THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION ISSUE

America

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Vatican II at 50

RICHARD GAILLARDETZ

OF MANY THINGS

Two months ago I turned 51. That feels pretty old to me. But at least I'm a bit more experienced and, I hope, a little wiser than I was at 21. With that in mind, here are six stupid things I have done that I never want to do again. Maybe you've done some of them too. But I'll bet we'd both be happier if we don't ever again...

1. *Compare*. Ever heard the saying "Compare and despair"? Comparing yourself to someone else usually means that you imagine the other person is better off, more satisfied—in a word, happier.

But here's the problem: We end up comparing what we know about our life, which is a mixed bag of good and bad, with a fantasy of someone else's supposedly "perfect" life. Why do we do this? Because we know all about our own problems, but other people's problems are harder to see. As a result, our real life always loses out. That leads to despair. Besides, there's probably someone comparing his or her life to your supposedly perfect one—which shows you how ridiculous it all is.

2. *"Should" on yourself*. It's easy to imagine yourself making a choice that would have taken you to a different place in your life. I should have married this person; I should have taken that job; I should have moved. This is called "shoulding all over yourself." (Say it aloud and the negative meaning becomes clearer.) Reflecting on our choices is an important way to grow, but you cannot live your real life if you're busy living in your "should have" life. Jesus of Nazareth once said you cannot serve two masters. You can't live two lives either.

3. *Get people to like you*. I spent all of my teens, most of my 20s, a great deal of my 30s and too much of my 40s trying to get people to like me. But forcing people's affection never works. Besides, it takes too much energy to tailor yourself to what you think people will like. Your true friends like you already. Be open to change and growth by all means, but treasure friends who love you for who you are. St. Francis de Sales, the gentle and lighthearted 17th-century saint, once said: "Be who you are and be that perfectly well."

4. *Be a jerk*. You're tired. You're rushed. You've got a cold. You're late. You're angry about something your boss said. Yes, you are miserable. That doesn't mean you have to be a jerk to everyone else. It really doesn't. Sure, share your frustrations and struggles with close friends, but don't make everyone else's life more miserable by passing on your misery. Once I joked to a friend, "Boy, my life is such a cross!" "Yes," he said, "But for you or others?"

5. *Make fun of people*. Nothing brings me lower than a few minutes of mocking another person. (Particularly if the person is not present.) But the snappy putdown has a high value in our culture, and famous snubs are often repeated approvingly. Much of our current political climate consists in politicians mocking their opponents. (That's been a big help, hasn't it?) Malicious speech is an easy way to wound. If you feel powerless to resist badmouthing someone, ask yourself three questions: Is it kind? Is it necessary? Is it true?

6. *Be hard on yourself*. One of my Jesuit mentors used to say, "Be easy with yourself, Jim." If you're reading this list and taking it at all seriously, you may be beating yourself up about stupid things that you've done in the past. (Believe me, my list is just as long as yours.) But you also want to change yourself, which is good. So be careful to "trust in the slow work of God," as the Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin used to say. (He was also a paleontologist, so he knew about things moving really slowly.)

If you ever get discouraged about your rate of change, just think about trees—yes, trees. In the summer they're green. In the fall they're red. And no one sees them change.

JAMES MARTIN, S.J.

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Cover: Bishops of the world line the main aisle of St. Peter's Basilica during the opening session of the Second Vatican Council in 1962. CNS file photo.

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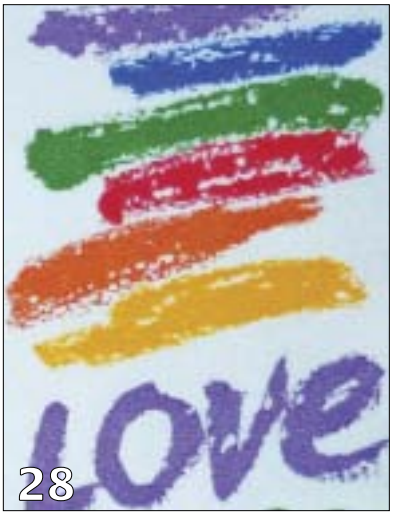


THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

COLUMNS & DEPARTMENTS

BOOKS & CULTURE

ON THE WEB

On our podcast, Richard Gaillardetz discusses the merits of convening a **Third Vatican Council.** Plus, Karen Sue Smith reviews Meryl Streep, right, in "**The Iron Lady**."
All at americamagazine.org.

Waste Watchers

The Food Network lives on contests—young chefs competing with peers for $10,000 or facing celebrity pros for glory. It features fat chefs and bad cooks, to whom it offers improvement. It reworks failing restaurants and glorifies tasty grease. It is not where one looks for social commentary.

During the second week of January, though, the network aired a program titled "The Big Waste." This show had the usual celebrities in a cook-off challenge, but here they had to cook a dinner for 100 guests using food that was destined to be thrown out. The men's team (Bobby Flay and Michael Symon) hit the road, finding cabbages on farms and peaches in orchards and fine rib ends that would taste great but could not be sold—too small, too fatty. The women (Anne Burrell and Alex Guamaschelli) found quantities of great food discarded from supermarkets. Along the way they met a New York "freegan," a well-off man who eats only what he finds for free, and from him learned the art of Dumpster diving.

Through the humor and contrasts with sanitized shopping, viewers learned about some big issues. Consumers will not buy a slightly dented tomato or a mildly bruised peach. Eggs too big or too small for standard containers do not head for market. The viewer sees a variety of wasteful practices, from gardens to butcher shops to corner stores. Though the show only hints at reasons, it introduces an embarrassing and challenging issue: in the generally prosperous society of the United States, almost 15 percent of the population live with food insecurity, while it discards in waste 27 million tons of edible, nutritious and tasty food every year. The Food Network has a lot to teach.

The Marrying Kind

Even though divorce rates in the United States have leveled off, the proportion of married people in the population has never been lower. Just 51 percent of all adults are currently married. Compare that with the 72 percent of married adults in 1960. Catholics are much like the general population in this respect. In 2007, for example, when 53 percent of U.S. Catholics were married, the national average was also 53 percent. Also, with marriages taking place later in life, the average ages at first marriage are at record highs: 26.5 for brides, 28.7 for grooms. Higher education accounts for some of the delay; proportionately more college-educated adults are marrying than are less educated couples. Clearly, the patterns of family life have changed in recent decades: more adults live alone, more parents are single, more couples cohabitate. Still, marriage is not yet considered obsolete. Researchers from the Pew Research Center found in December 2011 that 61 percent of the "never married" respondents to their marriage survey indicated they would "like to marry."

How are parishes responding to the changes reflected in the data? The church continues to offer a vision of Christian marriage; parishes still prepare engaged couples and marry them. But in too many parishes, parishioners outside "the 1960 family" model are still considered anomalies. These statistics show otherwise. Parishes must find ways to attract, welcome and minister to married and unmarried couples, families of all types and singles as well. Tailoring ministry to diverse groups requires extra effort, openness and creativity from parish leaders. Yet without a broader outreach, parish ministry risks being irrelevant to half the adult population.

The Cost of Business

Before purchasing an item, most consumers first check the price tag. But a new California law will help consumers discern whether that bargain sweater comes at a much greater cost. The law requires companies to provide greater transparency about the supply chain of products sold in the state, thus promoting more ethical and responsible behavior from the corporations that sell those products. The law applies to any company that has annual global sales of over $100 million and does business in California. Companies must state clearly and publicly their policy regarding the monitoring of their suppliers to ensure that there is no use of forced labor, child labor or human trafficking.

Although the law is applicable only to California, it could have a positive impact across the country, because few companies are willing to give up the huge California market in order to avoid compliance. The law will force these national companies to consider more carefully their supply chain and the needs of their work force. Those companies that need assistance in adjusting to this change may find help in new guidelines for supply chain accountability that were jointly issued by Christian Brothers Investment Services, the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility and Calvert Investments. The law will also make available the information needed by consumers who are trying to become more deliberate about how they spend and invest their money.

We hope the implementation of this California law will inspire other corporations, large and small, to foster more ethical business practices and increase awareness of the need for a just wage and safe labor conditions.

Taking Liberties

For a century and a half the Catholic Church in the United States has served the American people with health care, education and social services. Even a few months ago it would have seemed preposterous to suggest that the U.S. government would place the future of those good works at risk. That seems to be what has happened, however, with a decision by the Department of Health and Human Services to allow only a narrow conscientious exemption to the employer health care insurance mandate of the Affordable Care Act, the administration's signature health care reform law.

For U.S. Catholics as citizens, the administration's failure to offer a broader exemption presents a grave test of the "free exercise" of religion protected by the Bill of Rights. For the narrow definition of religion in the new H.H.S. guideline is at odds with the millennia-old Catholic understanding of the church as a community of believers in service to the world. The H.H.S. definition would force the church to function as a sect, restricted to celebrating its own devotions on the margins of society. The ruling is a threat to our living as a church in the Catholic manner.

The controversial guidelines, announced on Jan. 20 by Kathleen Sibelius, secretary of H.H.S., restricts religious exemptions to those persons and institutions the administration defines as religious—namely, those that serve clear religious functions, employing primarily co-religionists and serving a largely denominational clientele. The administration rejected appeals from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Health Association for a broader conscience clause. Religiously sponsored institutions, like all other employers, will be explicitly required to provide coverage for contraception, sterilization and two potential abortifacients, services that are in violation of Catholic teaching. The administration has thus pushed the U.S. bishops into a destructive showdown over the future of Catholic health care, social services and higher educational institutions. It is a confrontation both sides should seek to avert.

The exemption devised by H.H.S. places Catholic institutional employers in an untenable position. The guidelines force them to cooperate, though indirectly, in grave wrongs by facilitating acts the church considers sinful. They also place dissenting institutions in the position of withdrawing health insurance benefits from their employees and from students at their colleges and universities. Employees of such institutions will have to seek out inferior and more expensive health plans on the open market, and their employers will face annual fines from the federal government for refusing to comply with the employers' mandate.

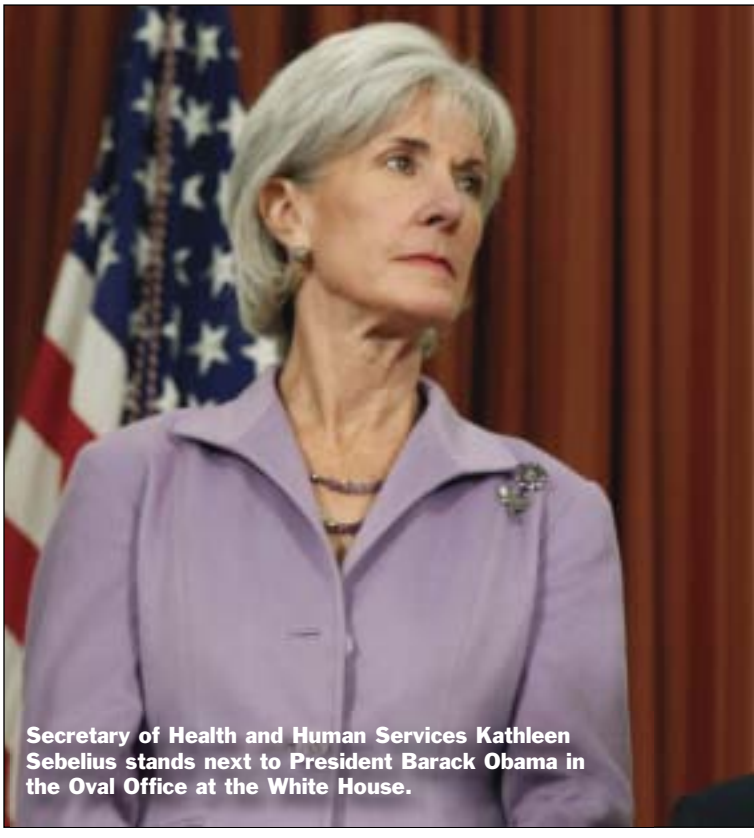
A misunderstanding of the Catholic mission in the United States lies at the heart of this unexpected conflict. The Obama administration's religious exemption covers only entities that serve patently religious functions, including parishes and parochial schools. But serving the broader community through hospitals, clinics, service agencies and institutions of higher learning is not an extraneous activity for the Catholic Church. It is a civic manifestation of the church's deep beliefs in human dignity, solidarity with the suffering and forgotten, the importance of learning and commitment to the common good. Even as the church remains true to its moral teaching, it is called to remain open and engaged with the wider society. The administration must be led to understand that defining away the church's service to the world infringes upon Catholics' free exercise of religion.

Less, but equally real, is the threat to Catholic ecclesial identity created by exasperated responses from some church leaders, who unwittingly would acquiesce to the sectarian temptation presented by the state, jettisoning the church's public institutions in the name of conscience, apparently without sober attention to the church's historic teaching on remote material cooperation. By complying with similar state-level regulations, however, the practice of Catholic employers in a number of states without conscience exemptions (a full list is at americamagazine.org) suggests many have until now held a different reading of that tradition. In any case, the Catholic conscience needs to remain engaged in the public forum out of our faith in the church as a "sacrament" for the world.

Catholics have resisted authoritarian governments that attempted to confine religion to the altar and sacristy. What has distinguished Western democracies from authoritarian regimes has been not just the freedom of individual believers but especially the institutional freedom of the church. While Catholics should be prepared, if necessary, to resist such a policy in our own country, both sides should leave no stone unturned to find a workable solution without unnecessary confrontation. Practically, in an election year, a solution needs to be found as early as possible. Miscalculations from either side could prove devastating.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Bishops Protest Decision On Contraception



Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius stands next to President Barack Obama in the Oval Office at the White House.

In the week after the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services told individuals and institutions that oppose contraception "to hell with you," as one bishop put it, members of the U.S. Catholic hierarchy were mobilizing their followers to fight back. Bishops across the country prepared letters to be read at Masses on the weekend of Jan. 29. "We cannot—we will not—comply with this unjust law," declared Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of Phoenix in a Jan. 25 diocesan letter.

In a shock to many Catholic supporters of the Obama administration, the secretary of H.H.S., Kathleen Sebelius, announced on Jan. 20 that the agency would enforce a narrowly worded religious exemption on new health insurance plan guidelines. According to the new requirements, employer-financed health plans must provide an array of contraceptive options to women without requiring a co-pay or deductible, including sterilization and birth control drugs that may act as abortifacients. Instead of broadening a religious exemption to the new requirements as many hoped, Sebelius merely extended a one-year grace period for religious employers to comply with the new guidelines.

Writing in The Wall Street Journal on Jan. 25, Cardinal-designate Timothy M. Dolan of New York, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said the H.H.S. decision rejected "loud and strong appeals" from "hundreds of religious institutions and hundreds of thousands of individual citizens." He said it is naïve to think that contraception and sterilization will be "free" under the H.H.S. mandate. "There is no free lunch, and you can be sure there's no free abortion, sterilization or contraception," he wrote. "There will be a source of funding: you."

Speaking that evening at Fordham University in New York, the archbishop said that President Obama had called him on the morning of Jan. 20 "to tell me the somber news" before the H.H.S. decision was announced publicly. He said he felt "terribly let down" and found it difficult to reconcile the decision with what the president had told him during a meeting in November—"that he considered the protection of conscience sacred, that he didn't want anything his administration would do to impede the work of the church that he claimed he held in high regard, particularly in the area of health care, education, works of charity and justice."

One of the most strongly worded reactions came from Bishop David A. Zubik of Pittsburgh, in a column titled "To Hell With You." Sebelius and the Obama administration "have said 'To hell with you' to the Catholic faithful of the United States," Bishop Zubik wrote. "To hell with your religious beliefs. To hell with your religious liberty. To hell with your freedom of conscience. We'll give you a year, they are saying, and then you have to knuckle under."

He called on Catholics in the Diocese of Pittsburgh to "do all possible to rescind" the mandate by writing to President Obama, Sebelius and their members of Congress about this "unprecedented federal interference in the right of Catholics to serve their community without violating their fundamental moral beliefs.

Although parish and diocesan offices and primary and secondary schools will be exempt from the new guidelines, Catholic colleges, universities, hospitals and other social services will not be. Administrators at many Catholic institutions complain that because of the narrow exemption they may be forced to stop providing health insurance for employees or eliminate services to non-Catholics.

WEST BANK

Demolitions at Record Pace

'Beit Arabiya," the home of Arabiya and Salim Shawamreh, a Palestinian couple, was demolished by Israeli authorities on Jan. 23 for the fifth time since 1994. Three houses as well as outhouses and animal pens were knocked over by bulldozers accompanied by heavily armed soldiers as 20 residents, including young children, looked on.

The main house, Beit Arabiya, was dedicated by the Shawamreh family as a peace center after its last demolition and reconstruction and was regularly put to use by the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions. This most recent bulldozing of the Shawamreh home is an example of a stepped-up rate of home demolitions by Israeli authorities on the West Bank. Almost 1,100 Palestinians, over half of them children, were displaced by home demolitions in the West Bank by Israeli forces in 2011—over 80 percent more than in the previous year—according to a United Nations report released on Jan. 26.

"Demolitions and Forced Displacement in the Occupied West Bank," prepared by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, reports that an additional 4,200 people were affected by the demolition of structures related to their livelihoods. According to the O.C.H.A., in 2011 Israeli forces destroyed 622 Palestinian structures including homes, animal shelters, classrooms and mosques—a 42-percent increase over 2010. At least 93,100 residents remain at risk of displacement.

The home demolitions have been widely condemned. "The current policy and practice of demolitions cause extensive human suffering and should end," the U.N. humanitarian coordinator for the occupied territories, Maxwell Gaylard, said on Jan. 27. In an annual report on conditions within the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Human Rights Watch reported on Jan. 22 that on the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israel had by Nov. 1 demolished some 467 Palestinian homes and other buildings, displacing 869 people, the highest number in five years.

"Israel usually carries out demolitions on the grounds that the structures were built without permits, but in practice such permits are almost impossible for Palestinians to obtain in Israeli-controlled areas," H.R.W. reports.

According to the United Nations, 90 percent of the demolitions and 92 percent of the displacement occurred in already vulnerable farming and herding communities in the territory known as "Area C"—a zone representing over 60 percent of the West Bank, where Israel retains control over security, planning and building. Seventy percent of Area C is off-limits for Palestinian construction, allocated instead for Israeli settlements or the Israeli military; an additional 29 percent is heavily restricted. Most communities visited by O.C.H.A. in Area C reported that families are being displaced because Israeli policies make it difficult for them to meet basic needs. The inability to build was one of the main triggers for this displacement.

The Israeli State Attorney's Office has promised to respond by August 2012 to all pending appeals by Palestinians against demolition orders. In practice this will lead to more rapid demolition of many Palestinian buildings that have been tied up in court. Among the structures whose demolition was postponed by Israel's High Court over the past several years were 32 Palestinian schools with demolition or stop-work orders for all or part of the structure. According to the United Nations, 24 remain in danger of being torn down.

Palestinian women and children sit outside a tent near their demolished house in the West Bank.

U.S. Majority Support Abortion Restrictions

A poll sponsored by the Knights of Columbus indicates that a majority of Americans continue to support restrictions on abortion. Seventy-nine percent said they would not allow abortion after the first trimester, and 51 percent said they would allow abortion only in cases of rape, incest or to save the mother's life—or not at all. The survey responses were released in Washington on Jan. 23, the date of the 2012 March for Life. Almost four decades after Supreme Court decisions "resulted in the almost totally unrestricted abortion regime of today, these decisions continue to be out of step with the vast majority of Americans," said Supreme Knight Carl Anderson. "Far from being settled law, the inadequacy of the court's reasoning on abortion...is readily apparent to most Americans. Once a survey moves beyond the labels of pro-life and pro-choice, we see a fundamental unity among Americans in favor of significant abortion restrictions."

Vatican Downplays Corruption Charges

Federico Lombardi, S.J., director of the Vatican Press Office, criticized as "partisan...partial and banal" an Italian television news program that on Jan. 25 broadcast portions of letters addressed to Pope Benedict and Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican secretary of state. The letters were apparently signed by Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò and written when he was the secretary general of the commission that governs Vatican City. One of the letters, dated April 4, 2011, said that when Archbishop Viganò took office almost two years earlier, he discovered "chaotic management" and overspending. The letter complained of a "media campaign" by opponents of his efforts at reform and implored the pope not to remove him from his job "even for promotion." The pope named Archbishop Viganò nuncio to the United States in October 2011. Under his leadership a Vatican City budget deficit of nearly $9.8 million in 2009 turned into a surplus of $28 million in 2010.

Unity Building

A British cardinal encouraged Christians to overcome the "three enemies of ecumenism" and to pray for the progress of closer unity. Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, retired archbishop of Westminster, said "suspicion, inertia and impatience" had damaged the ecumenical project. The former co-chairman of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission also told about 500 worshippers gathered in the Anglican cathedral in Chester that prayer and grass-roots initiatives were the best means of keeping the ecumenical dream alive. "To mend the ruptures of the past is a task that devolves on each one of us here this evening," the cardinal said at the service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Jan. 22. "For too long we have lived, as it were, apart, and one of the joys of my years as a priest and bishop has been the growing friendship that has come amongst us," he said.

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Robert Coogan

Prison chaplain Robert Coogan, an American priest based in northern Mexico, accused Mexican security forces of committing **sacrilege** after they tore apart his chapel during a raid on Jan. 24. ⬩ Pope Benedict XVI warned U.S. bishops during their *ad limina* visit to Rome on Jan. 19 that **"radical secularism" threatens** the core values of U.S. culture. ⬩ **Catholic Healthcare West** announced a restructuring on Jan. 23 that will transform the hospital chain into Dignity Health, no longer an official ministry of the Catholic Church but "rooted in the Catholic tradition." ⬩ Bible League International is distributing thumbnail-sized microchips that contain **entire theological libraries** to Christians around the world who are persecuted for their faith. ⬩ Former Archbishop **Robert F. Sanchez**, a pioneer in Hispanic ministry who resigned in disgrace when several women accused him of having abused them as adults, died on Jan. 20 at age 77. ⬩ "They are **destroying the hope of a united Nigeria,**" said Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama of Jos, referring to Boko Haram extremists after deadly attacks in the city of Kano on Jan. 20. ⬩ On Jan. 22 Archbishop José Guadalupe Martín Rabago of León called on **organized crime groups** to observe a cease-fire during Pope Benedict's March visit to Mexico.

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THOMAS MASSARO

Beyond Doubt

The only thing I do not like about my first name is its association with the verb *to doubt*. Thanks to the incredulity displayed by a certain apostle in chapter 20 of John's Gospel, the phrase "doubting Thomas" can still be deployed as a winged taunt against anyone who shares my name.

Yet I sometimes persist in displaying doubt even when I should not. Sometimes it is self-doubt in which I indulge, but far more often I find myself unfairly doubting the abilities of others to get a job done. Here is an example. On the university campus where I work, a new building is going up just yards from my office. The occasional glance out my window has me second-guessing the workers laboring on this ambitious project. I catch myself muttering: At this rate, they will never meet the announced completion date. That bricklayer is clueless. We should hire a landscaper who appreciates straight lines.

My predictions of failure have proved wrong on all counts. Without exception, the workers I initially derided turned out to know precisely how to do their job effectively and efficiently. Maybe this is not so surprising. The know-it-all hats we love to don invariably morph into self-deception caps. Naysayers should think twice before dismissing the hard-won skill and accumulated knowhow of dedicated workers in any field. Every doubting Thomas will have his comeuppance.

Fresh from this mea culpa experience, I recently stumbled upon Michael Hickey's fascinating book *Get Goodness: Virtue Is the Power to Do Good* (University Press of America, 2011). Unlike most books about virtue ethics, this one features more refreshing poetry than moralizing prose. Each of the 47 brief chapters describing distinct virtues contains an insightful poem that captures the virtue being extolled. You will find here descriptions of some standard virtues, like compassion, generosity, hope and loyalty, but also many that may surprise you, like curiosity, pride and silence.

My predictions of failure have proved wrong on all counts.

My only disappointment is that the book contains no entry that matches exactly the virtue I describe above: the grace to resist the temptation to doubt the prowess of others. Sure, we do get three pages on "humility," including an exceptional poem treating the humility of Christ in the Incarnation. But this brand of humility does not quite capture the attitude I have in mind.

Nor does Hickey's volume contain an entry on modesty, an alternate name for the virtue I am commending. Coincidentally, I recently attended an ethics conference where "A Proposal for Modesty" was the title of one session listed in the program. Imagine my surprise when the presentation turned out to focus on decorum in personal appearance and clothing selection, and did not address modesty of judgment at all!

So allow me to propose my version of the virtue of humility or modesty of judgment as especially appropriate to our "age of the know-it-all." If all the doubting Thomases out there turned the doubt back upon themselves once in a while, we would all be better off. I know I would benefit from this challenge. One familiar stereotype is the new boss or co-worker who arrives with a head full of ideas for changing the workplace but displays an inadequate appreciation for the carefully calibrated division of labor and social ecology already in place. While existing work arrangements and procedures always stand to be scrutinized and improved, the oldest story in the book is the reformer who is blind to the received wisdom about accustomed ways of doing things that keep the ship running, even if the merits of these practices might not be immediately evident to outsiders.

This issue of **America** is dedicated to the topic of theological education, an endeavor that generates a bounty of sharp exchanges of opinion. A recent article on education reform proposals in Time magazine, for example, elicited a spate of strong responses, including a letter from a New Jersey teacher who wrote: "I am tired of people who have never taught a roomful of 34 high school students telling me I am doing it wrong." Touché.

If the original doubting Thomas was able to take correction so well, why can't we today? Greater openness to revising our biased judgments and not discounting the wisdom of others would serve us well in private and public life.

THOMAS MASSARO, S.J., *teaches social ethics at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Chestnut Hill, Mass.*

SMALL TOWN SEEKS PARISH PRIEST.

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AMERICA'S NAVY

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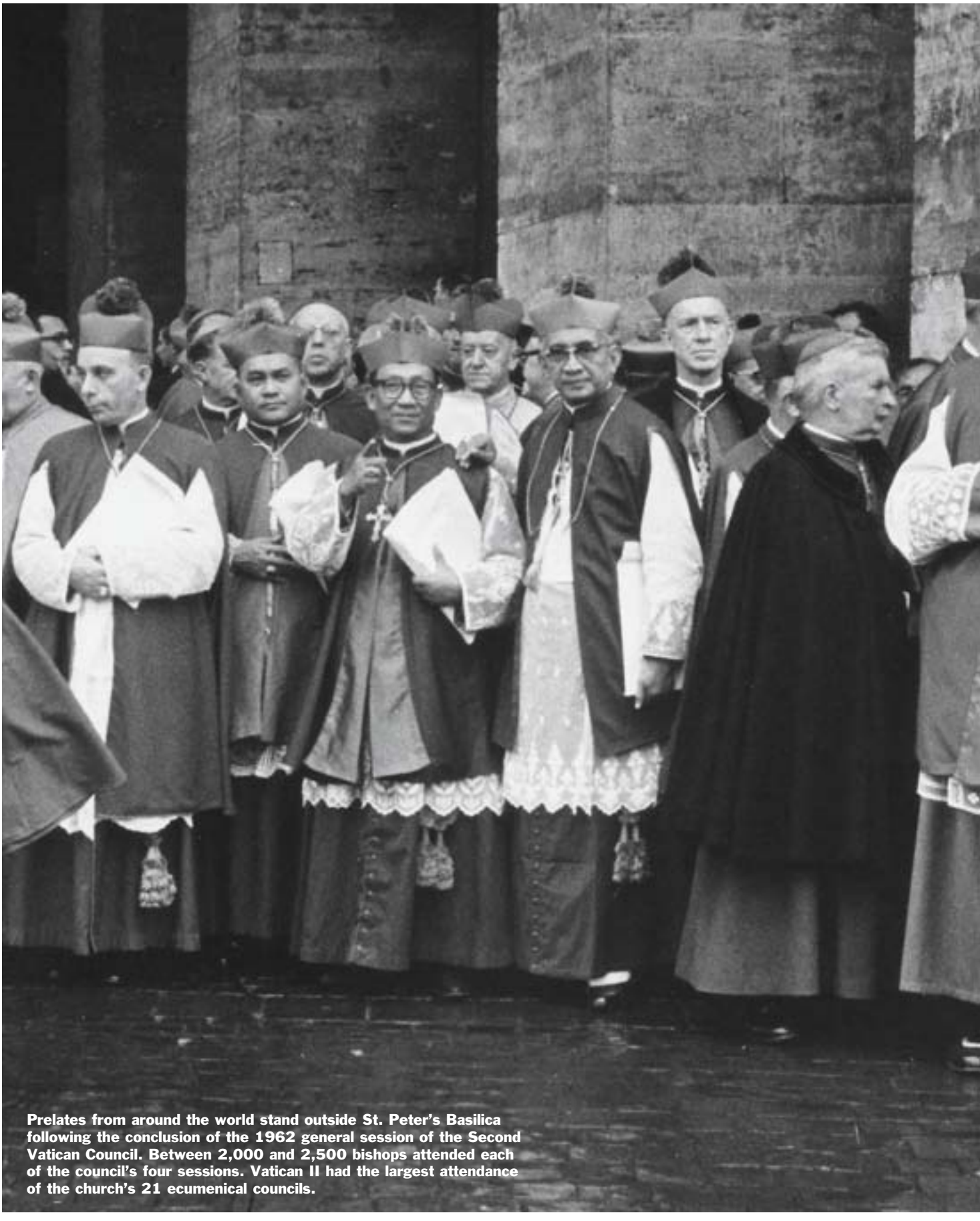


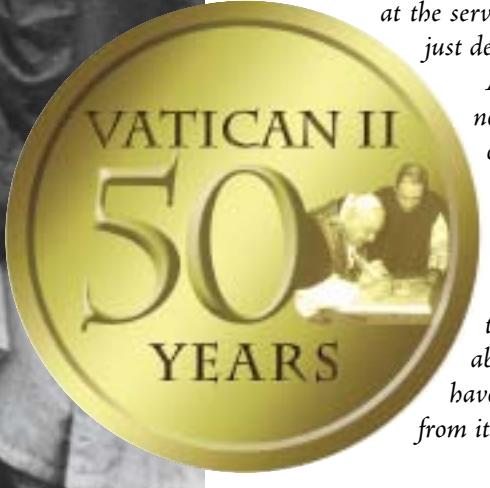
Prelates from around the world stand outside St. Peter's Basilica following the conclusion of the 1962 general session of the Second Vatican Council. Between 2,000 and 2,500 bishops attended each of the council's four sessions. Vatican II had the largest attendance of the church's 21 ecumenical councils.

CNS FILE PHOTO

Vatican II at 50

Fifty years ago this last Christmas Day (Dec. 25, 1961), with the Apostolic Constitution "Humanae Salutis," Blessed John XXIII formally convoked the Second Vatican Council in the hope that renewal of the church would give hope to the world. "I know how helpful for the good of souls are those means which tend to make the individual people in need of salvation more human," he wrote. Accordingly, Pope John urged that the church had to "discern the signs of the times." Despite the darkness of the era—it was the height of the cold war—he saw a few hints that "augur well for the fate of the Church and humanity."

For many years the renewal wrought by the council (1962–65) gave fresh hope to humanity. The church itself was renewed with a new self-understanding. Its catholicity was enhanced with a stronger embrace of the Eastern churches, the fostering of Christian unity and the retrieval of a special relationship with Judaism. Abandoning centuries of intolerance, the church committed itself to religious freedom. The liturgy was renewed in vernacular rites to promote congregational participation. Above all, the church placed itself at the service of the world in pursuit of human rights, peace and just development.



*As the 50th anniversary of the council unfolds over the next three years, **America** will present a series of articles commemorating its most significant documents, personalities, events and outcomes. We are pleased to introduce this series with an essay by Richard Gaillardetz of Boston College on "the enduring significance" of the council and its reforms. Professor Gaillardetz responds to contemporary skeptics who dismiss Vatican II as an aberrant enthusiasm of the 1960s. He counsels that we have as much to learn from the conduct of the council as from its documents and from the spirit of hope it engendered.*

Drew Christiansen, S.J.
Editor in Chief

Conversation Starters

Dialogue and deliberation during Vatican II

BY RICHARD GAILLARDETZ

Many Catholics over 50 are struggling with the realization that many younger Catholics, particularly seminarians and younger priests, do not share their sense of indebtedness to the Second Vatican Council. As one of those "over-50" Catholics, I am convinced that we overlook the influence of the council at our peril. The council's enduring significance is not limited to the 16 documents it promulgated, however. There is much the church today can learn from a consideration of the actual conduct of the council.

Yves Congar, the great 20th-century Dominican ecclesiologist and a key theological consultant at Vatican II, believed that councils manifest a deeper reality fundamental to the church itself—conciliarity. In an essay that has been influential in postconciliar ecclesiology ("The Council as an Assembly and the Church as Essentially Conciliar"), Father Congar complained of the tendency to treat councils as mere juridical events. He insisted that councils were, in some sense, a representation of the entire church. They effected "a totalization of the memory of the church." If he is correct, then the key ecclesial dynamics that were at work at the council ought also to be present in the life of our church today.

Every ecumenical council manifests or puts on display, to some extent, what the church really is. What happens at ecumenical councils is more than the writing, debate, revision and approval of documents. At an ecumenical council, saints and sinners, the learned and the ignorant gather together. They share their faith, voice their concerns, pray, argue, gossip, forge alliances and compromises, enter into political intrigue, rise above that intrigue to discern the movements of the Spirit, worry about preserving the great tradition in which their identity is rooted, seek to understand the demands of the present moment and hope for a better future.

That those who gather at a council carry lofty titles (pope, patriarch, cardinal, archbishop, bishop, religious superior, theologian) and wear somewhat unusual garb should not distract us from the fact that, at heart, they are brothers and sisters (women did play their part, however circumscribed it may have been) in the faith to all other Catholic Christians. Their deliberations represent, in a dramatic form, what the church is called to be.

Father Congar argued against the idea, floated by some during the preparations for Vatican II, that it might be possible to have "a council by writing." In such a view, it would have been sufficient for the bishops to have drafts of documents mailed to them. They would then submit written comments and suggestions, after which an amended version would be returned to them for a final vote. Congar rejected such a proposal as an ecclesial sham. He insisted instead that it was necessary for the bishops to actually gather together to deliberate as an episcopal body on the needs and concerns of the church. He knew that there were crucial ecclesial dynamics that could come into play only if the bishops were allowed the opportunity for genuine deliberation and discernment. Consider three of those dynamics.

Catholicity of Dialogue

The first dynamic pertains to the catholicity of dialogue. Here I am using the term *catholic* in line with its etymological roots. The Greek word *katholikos* is derived from the root, *kat'holou*, "pertaining to or oriented toward the whole." Catholicity affirms the fundamental unity-in-diversity of the church. Ecclesial dialogue is *catholic* to the extent that it freely engages different perspectives and insights. During the four sessions of the council, bishops were introduced to other prelates from diverse countries and continents, who looked at key pastoral and theological issues from strikingly different perspectives. One of the more felicitous decisions of the council concerned the seating of bishops in the *aula* (the nave of St. Peter's Basilica where the main meetings of the council were conducted). The bishops were seated in order according to episcopal seniority rather than by region. This created the circumstances in which an Italian bishop, for example, might sit next to a bishop from Africa.

This arrangement made possible a fruitful exchange of diverse perspectives and insights. Indeed, some of the most important work of the council was accomplished at the coffee bars (nicknamed after two Gospel characters, Bar-Jonah and Bar-Abbas) kept open behind the bleachers in the *aula*. Bishops, after struggling to stay awake during one mind-numbing Latin speech after another, found respite at these coffee bars and often engaged in frank conversation about a variety of topics. It was the sustained, face-to-face conversation and sharing of diverse experiences that opened episco-

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CNS photo from KNA

The Rev. Joseph Ratzinger, left, with the French Dominican Yves Congar, in 1962, during the Second Vatican Council.

pal eyes to new possibilities. These conversations were further facilitated by informal gatherings of bishops like the 22 bishops who met regularly at the Domus Mariae hotel and were committed to encouraging a more wide-ranging deliberation than was possible within the *aula*. These bishops met weekly to discuss topics being considered by the council. They included among their number key representatives from the various episcopal conferences and served as a sort of clearing house for ideas and proposals, facilitating workable compromises on disputed topics. Council bishops also had opportunities to interact with theologians (*periti*) and non-Catholic observers, who offered their own remarks regarding the issues being considered by the council.

It was the many opportunities for discussion and debate, both formal and informal, that allowed the bishops to discern the impulse of the Spirit. Even the common prayer of the council deepened this catholicity of dialogue. Daily liturgies were celebrated on a rotating basis among the diverse liturgical traditions, East and West. Many council participants recorded in their journals and diaries the transformative impact of these celebrations as experiences of a church immeasurably richer in diversity than they had previously imagined.

The catholicity of dialogue evident at the council shines a harsh light on the situation of our church today. We seek to live our faith in a culture that has become increasingly uncivil. We too often encounter demonizing rhetoric on cable television, talk radio and in the blogosphere. Yet the council reminds us of the Christian obligation to respectful conversation with people whose views may differ markedly from our own. The conduct of the council teaches us that a precondition for genuine ecclesial discernment is the conviction that none of us individually has all the answers. We discover the guidance of the Spirit and penetrate the power and significance of God's word through ecclesial conversation and the opportunity to interact with believers who offer us different insights, experiences and questions.

Humble Learning

A second dynamic evident at the council was the bishops' commitment to humble learning. In the century before the council it had become common to divide the church into two parts: a teaching church (*ecclesia docens*) made up of the clergy and a learning church (*ecclesia discens*) consisting of

the laity. This way of imagining the church dangerously overlooked the fact that bishops do not have a monopoly on divine truth. They do not receive supernaturally infused knowledge at their episcopal ordination. It is not the case that a priest with a shaky understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity on the day before his episcopal ordination would suddenly be able to give learned lectures on the topic on the day after ordination! As St. Cyprian of Carthage sagely pointed out in the third century, bishops must themselves be learners before they can be teachers (*Epistle* 74, 10).

Historians of Vatican II will point out the remarkable willingness of so many of the council bishops to become students once again. It is easy to forget that a good number of bishops, then as now, found that their pastoral responsibilities made it difficult for them to keep up with current historical, biblical and theological scholarship. As the council proceeded, many bishops sought the expert input of some of the many distinguished theologians and ecumenical observers who were in Rome at the time. Many regularly attended evening lectures offered by leading theologians. Bishop Albino Luciani (the future Pope John Paul I) admitted, according to an article in The National Catholic Reporter (Oct. 4, 2002), that during the council he tried to spend each afternoon in his room studying. He explained, referring to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, conducted by the Jesuits:

> [E]verything I learned at the Gregorian is useless now. I have to become a student again. Fortunately I have an African bishop as a neighbor in the bleachers in the council hall, who gives me the texts of the experts of the German bishops. That way I can better prepare myself.

Vatican II reminds us that we are all disciples of Jesus and, therefore, lifelong learners. This is as true for the pope as it is for children preparing for first Communion. Our pilgrim church does not so much possess the truth as it humbly lives into it, as it were, knowing full well that, this side of Jesus' Second Coming, we shall not have the fullness of truth ("Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation," No. 8). We are all baptized into a great school of discipleship from which none of us ever graduates. Christ, our teacher, showed impatience only toward those who were arrogant in their certitude.

Openness to the World

The final dynamic evident in the council's deliberations was its openness to the world. Pope John XXIII himself set the tone for this openness. Many have wrongly accused Pope John of being a naïve optimist, a remarkable accusation on the face of it, when one considers that during World War I he had served as a medical stretcher bearer, tending to the

injured and maimed victims of that bloody conflict. Later, as a church diplomat, he held ecclesiastical posts in such global hotspots as Bulgaria, Turkey and France.

Pope John knew well the evils present in the world, but he was convinced that we must not exaggerate those evils and succumb to a dark apocalypticism. In his many addresses and homilies he evinced an attitude of respectful yet critical engagement with the world. In "Humanae Salutis," the apostolic constitution with which he formally convoked the council, the pope warned of "distrustful souls" who "see only darkness burdening the face of the earth." And in his opening address at the council, he noted the advice he sometimes received from "prophets of gloom" who see "nothing but prevarication and ruin" in the world today.

ON THE WEB
Richard Gaillardetz on reasons to convene Vatican III.
americamagazine.org/podcast

Pope John XXIII was convinced that Christians must be willing to read "the signs of the times" and enter into a more constructive engagement with the world. Indeed the history of the council can be read as a long struggle among the council bishops to acquire a form of balanced engagement in which the church could preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ with a humble confidence, challenging the forces of hate and greed even as it affirmed the signs of God's reign already present in the world. Over the course of the council the bishops became convinced that the times demanded a church that lived in vulnerable and open mission to the world, effecting a transformation from within as leaven. The council thereby turned its back on that preconciliar tendency to stand in severe judgment of the world from some privileged Olympian heights.

Here again the council's conduct and attitude offer insight for our modern church, for we still hear far too many apocalyptic pronouncements regarding "a culture of death" and a "toxic secularism." The council reminds us that we must not yield in the face of evil, but neither can we close our eyes to the signals of grace always present where humans seek justice and truth and ask the great questions about life's meaning and ultimate significance.

Over the next three years we will have ample opportunity to celebrate the teaching of Vatican II as a breathtaking achievement and summons for today's church. Yet we should never forget that the council, in its conduct and deliberations, was a manifestation of the church in a dramatic and intense form. As an event of the church, the council reminds us that our church today must 1) continue to practice the catholicity of dialogue, 2) maintain a commitment to humble learning and inquiry and 3) sustain an openness to the world in which we have been sent. If we are faithful to these tasks, perhaps we can fulfill the hope of Pope John XXIII for an ecclesial renewal that will restore "the simple and pure lines that the face of the church of Jesus had at its birth." A

You Are Worthy

Helping young adults learn to see themselves as God sees them

BY RICHARD G. MALLOY

Many campus ministers and others who work with young adults ponder why 20-somethings often seem estranged from church and religious practices. Why does Charlie Sheen's way of life appeal more to the average undergraduate male than Jesus? Why do the ways of the Kardashians touch the souls of some young women more than Dorothy Day or Mother Teresa? In a world where Snooki and the Situation rule, how can we get the millennial generation interested in God and the practices of faith?

In February 2010, the Pew Research Center reported that members of the millennial generation (born after 1982) are much less likely to participate in or be affiliated with any particular faith than were members of Generation X (born between 1965 and 1982) or the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) at their age. Fully one-quarter of today's young adults do not profess allegiance to any faith tradition. Compared with their elders, current 20-somethings find religion to be much less a needed or important part of their lives. While 56 percent of the Greatest Generation (born before 1928) attend religious services weekly or more often, only 18 percent of millennials do so. Forty-four percent of the Silent Generation (1928-45) and 36 percent of Boomers attend church weekly.

Judging by these findings, it seems many of the young are ignoring God and church. Sexual scandals involving the clergy and a plethora of other reasons are given for the alienation of young adults from the church. But maybe young adults want to find a way to connect to God. The problem may be that they are just afraid and confused.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JOSEPH MASCIANTONIO

'Look Jesus in the Eye'

Amy Hoegen, an experienced pastoral minister, was leading a prayer exercise with students at the University of Scranton. She encouraged the group to pray, imagining Jesus right in front of them. "Look Jesus in the eye," she counseled.

After the prayer time, Amy invited the members of the group to share their experience. One described what happened but studiously ignored the "looking Jesus in the eye" part. Amy asked, "What was it like to look at Jesus face to face?"

"Oh, I couldn't do it."

"Why not?" gently asked Amy.

Pause. Shuffle of feet. A glance at the floor. "Oh, I'm not worthy."

What gave all of us on the campus ministry team pause was the next detail. Amy went on: "And I'm looking around the group, and all the heads were nodding. They all felt that way."

A few weeks later, Rob, a stellar freshman from St. Joseph's Prep in Philadelphia, a student who went on several retreats this year and is involved in many service projects,

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is hanging around the office late one night (these questions always seem to emerge late at night).

"Yo, Father Rick, how come before we get Communion we say that thing about not being worthy? That really sucks. Man, so many kids today don't feel worthy of anything. Why reinforce it right when we're receiving Communion?"

Is the problem that young adults feel unworthy of approaching God? Are the young afraid of getting too close to Jesus? If those are the issues, then pastoral approaches and responses need subtle to radical revision. We need to be asking why the students feel so unworthy and what we can do to let them know they are loved by God and worthy of God's attention. We need to communicate that they can be in relationship with Jesus and the saints, no matter how good or bad they think themselves to be.

Cathy Seymour, who has been a campus minister at the University of Scranton for more than 25 years, connects the feelings of unworthiness before God with feelings of lack of worth in relationships in general. "What our students most want is to be closer to Jesus," she says, "but they do not feel worthy. Just like what they most want is real, lasting relationships with another person, but instead they 'hook-up,' thinking they are not worthy, or 'who would want me with all my flaws?' They either feel they can't be perfect, so 'Why try?' or 'What if I make a mistake and choose the wrong person?' The 'how do you know' question always comes up on the senior retreat. Unfortunately, drinking helps them forget their faults and overlook others' as well, and hooking up precludes being real and the work they perceive it would take to become better, more desirable and committed to another."

We need to ask why students feel so unworthy and what we can do to let them know they are loved.

Guidance for the Over-Parented

The paradoxical reality is that this is the generation whose parents took the 1970s mantra "I'm O.K., You're O.K." to the max. Their parents made sure every kid got a trophy and that every report card affirmed their child. Today's college students react in horror to descriptions of the corporal punishments my generation received. But most of us were not abused. In the 1960s it was called parenting. Wendy Gottlieb, a therapist, reports that the over-parenting today's young adults received (from what she calls "helicopter parents") gave them an inflated sense of self and self-worth.

I suspect many 20-year-olds are aware that they cannot live up to the false assurances of competency and character proffered by their well-intentioned parents. When these young people slow down, become quiet, stop texting and open themselves to God, they realize their intrinsically flawed humanity.

This is the classic dynamic of the First Week of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. When we meet the living and true God, our obvious distance from God's holiness becomes readily apparent. The difference is that in the Exercises the confrontation with our sinfulness follows an experience of God's love and grace. But in the lived reality of the 21st century, Catholic young adults who are tangentially connected to God and church too often realize their sin and sinfulness without having had that foundational experience of God's transformative love.

The trick is to get them to understand the truth in "I'm not O.K.; you're not O.K.; but that's O.K." The good news is that we are not perfect. We are not even all above average. Yet the consolation is that we do not have to be perfect. Only Charlie Sheen has "tiger blood" and "Adonis DNA," and look where it gets him—into rehab. The truth is that God loves us precisely as "unworthy" sinners. God comes to save us from our sinfulness. God transforms us into persons who can believe, hope and love.

What can we do to foster among the young the twin dynamics of overcoming fear of God and dealing with a sense of one's unworthiness and sin?

First, challenge young adults more directly and deeply. Their coaches yell at them, while we teachers "ask" them to do the assigned readings. If professors could be as tough as coaches, we would see less grade inflation and more real engagement with the life of the mind. Meeting challenges will foster in young adults a sense of self-worth. Making things too easy leaves them, on some subtle level, knowing "they are missing the mark," which is the literal meaning of *hamartia*, the Greek word for sin in the New Testament. Thomas Merton wrote in *Love and Living*:

> The function of a university is, then, first of all to help students discover themselves: to recognize themselves, and to identify who it is that chooses.… To put it in even more outrageous terms, the function of a university is to help men and women save their souls and, in so doing, to save their society: from what? From the hell of meaninglessness, of obsession, of complex artifice, of systematic lying, of criminal evasions and neglects, of self destructive futilities….

How drastically Catholic universities would change if we took seriously, and made our students take seriously, the

task of saving one's own soul and in doing so saving our society. Priests and other campus ministers need to challenge students to meet the demands of discipleship.

Second, preach a God who loves us and who not only calls us but also demands that we love one another. Many college students today know infinitely more about how to work a cellphone than they do about simple, bedrock theological concepts. Too many think of God as the all-powerful punisher, condemning them for what they are doing "wrong." They have too little sense of a God who rejoices in who they are and in the good they do. Ours is a God who gives us the graces, that is, the power to truly love one another.

Real love always includes the hard work of naming our sinfulness, asking for and receiving forgiveness. Amy Hoegen and Brian Pelcin, both married campus ministers, were teaching a class for the Rev. Jack Begley's marriage course. Ms. Hoegen noted how deeply struck the class was by the section they presented on forgiveness and redemption. The idea that we can be forgiven and redeemed was not only attractive to the students; it came as news. Most in the class did not seem to know that God's forgiveness is part of the deal.

Third, teach transformation. Many students think their sexual hooking up and wild partying have stamped them for life. They need to learn what the anonymous author of the spiritual classic *The Cloud of Unknowing* realized: "It is not what you are, nor what you have been, that God sees with his all-merciful eyes, but what you desire to be." Our young need to know that God can change and transform us, no matter what we have done in the past. St. Athanasius said, "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." God does not transform "perfect" people. God loves, saves and transforms sinners.

Religion as Recipe Book, Not Rule Book

Real religion, the practices of spirituality that routinely and concretely connect us to God and others, can foster a sense of the grace of God transforming us daily. Young adults need to be led to experience religion more as a recipe book than a rulebook. Authentic religion frees and empowers. Young adults (and most thinking, responsible adults of any age) will ignore religious institutions and ministers who make religion an oppressive force. Un-Christian dynamics make too many fear God instead of running toward God. And real religion, the deep and transformative binding of things together, does not always happen inside a church building.

I recall a student I met during the years I lived and worked at Holy Name Parish in Camden, N.J., and taught at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. After graduation, this fellow's 2.0 grade point average from the business school was not making his phone ring with job offers. He was feeling really bad about himself: no job, nothing to do, drinking too much, as he had during his college days. He called up Dan Joyce, S.J., who was also working at Holy Name. Father Joyce got him working in Sister Helen Cole's Camden summer camp. This graduate, it turned out, was a genius at working with kids. All the Camden kids wanted to hang with him. All the campers wanted to ride with him. Everyone loved him, and he found his true self in that inner-city setting.

This young man finally found his worth. That he missed all the opportunities for service while he was at St. Joseph's amazes me. But it is in meeting the challenges beyond our comfort zones and growing that we feel our intrinsic worthiness. The multitude of service venues on Jesuit campuses force college students to look themselves in the mirror and see who they actually are. The lesson is that "in serving one another we are set free," as Sean Connery's King Arthur tells Richard Gere's Lancelot in the film "First Knight."

Students need to meet the challenge of experiencing Jesus in service to others and in prayer. In doing so, they will discover their true worth. The Christ of God has come among us and remains present in the Eucharist to transform us in the reconfiguration of ourselves and our world. Go ahead. Look Jesus in the eye. In that divine gaze, we will see not condemnation but the reflection of our deepest, truest self. A

The Art of Prayer

BY TIMOTHY O'BRIEN

Some people, many of them Catholic, go to great lengths to learn about meditative and contemplative practices. For most of my life, I was not one of them. Rather, I came upon contemplation accidentally, almost despite myself.

As a first-year student at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., I registered for "Introduction to the History of Art," a course taught by Professor Joanna E. Ziegler. No great aesthete, I selected the class to fulfill the arts requirement for graduation. And as a novice in art history, my expectations were colored by hand-me-down wisdom from my contemporaries. I anticipated a steady diet of names and dates, with which one might catalogue everything from cave paintings to cathedrals. I remember uttering that dismissive (if common) question heard about the liberal arts: "When will I ever use *that*?"

My expectations were soon shattered. Certain things I remember vividly: Professor Ziegler's sly smile upon first entering the classroom; her hair, shocking in length and curl and whiteness; her gingerly held cup of tea, steam billowing over its top. Most of all, I remember my elation upon first looking at the "evaluation" section of the syllabus and finding none of the anticipated tests and quizzes. (Things were looking up for art history!)

Instead, we were given the names of three paintings and sent to the Worcester Art Museum. We were to look at each, identify which one most seized our attention and report back. Almost a decade later, I still remember

my first viewing of Pieter Jansz Saenredam's "Interior of the Choir of St. Bavo's Church." There is no other way to put it: I was intrigued. The soaring, Spartan interior of the church had a subdued silence about it. And the painting fostered the same in me.

The purpose of this first museum trip was revealed at our next class. We would visit the museum for one hour each week, preferably at the same time of day, to look solely at our selected painting. Notebook in tow, we were to write down what we saw, beginning from scratch each week if necessary. No additional research about the painting or artist was permitted, not even dates. We were even discouraged from reading the work's identification placard.

For 13 weeks, I gazed at the austere choir of Saenredam's church. Though I later learned that this was one of his favorite subjects, I knew nothing about it at the time. Sitting before the painting early in the semester, I looked at my watch after what felt like an hour, ready to depart. Fifteen minutes had passed. Mumbling something uncharitable about art historians—or one particular art historian, at least—I stayed put.

To make time go faster, I wrote down everything I saw, noting colors and brush strokes. Was it painted on wood, not canvas? Several weeks later, I saw people in the painting that I had overlooked before. What were they doing? I noted features of the church different from any worship space I had ever visited. What kind of church was this? How did Saenredam convey the vastness of space and the intricate vaulted ceiling with mere paint? Gradually, I became more adept at "seeing" the work, letting it reveal itself over time. I grew quieter, writing less. And what I initially called "the

ART: SEAN QUIRK

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painting" I now thought of, with all respect to the artist, as "my painting."

Back at Holy Cross, in class and conversation, I learned that this was precisely the point. Professor Ziegler was taken up not so much with names and dates as with how art intersected with contemplation, revelation and mystery. For her, introducing a class to art history involved our learning how to see, understood as both a spiritual and physical activity. We learned, or tried at least, to be attentive and heedful, to wonder at something beautiful.

Our teacher had asked us to become contemplatives.

In the Gospel of Luke, the disciples entreat Jesus, "Master, teach us to pray." He responds with the words of the Our Father. Many of us learned to pray with these or similar words, schooled by our parents and preachers before even thinking to ask for instruction. With time, these rote formulae can open the way to larger expanses of prayer, to meditation and contemplation, which are considerably harder to teach.

Professor Ziegler's class and Saenredam's church were essential for my schooling in prayer. I do not claim to have had some mystical experience in the Worcester Art Museum. Quite the opposite. My recorded concerns were distressingly terrestrial: uncomfortable seating and the stale air proper to art museums.

But like all good introductions, her course laid the groundwork for later growth. This project pointed to the virtues of routine and ritual. Repetition helped minimize the extent to which my own "baggage" in a given week colored how and what I saw. Most important, it underscored that contemplative practice hinges on one's disposition; that mystery—whether a painting's or God's—will be as apparent to us as our attentiveness allows.

Life after college took me into government service and then into the Society of Jesus. St. Ignatius wanted his followers to be "contemplatives in action," to see this world with different eyes. Most of the lessons I have learned as a pray-er cycle back in some way to Saenredam's work and my semester seated before it. After all, what is contemplation if not looking and seeing with care, awe and even love? As a Jesuit, I was heartened to encounter a definition of prayer by Walter Burghardt, S.J., as "a long, loving look at the real."

Professor Ziegler died last November, far too soon. My appreciation for what she was about continues to deepen, however. Since the cornerstone of her course was that our judgments develop with time, maturing as things are revealed to us, this seems entirely appropriate.

"Master, teach us to pray," the disciples asked. How fitting that some teachers and artists are called "masters." Both share Jesus' concern for people who have "eyes but do not see." And like him, they too can teach us to pray. A

ART | SUZANNE WIELGOS

GIFT TO A GOOD, GRAY WORLD

The life and legacy of Corita Kent

Last year was the 25th anniversary of the passing of one of the most outspoken and well-known activists within the Catholic Church during the turbulent 1960s. Corita Kent, once known as Sister Mary Corita, I.H.M., never backed down from her desire to call people to the simplicity of the Gospel through revolutionary art, despite enormous pressure from within and without the church.

Once tagged "the modern nun" in a Newsweek cover story in 1967, Corita initially produced pleasant serigraphs featuring traditional color schemes and distinctly religious subject matter. She chose serigraphy, a process of hand-applied silkscreen, to create a large quantity of accessible, low-cost prints. Her serigraph "the lord is with thee" won first prize in the print division of a Los Angeles County art competition and brought her public acclaim in the 1950s.

"the lord is with thee"

But with the seismic shifts in American pop culture, Corita's art shifted as well. She was among the first pop artists to appropriate advertising slogans and logos and turn them into reminders of God's presence in everyday life. Her creative approach drew raised eyebrows from some, who preferred that she stick to less controversial expression. The colorful, circular logo from a bag of Wonderbread became an image of the Eucharist—truly "wonder" bread. Corita was testing convention and finding success. It is perhaps not surprising that she never received full credit for being among the first to experiment with using common images and twisting texts to express her thoughts. Would the canon of modern art recognize a woman—and a woman religious at that—for contributions that equal those of her contemporary, Andy Warhol?

As Corita's political activism grew, her art began to feature psychedelic colors and more strident messages. She later gave Daniel Berrigan, S.J., the peace activist, credit as a source of her powerful activist art of the mid- to late-1960s. "I suppose people like Dan had a lot to do with it because he was the first one I had ever heard speaking about the Vietnam War.... And I think living with people who were socially conscious helped a lot. I'm sure if I had been a nice proper housewife, I would not have bumped into all of these ideas," she said in an interview in 1977 for an oral history project at the University of California. Her 1969 serigraph "phil and dan" features a news photo of the Berrigan brothers burning draft cards, in fluorescent orange. It is striking, engaging and challenging to the viewer, perhaps requiring a greater response than her earlier serigraphs.

That is the point Corita was trying to make; if her early serigraphs were whispers, these were screams. She screamed against the Vietnam War, against racial prejudice, against injustice.

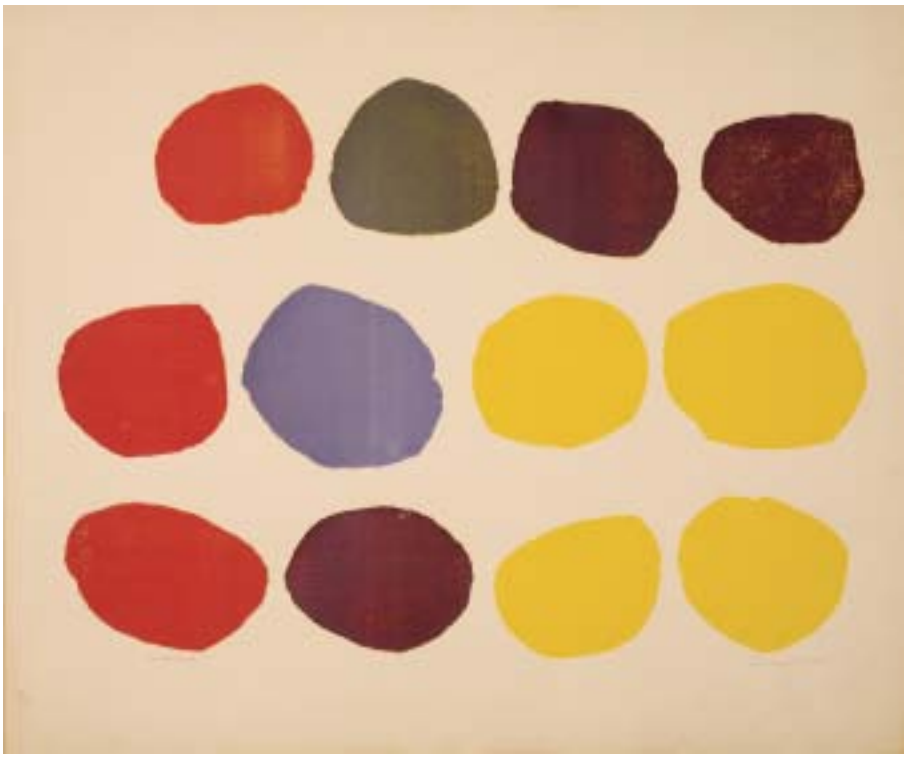
In 1968 Corita, probably exhausted, left the Immaculate Heart of Mary community and moved to Boston. Suddenly alone and needing to support herself financially for the first

time in her life, she continued to accept corporate art commissions like those she had done for Neiman Marcus and Westinghouse. She declined an offer to join Harvard University in order to discover the joys and sorrows of a solitary artist's life. In addition to commissions from Revlon, Samsonite and other firms, Corita worked free of charge for many nonprofit groups.

Although her underlying messages remained the same, she switched to watercolors that featured swaths of happy, rainbow colors and brief platitudes. Gone were the acid greens and yellows and the twisted Helvetica typefaces falling off the edges of the serigraphs. Gone were lengthy literary quotes from Beat generation writers and direct challenges to the viewer to take action. Now Corita focused simply on love. She once explained the shift: "The serigraphs were bold, are bold, and they make a statement," she is quoted as saying in *Come Alive! The Spirited Art of Sister Corita*, by Julie Ault. "The watercolors, on the other hand, make conversation. I feel that the time for physically tearing things down is over. It is over because as we stand and listen we can hear it crumbling from within."

Around this time Corita created the largest copyrighted painting in the world. She was commissioned by Boston Gas to paint an enormous gas storage tank on a major thoroughfare just outside Boston. She also created her smallest work. At one square inch, the "LOVE" stamp commissioned by the U.S. Postal Service is perhaps Corita's best-known work of all; over 700 million were sold.

Although Corita was diagnosed with cancer around 1974 and passed away in 1986, her legacy remains vibrant. Today the Corita Center in Los Angeles bustles with activity, filled with fellow former I.H.M.'s and others determined to carry her message into the future. The walls are filled with bright serigraphs, and a tiny gift shop keeps her art accessible to all, as Corita wished. Perhaps the best summary of her legacy comes from Daniel Berrigan, S.J., who wrote in *Come Alive!*: "The joy in her work, its riotous color, was her gift to a good gray world. It seemed as though in her art the juices of the world were running over, inundating the world, bursting the rotten wineskins of semblance, rote, and rot…one emotion seemed denied to Catholics …they needed joy, joy, joy! Corita Kent had it in abundance. She gave it, pressed down, flowing over."



"wonderbread"

THE LOVE STAMP ©1984 THE UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

The LOVE stamp

ON THE WEB
A Catholic C.E.O. discusses her stint on "Undercover Boss."
americamagazine.org/culture

SUZANNE WIELGOS *is an adjunct instructor of writing at the College of DuPage and at Lewis University, both in Illinois.*

GREAT AMERICAN RIPOFF

RETIREMENT HEIST
How Companies Plunder and Profit From the Nest Eggs of American Workers

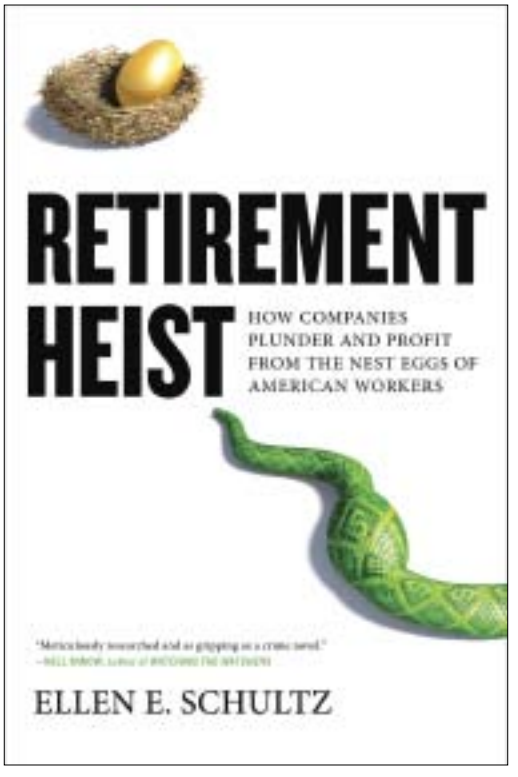
By Ellen E. Schultz
Portfolio. 256p $26.95

You know the whine. Bloggers, pundits and media stories have repeated it often enough. Companies should not be faulted for America's retirement-and-pension crisis. It was unforeseen economic factors—an aging workforce, increasing health care costs, an outmoded pension system and the stock market debacle—that necessitated slashing retiree benefits and forgoing pension plans for new employees.

Not so! says Ellen Schultz. *Retirement Heist* argues that today's crisis, far from being a demographic accident, was manufactured by company executives and their facilitators—benefit consultants, insurance agencies, banks and industry lobbyists—to enrich the few.

An award-winning investigative journalist who used to write for The Wall Street Journal, Schultz has reported on the so-called retirement crisis for more than a decade. She has pored over Securities and Exchange Commission filings and company memos, read transcripts for court cases challenging cuts in benefits and sat through congressional hearings on pension law and conferences for actuaries. With this insider's knowledge, she documents a tale of mind-boggling thievery and greed. *Retirement Heist* provides an important and shocking back story on an issue that is affecting millions of American workers.

According to Schultz, the looting began in earnest more than 20 years ago, when pension funds were still flush. Many corporate pension plans had such massive surpluses they "could have fully paid their current and future retirees' pensions, even if all of them lived to be ninety-nine and the companies never contributed another dime," she writes. By 1999, surpluses at some companies had reached "laughable levels": $25 billion at G.E., $24 billion at Verizon, $20 billion at AT&T and $7 billion at I.B.M. Rather than celebrate this security, employers bemoaned their inability to access these assets and pushed for the government to loosen the rules of withdrawal, which it did. With the spigot open, corporate siphoning of wealth, already a chronic problem, intensified.



Retirement Heist methodically catalogues how the siphoning occurred. Exploiting loopholes and flexibility in new federal accounting rules, employers use their pension plans to finance downsizing, cover the cost of retiree health benefits and boost executive pay. They lay off older workers just before their pensions will spike, inflate retiree medical costs to increase profit and conceal the liability of executive benefits in pension plans for the rank-and-file. Schultz says the latter practice explains the current "drag" on many pension funds. By 2008 executives were receiving "more than one-third of all pay at U.S. companies—more than $2.1 trillion of the $6.4 trillion total compensation," she notes.

The strategies employed show remarkable audacity. Some companies purchase life insurance policies on their employees, often without their knowledge, to use as tax shelters for executive benefits. Others decrease their health care obligations with "creeping take-aways." The maneuver entails paring down medical benefits for several years in increments too small to warrant a lawsuit, then suddenly slashing them. When retirees challenge the reduction in court, the company argues that employees' lack of action on the small cuts signaled tacit approval for the reduction.

G.E. monetized its pension assets by selling a unit to another company, then handed over more pension money than was needed for the transferred retirees in exchange for a higher asking price. Schultz says a succession of such swaps, as well as other practices, left G.E.'s once-flush pension plan $6 billion in debt by 2011.

Can pension plans be saved? Schultz thinks not. They are a thing of the past, she believes, and their replacements, 401(k)s, are not the great equalizers they were purported to be. She warns us that the retirement industry is going global and already "has big plans for Social Security."

Retirement Heist specifically scrutinizes the scurrilous practices of America's large corporations. The inequities documented border on the fantastical. While the book cites some individuals for their singular irrespon-

sibility and greed, the main culprit in Schultz's tale is the take-what-you-can-get-away-with mind-set that has infected so much of the finance industry. The ledgers used in the corporate world come from a planet few of us inhabit. Capital is divorced from labor, product or even innovation. Vast sums of money appear and disappear with a wave of the actuarial hand. Amid the wizardry, American workers, many of whom have given decades of their lives to a company, are reduced to "portfolios of assets and liabilities."

There is pushback to this dehumanization. Some of the book's most poignant and inspiring sections are its David-and-Goliath accounts of aging and ailing retirees challenging cuts to their already meager benefits. More often than not, Goliath wins, but the pursuit of Motorola for unexplained pension deductions by the feisty retiree Fred Loewy marks an impressive win for the Little Guy.

Readers unfamiliar with the workings of the finance industry might struggle to track the labyrinthine shenanigans recorded here. Persevere. You or someone you know could be affected by the monetary maneuverings described.

Reading *Retirement Heist* brought to mind *Nickel and Dimed*, Barbara Ehrenreich's searing and witty examination of the minimum wage. Like Ehrenreich, Schultz explains and interprets the dollars-and-cents data on her topic, always keeping the American worker at the center of her calculus.

While the revelations in *Retirement Heist* infuriate and frighten, they can also inspire a re-evaluation of our notions of security. Nest eggs, after all, are fragile. Why not, then, invest in treasures that neither moth, nor rust nor profit-obsessed employers can consume?

CLAIRE SHAEFFER-DUFFY, *a freelance writer, is a member of the Saints Francis and Thérèse Catholic Worker Community in Worcester, Mass.*

JAMES F. KEENAN

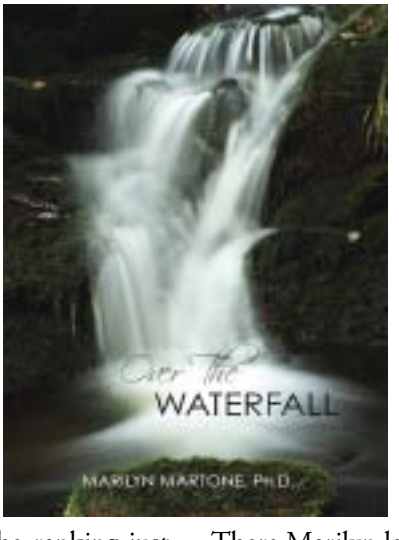
AFTER THE CALL

OVER THE WATERFALL

By Marilyn Martone
CreateSpace. 214p $14.95 (paperback)

In the early evening of Feb. 22, 1998, Larry and Marilyn Martone of Long Island, N.Y., received a phone call from Cook County Hospital telling them that their youngest child, Michelle, an undergraduate senior at the University of Chicago, had been hit by a car. She was on a ventilator and in critical condition with severe brain trauma. "Brain" and "ventilator" were the two words that Marilyn remembers as she, her husband and their sons headed out the door that night to fly to Chicago.

So begins the odyssey of the intrepid Martone family as they rescue Michelle from a health care system that just transfers her from one facility to another. At the heart of it is a gripping, deeply disturbing and painfully transparent narrative of Marilyn's advocacy for her daughter's well-being from 1998 until the present.



As they arrive in Chicago, they learn that Michelle is at level three on the Glasgow coma scale, the ranking just short of brain-dead. Within 48 hours, she needs surgery to reduce the brain swelling. On the "informed" consent form that Marilyn signs, next to "possible effects" is written "death" and next to "alternatives" is "none." Marilyn comments, "No, I didn't give informed consent, but we all pretended that I did. Signing consent forms was an illusory symbol that we had control over the situation, but we were all taking our cues from Michelle and only reacting to what needed to be done."

The book exudes wisdom. Marilyn Martone, a professor of moral theology and bioethics at St. John's University in Jamaica, N.Y., has published in more than a dozen different journals, including the Hastings Center Report, the Journal for the Society of Christian Ethics, Theological Studies, the Journal of Religion, Disability and Health, Origins, the Journal of Clinical Ethics and **America**. For her work on ethics and disability, she won a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and a fellowship at Weill-Cornell Medical College and the Hospital for Special Surgery.

The wisdom in these pages is not, however, the fruit of academic research alone; it is rather born from the reflective and sustained experience of a mother nursing and protecting her daughter with love, unwavering fidelity and hope.

For nearly eight weeks, Michelle remained unconscious at Cook County. Later she was transported to the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, where she needed to emerge from her coma within two weeks if she were to remain at the center. There Marilyn learned that acute care and rapid recovery were the focus of professionals' preference for brain trauma patients—rather than chronic care.

After four months in Chicago, an unconscious Michelle was shuttled to another facility, this one in Edison, N.J. Here Marilyn faced the question: will her daughter ever awaken? Again the staff decides that Michelle is not improving, and now the Martones are advised to consider withdrawing her artificial hydration and nutrition because one physician believes she is in a persistent vegetative state. (Too early for that prognosis, thinks Marilyn.)

With a sense that "as the medical magic ceased to work, Michelle was becoming less and less of a person in the eyes of medical professionals," Marilyn watches as they transfer her to the facility's "sub-acute division." There, nearly eight months after the accident, Michelle begins to nod, respond and even speak. As she emerges from unconsciousness, she begins to experience excruciating pain.

She remains in Edison for one year, but her development is slow and the facility begins cutting back on her therapeutic sessions. Though she is conscious and aware of her family members and knows their love, her cognitive development and her memory are profoundly compromised. She moves to a facility on Long Island, and then, about two years after the accident, she returns home.

Throughout the account are some unbelievable stories: a roommate who beats her nurse with a metal bar and jumps from the hospital's third floor window; an anesthesiologist who does not realize that Michelle has a tracheotomy; a fire on her floor in a Chicago hospital and a fire on her floor in the Edison facility. There is the lawsuit over the car accident, Marilyn's surgeries (knee replacements, breast cancer and emergency gall bladder surgery), the occasional overwhelming depression, spiritual desolation and abiding sense of abandonment from the experience that long-term disabilities from brain injuries are simply not a health care priority.

Over the Waterfall is unlike anything else Martone has written or I have ever read. This is truly her own *Confessions*, filled with rich insights about the gift of a child and spiritual strength, about brain injury, brain development and health care advocacy. Above all, it is Marilyn's description of Michelle going over the waterfall. There her daughter's entire life, con-

sciousness and even personality are shattered in her descent; and her family scrambles against the rushing water at the bottom of the waterfall to find the pieces to save her. They are there because they went over, too.

Twelve years later Michelle lives at home with her parents. For the young woman to whom most things came easily, today she works "very hard" with speech, motor and cognitive therapies and "is slowly forming her new identity." When Marilyn Martone is not with her daughter at home, she is out raising consciousness about victims of brain trauma.

JAMES F. KEENAN, S.J., *is Founders Professor of Theology at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Mass.*

MARIE ANNE MAYESKI

SISTERS OF THE WORD

PROPHETS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY

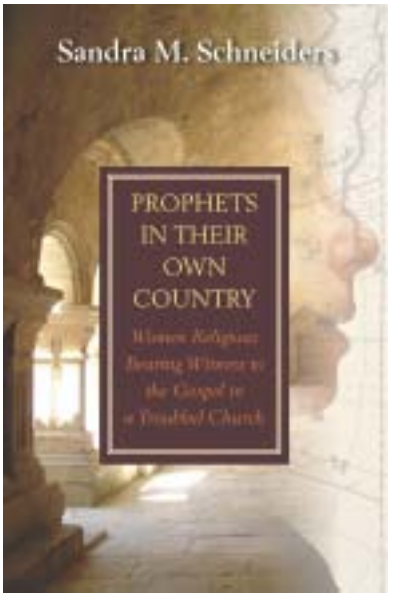
Women Religious Bearing Witness to the Gospel in a Troubled Church

By Sandra M. Schneiders
Orbis. 128p $20

In this slender volume Sandra M. Schneiders, I.H.M., offers a historical and theological reflection on the recent interaction between American women religious and the Vatican. But far more than this, she models a solid theological methodology by which history, biblical evidence and a concrete socio-historical situation can be brought together to illuminate the challenge of revelation and the meaning of history as the locus of the drama of salvation.

Schneiders's work emerged in response to the Vatican's investigation of many communities of American sisters launched in January 2009. In the book's introduction, Schneiders carefully narrates the process by which she came to write and publish her reflections and briefly lays out the themes she considers in each of the subsequent four chapters and a brief conclusion. She asks interesting questions, like, Who is paying for the investigation? since the U.S. bishops and the religious congregations themselves mostly declined the invitation to finance the project.

The first, short chapter was originally part of an e-mail conversation with colleagues, an initial response to the announcement of the Vatican investigation. It reflects the author's understanding that the investigation has been neither benevolent nor helpful to American women religious. It also exposes briefly her understanding that the contemporary life of active women's congregations is emerging as a new form of religious life, one that has grown organically from earlier forms but is distinct from them. She describes that evolution more fully in Chapter Three.



In a chapter entitled "Why They Stayed," Schneiders clarifies the historical situations that shaped the unusually large influx of women into religious life during the 1940s and '50s and explains why this has probably created an unrealistic expectation about how big religious congregations "should be" today. Measuring the present population against this anomalous standard can create the sense that religious congregations are somehow failing. Instead, Schneiders argues, we ought to ask why those who stayed did so, and in three short but eloquent pages she portrays the contemporary character of today's religious sisters.

Then Schneiders analyzes the evolution of what she calls "ministerial" or "apostolic" religious life. Here she integrates important historical information and identifies key historical shifts that are the crucial moments and movements for understanding the distinctive character of women's religious life. Her analysis rests not just on sound historical data, however, but on biblical revelation: she points to the elements of Jesus' own life as the model for ministerial religious life. This leads ineluctably to the chapter entitled "Religious Life as a Prophetic Lifeform in the Church." In this, the longest chapter, we see distilled all of Schneiders's formidable biblical scholarship as well as her lifelong, thoughtful commitment to the life she has chosen. She carefully lays out the meaning of biblical prophecy and reflects on the prepaschal life of Jesus as a prophet—his divine call, the task of the prophet as he understood and lived it and his life as understood in prophetic terms.

Then she examines the ministerial life of contemporary religious women, using again the rubric of the prophetic call, task and life to explain not only the changes that American religious women have undertaken but also the distinctive characteristics of their life today. She shows how these sisters have lived a

truly prophetic way of life that has both challenged and subverted the authoritarian control the Vatican is trying to reassert. Here we find the true answer to the two questions with which she began: why is the Vatican investigating the sisters, and why do the sisters object so strongly to this investigation? This is truly radical theology, in the sense that Schneiders seeks to go to the very roots of ministerial religious life in biblical revelation and in lived, historical experience. It is not, however, a call to the barricades, but a call to the most profound prayer and searching of the heart.

This project began as a response to a particular, painful event to which Schneiders returns again and again, showing how the theology and history that she integrates here illumine both the Vatican's initiative and the responses of various groups of American women religious. But the theological and practical ramifications go beyond this one concrete situation. Religious life, from its eremitic and monastic roots onward, has been and continues to be informed by and informing of the church.

In both its method and its content, what this short book affirms about ministerial religious life is also important for ecclesiology. In the chapter on prophecy, Schneiders synthesizes what the documents of Vatican II reveal about the task of the church today, a task that she believes is shared in a special way by ministerial religious sisters. She carefully illuminates the issues of authority, power and obedience, issues of critical ecclesiological importance as well as central to the Vatican's investigation and the sisters' response. She reminds us of the centrality of the life of Christ to a true understanding of the church and demonstrates how the biblical texts, taproots of the church's life, can lead us to a deeper understanding of our own historical moment and context as well as to a closer encounter with Christ.

The church in the United States has undoubtedly been enriched by the presence and ministries of the many congregations of women religious. The recent touring exhibition "Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America" probably surprised many with the breadth of that service and the ardor of those ministers, even those blessed to know and be served by them. But anyone who wishes to understand their life today and the importance of their congregations to the life of the church should read *Prophets in Their Own Country*.

MARIE ANNE MAYESKI *is emerita professor of historical theology at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles and author of* Women at the Table *(Liturgical Press).*

LETTERS

Saving a Poor Man

I have just experienced the truth of your editorial "Failure to Protect" (1/30). This week I found a youngish Latvian man living in a field near Dublin airport. He hadn't eaten in three days. I have never met someone so close to a mental breakdown; he couldn't stop crying. Neither the airport police, who had thrown him off the property, nor the ordinary police, nor his own embassy people whom he had walked 10 miles to find, nor anyone else told him of the numerous Christian charities in town where he could at least eat. Without a blanket in January, this man could have died. Each group and the media would have blamed everyone else and a lot of hand-wringing and soul-searching would have gone on.

The truth is that extreme poverty, like mental illness, is considered contagious. All we can do is push the social teachings of the Gospels. I wonder what would happen if the perfect storm of financial collapse and an oil war in the Middle East destroyed our society. All it takes for the Catholic Church to retain its moral presence in Ireland is for the bishops to take off their mitres and get their hands dirty, like good fishermen. Meanwhile I fear that if compassion is taught to be a moral weakness—as the Nazis taught—and not the greatest personal strength, civilization will be busted.

DES FARRELL
Dublin, Ireland.

How Could You?

Kyle T. Kramer's "On the Hunt" (1/30) raises some questions. Did he need that doe for food for his family? For a coat to keep him from freezing to death? Yes, I eat meat, but hunting is something else. We might look to the laws of kashrut (kosher) of our "elder brothers" in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

The law permitted eating meat, while mandating specific, humane guidelines on how the animal is killed (Leviticus and Deuteronomy). Kosher means of killing animals include trapping the animal followed by a rapid and painless dispatch by slitting the throat. Sport hunting was strictly forbidden in the world in which Jesus grew up because it is both cruel and wasteful. Knowing this, can you justify shooting a deer that is gentle, not a threat to your life, not needed to stave off starvation and not needed for its pelt to keep you from freezing?

LESLIE RABBITT
Orange, Calif.

Hunting and God

Kyle T. Kramer's description of hunting (1/30) makes me think. Having hunted deer, elk and antelope for years, I can say that I have seen some of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen while hunting. Hunting is the reason I was up long before dawn, well out into the country and paying close attention to everything around me. If God can be found only in the present, hunting will keep a person in the present all day long. Hunting for food is entirely reasonable. At least a wild animal has a chance to get away, unlike one in a pen. The stereotypical hunter in the pickup truck, drinking beer and shooting badly, does exist, and that is unfortunate. But ethical hunters also exist, and they provide habitat for animals and management for game animals so they have a place to exist. I don't hunt anymore because I am reluctant to kill animals. But I don't eat

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CARTOON BY HARLEY SCHWADRON

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a lot of meat either, because meat comes from animals. Though I did not do the killing, the animal died to provide the meat. If you eat meat, you have no reason to object to hunting ethically. And Kramer's description of hunting sounds ethical to me.

LISA WEBER
Spokane, Wash.

Not Eunuchs

Re "A Change in Formation" (1/2), by Katarina Schuth, O.S.F.: Better screening and open discussion about sexuality in the seminary is a good beginning. But the real effort is needed in post-ordination training.

As a former seminarian (in the 1960s), I recall little discussion of sexuality. One spiritual director commented that he could make us all uncomfortable by mentioning masturbation. Our enthusiasm and spirituality kept our sexual feelings in check. When the balance became difficult for me, I left and married.

For many, deep prayer and commitment to the vows sustained them. But for others alcohol was a crutch to ease the tensions of priestly life. More recently some priests who are comfortable with their homosexuality share their orientation but remain celibate. Those who fail cause a scandal.

The priesthood is a lonely life, especially when priests no longer live in community with other priests who might sustain them. We must first acknowledge that sexuality is a gift from God that affects us all. But should celibacy be optional? At least the scandal has brought to the forefront that the priest is not a eunuch but a sexual being like the rest of us.

GEORGE TREJOS
Hannawa Falls, N.Y.

Thou Shalt Not Touch

Thank you for "A Change in Formation." While there is much more to be said about priestly formation today, from anecdotes I have heard it seems that more recently ordained priests may have been better briefed on some aspects of this problem but have developed, as a sad byproduct, a nearly "scared to touch" approach to relationships. With hugs of all sorts now suspect, this too often fits into a clerical mind-set that continues to see the priest as a "man apart" rather than the more approachable human that the best priests of the previous era exemplified.

DAVE PASINSKI
Fayetteville, N.Y.

On the Road

John Anderson's dismissal of "The Way" as a "train-wreck of cinema" is unwarranted, given the popular response it has received ("Faith at the Movies," 1/16). People typically do not recommend watching train wrecks as an edifying experience, yet this film has been widely praised as an intimate portrayal of a communal pilgrimage as a means of personal healing. "The Way" for many people has connected with their desire to restore their lives. As Phil Cousineau says in *The Art of Pilgrimage*, "When life has lost its meaning the pilgrim will risk everything to get back in touch with life.... Rediscovering the mystery of life is usually achieved in unexpected ways." This is what Emilio Estevez explores in this understated film.

LEE MOISANT
Minneapolis, Minn.

Being a 'Yes Man'

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), FEB. 19, 2012

Readings: Is 43:18-25; Ps 41:2-14; 2 Cor 1:18-22; Mk 2:1-12

For however many are the promises of God, their Yes is in him. (2 Cor 1:20)

Nobody likes getting stood up. Usually, with a self-devised set of criteria, we decide if the offender's reason is legitimate or if we have a right to be mad. An emergency? Of course we understand. Duty? Sure. Still, part of our judgment calculus includes how avoidable we imagine it was, the person's habits and history and so on. But who gets a pass for making a commitment and then not showing up because one simply changed one's mind? Nobody.

This is what some Corinthians are saying about Paul. Among Paul's many detractors were those in Corinth who leveled an additional charge against him: He's a flake. Paul was traveling to Macedonia (northern Greece) and promised to visit the Corinthians both on his way there and back (1 Cor 16:6-7). But he didn't show up at all. They had been stood up.

Our second reading is part of Paul's response to this charge. By the end of the letter (2 Cor 11-12) Paul assures them that he is just as good as the "superapostles" (11:5, 11) and recounts his commitment, sufferings and even personal mysticism in response. His letter seems to be asking, "Does this letter sound like that of a flake?" Paul's direct answer at the beginning of the letter is to say that he chose to delay coming until hurt feelings about him were healed. He certainly did not want to feed community conflict.

PETER FELDMEIER *is the Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo.*

This is the background to our lectionary reading, which is at heart a beautiful mini-treatise of profound Trinitarian theology (albeit a grammatical nightmare) occasioned by the misunderstanding. Paul writes, "As God is faithful, our word to you is not 'yes' and 'no.' For the Son of God…was not 'yes' and 'no,' but 'yes' has been in him." Paul's yes to the Corinthians, and indeed to his whole ministry, is an absolute yes, because it is grounded in Christ, the absolute Lord.

Then Paul focuses on the Father: "For however many are the promises of God, their Yes is in him [Christ]; therefore, the Amen from us also goes through him to God for glory." So, even as Paul's promises are grounded in Christ, so are the Father's. And our Amen, our affirmation of faith, redounds to the glory of God through this same Christ, the "one mediator between God and the human race" (1 Tm 2:5).

Finally, Paul assures us that this same Father who has secured us in Christ both claimed us and has given us the Holy Spirit: "He has also put his seal upon us and given us the Spirit in our hearts." The life of the Spirit is both fruit and evidence of the eternal yes that we live.

In what amounts to four sentences, Paul reorients the Corinthians—and us—to see what is really going on. It is not a question about whether his excuse is adequate or even less whether he is a flake. Rather, Paul's coming or not coming or his challenging them or praising them means nothing. The real issue is seeing how our yes participates in the Father's yes, with Christ binding us to God and to one another. If we are utterly bound together in Christ, and if we share the same life in the Spirit, then there should be no question of judgment or suspicions, only deep love and shared spiritual joy. Paul is saying to them, "This is how I'm relating to you, and this is how you should be relating to me and to each other."

Embracing Paul's vision does not mean that we should not hold each other accountable. We do not have a free pass to stand others up. Rather, Paul challenges us to see the deep truths that bind us together and to live out of those truths. Paul invites us to see how we can realize our recreation in the Son, living with him as Lord, brother, lover and Word, who holds in himself the eternal promises of the Father. Paul calls us to truly see each other, looking through momentary attractions and aversions, and to discover a shared life in the Spirit.

I am glad Paul missed his appointment.

PETER FELDMEIER

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Consider the saving promise the Father made for you.
- Now imagine Christ enveloping you, securing you in that promise.
- Imagine this for all God's children.

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with Rev. John J. Cecero, S.J.

John J. Cecero, S.J., is Director of the Center for Spirituality and Mental Health at Fordham University. He presents widely on the role of spirituality in mental health. He is the author of *"Praying Through Lifetraps: A Psycho-Spiritual Approach to Freedom."*

Afternoon Keynote:

Living an Authentic Spiritual Life: Lessons Learned from the Dying

with Rev. Dr. Kathleen J. Rusnak, Ph.D.

Rev. Rusnak is an ordained Lutheran pastor with a doctorate in Psychology and Religion. She is author of several books, most recent, *"Because You've Never Died Before: Spiritual Issues at the End of Life."*

Morning Keynote for Spanish-speaking Community:

"Pongámonos las Pilas! Que el Espíritu Santo Nos Impulsa"
("Let's Get on the Ball (Recharge Our Batteries), as it is the Spirit Who Impels Us!")

with Rev. Eduardo C. Fernández, S.J.

Fr. Fernández teaches pastoral theology & missiology at the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University in Berkeley & the Graduate Theological Union. He is past president of the Academy of Catholic Hispanic Theologians of the United States. His two latest books are *Mexican American Catholics (Paulist Press, 2007)*, awarded a 2008 Catholic Press Association Book Award, and *Culture-Sensitive Ministry: Helpful Strategies for Pastoral Ministers (Paulist Press, 2010)* with Kenneth McGuire, CSP and Anne Hansen.

Music & Liturgy For Our Conference Experience:

with Bob Hurd

Bob Hurd currently teaches in the Graduate Pastoral Ministries Program of Santa Clara University, California. His widely used liturgical music is published by OCP and is featured in numerous hymnals worldwide.

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