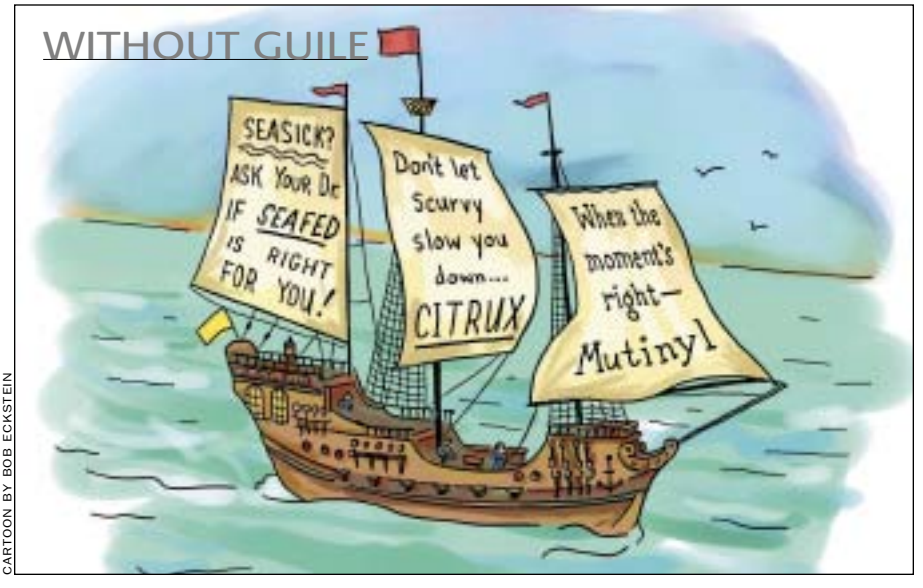
Wolff works on a somewhat broader canvas than Wooten, and the reader gains a sense of both the social pathologies of New Orleans (a pastor describes his city as a "happy plantation," whose residents fatalistically accepted its anemic service economy in exchange for a low cost of living) and the bungling of the authorities, who deliver FEMA trailers contaminated with formaldehyde, slash the number of public housing units, and award the usual sweetheart contracts for debris removal and the like.

He devotes much space to the considerable efforts of Common Ground, a collective that described itself as providing "service-oriented direct action" to residents trying to rebuild. A relative novelty in a city lacking any such tradition, Common Ground was founded by an ex-Black Panther native of the city, and it was sustained for several years by thousands of mostly young, white volunteers from across the country. Perhaps because of its self-styled radical politics, the group was rarely taken seriously by the local media, and the extent of its efforts (tool libraries, a free health clinic, etc.) may come as news even to many New Orleanians.

Both Wooten and Wolff present an ultimately cheerful view of the city's progress since Katrina, and they are right to celebrate the determination and resourcefulness of their protagonists. Still, it may give readers pause to consider the extent to which individual citizens must take charge of their own recovery from catastrophes like Katrina, with many of the most isolated and vulnerable people at a considerable disadvantage. Is it not possible that a nation that chose to spend vast amounts of its treasure on the sort of military adventures supported by politicians and voters of both parties in states like Louisiana might find a way to fund stronger levees and other infrastructure to protect its people from the perils of a changing climate?

Wouldn't the revenue saved allow us to devise more generous and efficient mechanisms for providing disaster relief? Might not the security generated by these efforts promote a greater sense of social cohesion that would dispel fears of dark plots by real estate developers and other bogeymen?

Sadly, our society seems no closer to addressing these questions today. Wolff observes that Louisiana led the way in America's addiction to cheap energy, and indeed the state's decision to prostrate itself to the oil industry, which has done little to enrich its people and much to scour away the wetlands that once protected the state's major population centers from hurricanes. Sandy notwithstanding, it may be the Gulf South that provides the leading indicators for a future of weaker government, more frequent and severe weather disasters and an atomized population that relies on its own pluck and wit to survive.



CARTOON BY BOB ECKSTEIN

VINZI PROVENZA *teaches world religions at Loyola University New Orleans.*

LETTERS

Moral Depth Needed

Re "The Hunted and the Haunted," by John Anderson (2/11): Maya, in "Zero Dark Thirty," is a stand-in for the post-9/11 generation, compressed between the clips and sound bites of the towers falling and the 9/11 taped calls on one hand and the aftermath of the "war on terror" that has gone underground and turned to drone warfare on the other.

The death of Osama bin Laden felt like the fall of the Berlin Wall and the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue: visceral, maybe even visual and cathartic, but also alien to one's personal history and affect. It leaves such a generation with the ambiguity of answering questions like those posed to Maya at the end of the film: You can go anywhere now; where do you want to go?

In today's world we are debating gun safety at home and our military footprint abroad. We want women properly acknowledged in combat operations but are fighting over how many guns should surround our youth. If there's any lasting take away, it's that the United States does best when it has a clear, evil enemy to declare war against. But we don't seem to have the moral depth to inherit or possess, much less envision what victory might actually look like or achieve.

JAY CUASAY
Sterling, Va.

Rooted in Catholicism

Re "The Noble Enterprise," by Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl (2/4): The online comments following this article express dissent rather than finding common ground for encouragement and support.

Is it possible to incorporate new ideas, an activity many persons consider synonymous with thinking, without distorting the nature of Catholicism? If such thinking does not spring from the roots of Catholicism, such concern is urgent. As Martin Heidegger has written, "The most difficult learning is coming to know actually and to the very foundations what we already know." Thus speak the philosophers of all ages.

Has the essential nature of the Gospel been revealed at its source only to be gradually understood by us? Or are we able to generate new thoughts that alter the "paradigm" of Catholicism? Does continuity necessarily stifle growth?

If we wish to keep up with the pace of the secular world, continuity should not be forsaken. Let us remember that Jesus referred to the apostles as his friends "because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father" (Jn 15:15).

SEAN McCARTHY
Whitestone, N.Y.

Why Unions Rise

Re "State of the Unions," by John J. DiIulio Jr. (2/4): Unions don't exist in a vacuum. Fair employers, either public or private, who value their employees and pay fair wages and good benefits don't need unions.

There's a reason why Walmart

keeps having unionization issues. Bad management and corporate greed caused unions to rise. As the popularity of unions wanes, watch for working conditions, safety and benefits to wane also.

JOHN PELLEGRINO
Coral Springs, Fla.

No Thank You

Re "Killer Women?" by Raymond A. Schroth, S.J. (In All Things blog, 1/30): It is not heretical to write, "I see women as morally superior to and often more intelligent than men," but it has such twists in it to suggest that we "ladies" soak up this kind of praise while continuing to be paid less than men and having less opportunity for advancement in our professions.

A further dilemma with such statements is that some commentators who profess them go so far as to suggest that women are somehow responsible to get men to live in a more moral way. All the while, men are getting the bigger salaries and have more opportunities for advancement. Thanks for the compliment, but no thanks.

MOLLY ROACH
Millsboro, Del.

Close to Home

Re "Permanent Prison," by Luke Hansen, S.J. (Web only, 1/16): Thank you for bringing Guantánamo into the context of the U.S. incarceration phenomenon. Tens of thousands of Americans who are no danger to anyone are spending their lives locked up because of harsh mandatory sentencing rules. Families despair after years of trying to find a way out of this nightmare, hoping against hope that something will change; but the break never comes. Guantánamo is following the same pattern.

It seems that the "dark side" of the war on terror is closer to home than we initially imagined.

My hope is that without the pressure to remain politically viable, President Obama will come to his senses and do the right thing. The drone strikes are not encouraging. What is encouraging is Jeh Johnson's speech about ending the war on terror; it needs more airing.

BETH CIOFFOLETTI
Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

To send a letter to the editor we recommend using the link that appears below articles on **America**'s Web site, www.americamagazine.org. This allows us to consider your letter for publication in both print and online versions of the magazine. Letters may also be sent to **America**'s editorial office (address on page 2) or by e-mail to: letters@americamagazine.org. They should be brief and include the writer's name, postal address and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

America (ISSN 0002-7049) is published weekly (except for 13 combined issues: Jan. 7-14, 21-28, April 8-15, June 3-10, 17-24, July 1-8, 15-22, July 29-Aug. 5, Aug. 12-19, Aug. 26-Sept. 2, Sept. 9-16, Dec. 9-16, 23-30) by America Press, Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019. Periodical postage is paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Business Manager: Lisa Pope. Circulation: (800) 627-9533. Subscriptions: United States, $56 per year; add U.S. $30 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. $56 per year for international priority airmail. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, P.O. Box 293059, Kettering, OH 45429.

Repent or Perish

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (C), MARCH 3, 2013

Readings: Ex 3:1-15; Ps 103:1-11; 1 Cor 10:1-12; Lk 13:1-9

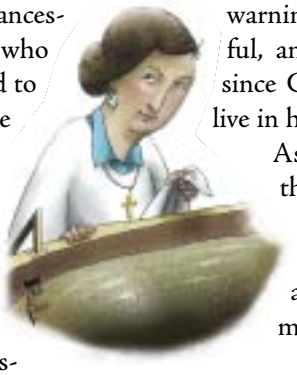
"And all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor 10:2)

Entering into the Catholic Church as an adult, as many are preparing to do during this Lenten season, is a movement of faith that takes time. Candidates often wonder if this is the "right" time or the "best" time. As they celebrate the scrutiny rites on this Third Sunday of Lent, they may even wonder whether they are worthy to make such a step.

But as the Apostle Paul promises, "See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!" (2 Cor 6:2). Catechumens often display the wonder of the initiate inexorably drawn to God, like Moses in Exodus 3, who wants to approach God yet still believes he is not worthy to carry out God's plan for him.

When God called Moses, one of the events on his résumé was murder. God's choice to appear to Moses and reveal his plans for Israel was not an imprimatur on previous behavior, but an acknowledgement that in a fallen world, all whom God calls have sinned. And yet with God's grace we are able to transcend our weaknesses and sins. God called Moses and revealed himself to Moses because God knew that Moses was able to carry out the mission God had planned for him. Moses was less certain.

When God appeared in the burning bush, Moses was drawn to the theophany; and when he came nearer, God announced his presence. God identified himself as "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob," the God of his ancestors, but also as "I am who am"—a new name revealed to Moses. If the Israelites were to ask by whom Moses was sent, he was to tell them, "I AM sent me to you."



Moses did not agree immediately to represent God; he continued to question God's decision and whether he was the right person for the task. We all question God, both at points of initiation into the faith and at the revelation of new or deeper truths. Because the history of the covenant is a history of relationships, there is a record of questions people have asked of God: "Are you certain God? Is it me you want? Is this the path?"

Questions are essential to any relationship, but it is important that they not turn into obstinacy or willfulness when God's way has been revealed and the truth opened to us. God is merciful, gentle and kind, but God ultimately must act if we do not. Questions can turn to grumbling against the ways of God; grumbling can turn to rejection of God. Paul speaks of grumbling against God's ways in the time of the Israelite wandering as a warning for the people of God.

When Jesus is told about some Galileans who had been killed by Pilate, he does not respond with the expected righteous indignation. Instead, as he often does, he turns a question to his interlocutors that asks them to look inward: "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way, they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!"

It is a hard saying: Repent or perish. But both newly initiated and long-time disciples need the truth of the warning. God is gentle and merciful, and in his mercy will wait, since God desires that all should live in his presence.

As Jesus says in the parable of the fig tree, "Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future."

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Do I accept that God calls me as I am?
- When I question God, how do I listen for his response?
- For what do I need to repent?

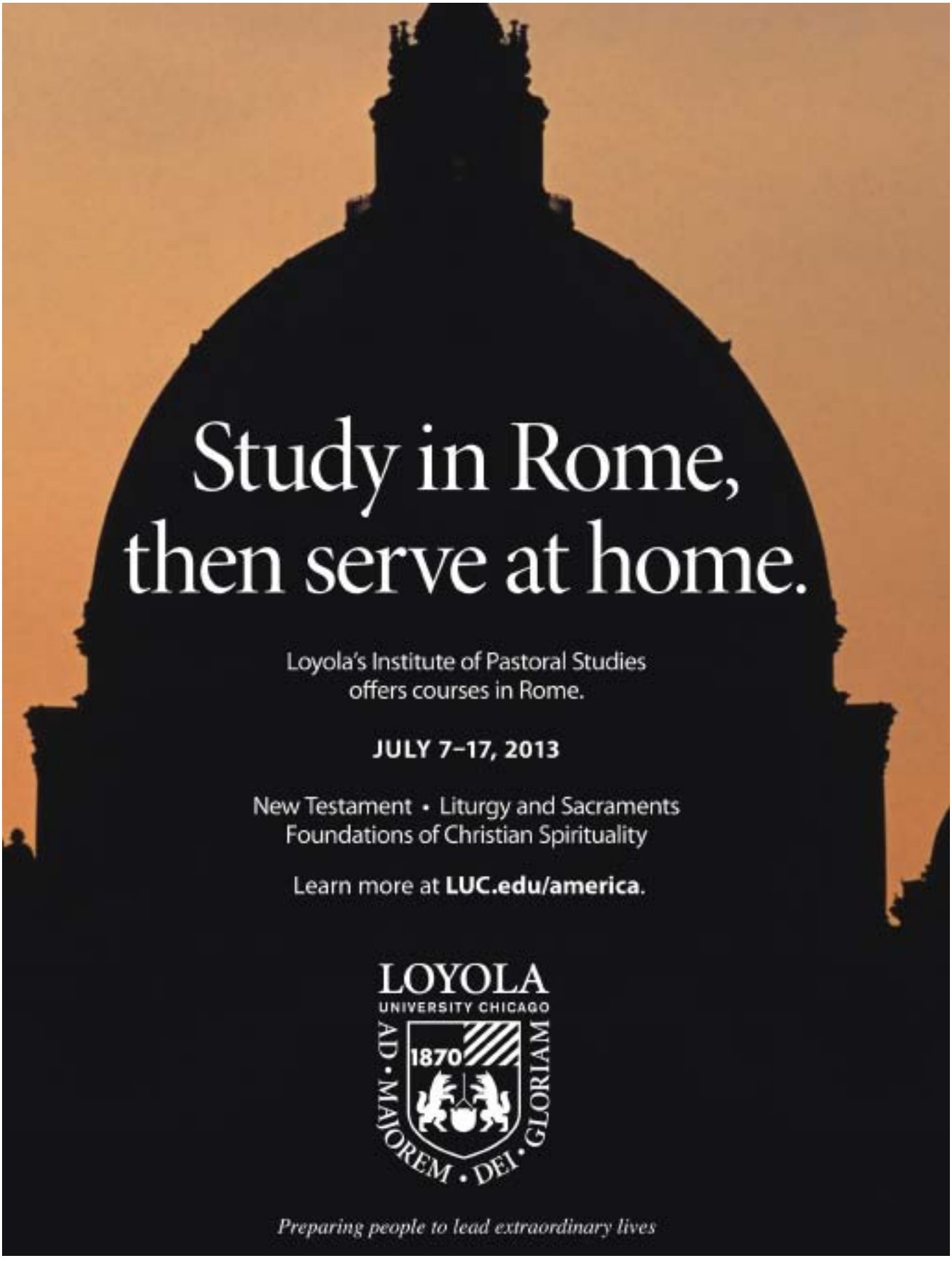
ART: TAD DUNNE

And if it does not? "If not, you can cut it down."

John the Baptist says at the beginning of Luke's Gospel, to those who came to be initiated into the way of repentance: "Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Lk 3:8). It is true, of course, that God could raise up followers from stones, but God wants us. God hears our questions and waits on us but calls us to enter into his presence, to turn from sin and repent, to be near him.

JOHN W. MARTENS

JOHN W. MARTENS *is an associate professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn.*


Study in Rome,
then serve at home.
Loyola's Institute of Pastoral Studies
offers courses in Rome.
JULY 7–17, 2013
New Testament • Liturgy and Sacraments
Foundations of Christian Spirituality
Learn more at LUC.edu/america.
LOYOLA
UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
1870
AD · MAJOREM · DEI · GLORIAM
Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives