

America

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Faith in the Family

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OF MANY THINGS

Each morning, as I sit down behind this desk, I discover 12 sets of eyes upon me, the most recent (and in some ways least likely) Jesuit to occupy this office. One of my predecessors, when greeting visitors here, would describe these portraits of *America's* former editors as a "rogues' gallery"—his attempt to take some of the pomp out of what is, admittedly, a rather self-important display. My immediate predecessor, Father Drew Christiansen, will soon join the group; the pictures will then get re-arranged and a space just below Drew's will be set aside for the day when I in turn vacate this office at America House.

Hopefully, that day will not come too soon. For at least one of *America's* editors, however, the last day came very soon indeed. John Wynne, S.J., the first editor (1909-10), possessed the genius to found this weekly review but not the skill to manage it; he was relieved of his duties within a year. Still, Father Wynne is the former editor in chief who is most on my mind these days. What would he think of this 21st-century *America*? Would he even recognize us? It is very likely that Father Wynne never sat in a car; he could not have imagined the iPad on which I am writing this, nor would he have predicted that most of *America's* writers would now be laypeople.

Yet the spirit that inspired Father Wynne still animates our work. And as with most things Jesuit, it all goes back to St. Ignatius. If you are familiar with Ignatian spirituality, then you will know a fundamental Ignatian principle, one of the first things that he mentions in his *Spiritual Exercises*: God meets us where we are. For St. Ignatius, that principle obviously meant that Jesuits should do the same. In Ignatius' time, "meeting people where they are" meant moving downtown. St. Ignatius was not the first to found a religious order. His peculiar innovation was to relocate its base from

a monastery outside of town to the very center of the city.

Which brings me back to Father Wynne. That Ignatian impulse to be at the center of the action is the spirit in which *America* was conceived. Yes, *America* is located downtown, or, as it is known in New York, in Midtown. That, however, is not the most relevant bit of our geography. What Father Wynne understood was that in the United States, that new and daring experiment in civil society, the city that mattered most was an intellectual municipality, the arena in which ideas were exchanged, what a later generation would call "the public square."

And so *America* set up shop overlooking the public square, right at the corner of the church and the world. The object was three-fold: to assist with the faith formation of American Catholics, the evangelization of American culture and the progress of America's civil society. Thus, our name. In Father Wynne's day—when the nation's Catholic citizens were viewed with disdain—this kind of intellectual apostolate was especially needed. For different but no less daunting reasons, this apostolate is still needed today. The U.S. body politic, sickened by the toxin of partisanship, needs the elixir of charity and clarity. The body of Christ also needs healing, torn asunder as it is by scandal and ideological divisions that thoughtlessly mimic their secular counterparts.

America neither pretends nor aspires to be the solution to these problems. We simply hope, as Father Wynne did, that our weekly review—in print and online—will serve as one model of a truly Catholic as well as a truly American public discourse, one marked by faith, hope and charity. In other words, we seek nothing more than to bear public witness to the healer of all our afflictions, the balm in Gilead, the One whose spirit even now lives among us, among the people of these United States.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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Cover: An estimated 600 people hold candles and pray the rosary in an anti-abortion procession in Germantown, Md., in December 2011. CNS photo/Leslie E. Kossoff, Catholic Standard

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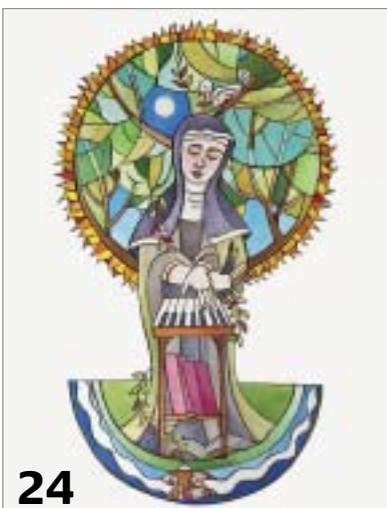
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ON THE WEB

A video interview from the United Nations with **Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga**, right. Plus, **Michael O'Neill McGrath, O.S.F.S.**, talks about his art on our podcast. All at americamagazine.org.



Blown Call

The story of the recent strike by National Football League referees will inevitably focus on the last-minute blown call that cost the Green Bay Packers a win against the Seattle Seahawks on Sept. 24. Very few will remember one of the principal reasons for the strike, which ended just a few days later: a pension dispute. The N.F.L. owners proposed ending pensions for referees in favor of 401(k) investment accounts. The referees balked, then ultimately agreed to a deal that kept their pensions but ended the practice for future hires.

So ends another chapter in the sad story of workers' rights. Pensions, a traditional form of retirement support, are very quickly going the way of the leather football helmet. Meanwhile, 401(k)'s and other individual savings accounts managed by employees are proving too anemic to support workers after retirement. People are simply not saving enough, and the market is proving too fickle to provide for workers in their retirement. (See "Our Ridiculous Approach to Retirement," by Teresa Ghilarducci, in *The New York Times*, 7/21). The pension benefits would have cost N.F.L. owners \$3 million, the price of a 30-second commercial during the Super Bowl. Their intransigence was not a matter of fiscal prudence but of cold-hearted management. Unfortunately, their position reflects a growing consensus among the American public, who are increasingly skeptical of pensions for public workers and others. The referee lockout could have brought this issue to the public consciousness. It did not. The referees signed a deal to protect their pensions while abandoning them for the next generation of officials. Now we can all get back to watching football. Everybody wins (except the Packers), right?

Faith-Based Campaigning

The Obama campaign has issued a "faith platform" that describes how the president's religious convictions relate to his political stands. The platform begins with President Obama's belief that we must recommit to being "our brother's keeper," and it quotes St. Paul: "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it..." (1 Cor 12:26). Accordingly, the platform highlights Mr. Obama's commitment to strengthening the economy, reforming health insurance, caring for military families, opposing the war in Iraq, preventing a massacre in Libya, forbidding torture, abolishing nuclear weapons, protecting the environment and cooperating with faith-based organizations to serve the common good.

In other areas, however, Mr. Obama's policies contrast sharply with what it means to be "our brother's keeper." The platform describes Mr. Obama as "pro-choice" and

focuses on his belief that we should "work together to reduce the number of women seeking abortions." But Mr. Obama wrongly opposes even common-sense restrictions on access to abortion.

In foreign policy, the platform conveniently ignores Mr. Obama's support for indefinite detention (see Editorial) and profligate use of drones. Under Mr. Obama, U.S. drones have hit targets in Pakistan 264 times. With Mr. Obama personally approving most hits, the U.S. has intentionally killed at least one American citizen. A report by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates between 474 and 881 civilians, including 176 children, have been killed since 2004. In this light, Mr. Obama should be cautious in citing Cain's question to God after killing his brother. God may respond, "What have you done! Listen: your brother's blood cries out to me from the soil!" (Gn 4:10).

Who Shall Lead Us?

While we dissect and discuss this month's presidential debates, we should reflect on how it all got started: the seven debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas during their 1858 U.S. Senate race. That year the debaters spoke for three hours before a crowd of 15,000, typically—one a short, portly senator with a booming voice in a fashionable blue suit, who traveled in a special train; the other a tall, thin, homely lawyer with a high, piercing voice and wearing an ill-fitting black coat, who traveled as a regular passenger and chatted freely with his fellow riders.

The voters' choice then was not merely between two personalities but between two views of what America was all about. One way to understand the difference, says the Lincoln biographer David Herbert Donald, is to view Douglas as a defender of majority rule and Lincoln as a defender of minority rights. In 1858 that meant to Douglas that the government, Mr. Donald writes, was "made by the white man for the benefit of the white man." Lincoln too favored self government; but in his judgment, no majority should limit the rights of a minority. In effect, the principal issue was slavery.

Today's ideological split concerns the role of government in promoting the public welfare. The choice is perhaps not as dire as the one that faced the antebellum United States. Still, the differences are clear enough: President Barack Obama says that the federal government is a vital force for good; Gov. Mitt Romney says it should get out of the way of progress. At the first debate, both men showed up wearing similar blue suits and American flag lapel pins. They differed only in the color of their ties and their skin. That itself is progress, a long way from 1858.

Obama's Scandal

Since January 2002, when the prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, was established, more of its 779 detainees have died in custody (nine) than have been convicted (seven) in civilian court or by military commissions. Six of the detainees reportedly committed suicide. The most recent death occurred last month. Adnan Farhan Abdul Latif, a 36-year-old citizen of Yemen, was found unconscious in his cell and could not be revived. After nearly 4,000 days in Guantánamo, he was finally “released”—in a casket.

Mr. Latif's is a tragic story. At age 18 he suffered a serious head injury in a car accident in Yemen. In later testimony, he explained that he traveled to Jordan, and then Pakistan, for treatment. In late 2001 he was arrested by Pakistani authorities, accused of fighting for the Taliban and transferred to U.S. custody.

Mr. Latif was one of the first detainees to arrive in Guantánamo. As early as 2004, and multiple times thereafter, the U.S. military determined that Mr. Latif was “not known to have participated in combatant/terrorist training” and cleared him for transfer to Yemen. In 2010 Mr. Latif finally received a hearing in federal court. Judge Henry H. Kennedy Jr. examined the government's evidence, found it uncorroborated and “not sufficiently reliable,” and he ruled Mr. Latif's detention “not lawful.” The appellate court, however, decided 2 to 1 in the government's favor, and the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case.

It is another cruelty that Mr. Latif languished in Guantánamo simply because of where he was born. In January 2010 President Obama placed a moratorium on all detainee transfers to Yemen regardless of individual situations. The indefinite nature of his detention weighed heavily on Mr. Latif. In fragile physical condition and poor mental health, he attempted suicide at least once and often communicated his despair through poetry and letters. The detainee “who is able to die,” he wrote, “will be able to achieve happiness for himself...”

The Letter to the Hebrews implores the Christian community to “be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment” (13:3). This call to awareness, empathy and solidarity invites us to listen with open hearts and minds to the stories of prisoners like Adnan Latif and to recognize our complicity in their suffering. For some the complicity is active; it involves demonizing prisoners or legislating out of fear, not fairness. For most Americans the complicity is characterized by indifference.

As concerned parties await autopsy results for Mr. Latif, the Obama administration is busy defending a controversial provision in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012. The provision grants broad executive authority to use indefinite military detention without charges or trials for terrorism suspects. Last month Judge Katherine B. Forrest issued a permanent injunction against the provision, ruling that it unlawfully expanded executive detention authority, failed to shield U.S. citizens from indefinite military detention and failed to specify adequately what counts as prohibited activity. In response, the Obama administration immediately requested, and won, a stay.

These legal disputes, however, can dangerously obscure a more fundamental question: Is it ever morally acceptable to detain a person, citizen or not, possibly for the rest of his life, without charges or a trial? Consider the Golden Rule. If a foreign government detained you, or a loved one, what would you expect as due process? Detailed charges? A presumption of innocence? Humane interrogation, skilled legal representation, access to evidence, ability to call witnesses, fair courtroom procedures, an independent judicial authority, a public trial within a reasonable amount of time and, if you are not charged or convicted, the freedom to return home to family? Some might argue that “terrorists” forfeit these rights. But this presumes guilt. No detaining authority, whether foreign or American, should have unchecked power over a person's liberty.

The United States failed to treat Adnan Latif in accord with the Golden Rule. His only relief from Guantánamo was death itself. The Obama administration has no plan to prosecute or release 48 detainees in Guantánamo and hundreds more in Afghanistan. These men face the prospect that they will be “released” in the same tragic manner as Mr. Latif. In Guantánamo, 85 other detainees, already approved for release or transfer, remain in custody.

What has sustained this perversion of justice? As a nation, we have failed to acknowledge and repent of our sins. The problem is both political and spiritual. Leaving persons detained for an indefinite period of time is an inhumane practice that results in hopelessness, despair and sometimes, tragically, death. Human dignity requires that the United States reject this practice and firmly renew its commitment to basic fairness for all.



ELECTIONS 2012

Little Being Said by Candidates About America's Longest War

As Operation Enduring Freedom marked its 11th anniversary on Oct. 7, the conflict in Afghanistan remains a largely undiscussed issue in the 2012 presidential campaign. Both major candidates—President Barack Obama, the Democrat, and his Republican challenger, Gov. Mitt Romney—have kept Afghanistan on the rhetorical back burner as they crisscross the country, even though 68,000 U.S. troops remain on the ground.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announced on Sept. 21 that the last of the 33,000 troops that were part of the 2010 surge have left Afghanistan. While the Obama administration has said the surge weakened the Taliban, the insurgency remains a potent force and threatens the security of both troops and Afghan civilians.

On Oct. 5 combined Afghanistan coalition military fatalities stood at 3,197 dead, including 2,132 Americans, according to statistics compiled by the Web site iCasualties.org. Thousands more have been wounded in a war marked largely by low-intensity conflicts in a country slightly smaller than Texas. Estimates of civilian casualties in Afghanistan vary widely, but the latest U.N. figure puts the death toll among noncombatants at more than 25,000—the majority victims of the insurgency.

Afghanistan gets scant attention even on the candidates' Web sites. On the president's re-election site, Afghanistan garners a two-line reference in a promise to withdraw U.S. troops by the end of 2014. Romney's Web site offers a longer narrative on the war. But his criticism of the president's surge and the 2014 deadline to withdraw forces is longer than his plan for addressing Afghan security. "Withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan under a Romney administration will be based on conditions on the ground as assessed by our military commanders," the site concludes.

"The truth is that both candidates have avoided talking about Afghanistan because neither has really good answers," said Michael J. Boyle, assistant professor of political science at La Salle University in Philadelphia.

Boyle said that even though the president plans to withdraw the remaining U.S. troops by the end of 2014, "events on the ground are not cooperating with him.

"We have the situation that the Taliban aren't losing, and that is not making the U.S. withdrawal very easy."

Of Romney's stance, Boyle said there is little to dissect.

"He says, 'We will win,' but there's no clear understanding of what winning means at this point," he said. "Does winning mean increased security and stability? Does winning mean defeating the Taliban?"

Beyond its military goals, the United States has a "moral obligation" to rebuild both Afghanistan and Iraq, said Stephen Colecchi, director of the U.S. bishops' Office of International Justice and Peace.

"Our foreign assistance needs to continue to the Iraqi people both to enable them to rebuild society and to



On patrol in Kandahar, Afghanistan

strengthen the rule of law and to strengthen the judiciary and to protect all Iraqis, but especially vulnerable minorities and particularly Christians. That's the unfinished agenda of the legacy of that war that we still have to deal with," he said. Much the same holds true in Afghanistan, even as hostilities continue, he added.

U.S. bishops have encouraged the U.S. government to focus more on diplomacy, development and humanitarian assistance and less on exclusively military responses to geopolitical challenges. Other concerns that must be addressed, the bishops have pointed out, include protecting human rights and religious freedom, minimizing the loss of human life and assisting refugees and internally displaced people while fostering economic and agricultural development.

None of those issues is specifically addressed on the candidates' Web sites.



ECONOMIC CRISIS

Pain in Spain

The Catholic aid group Caritas Spain urged the Spanish government to consider the “sinister concrete implications” of the country’s economic crisis after a sharp increase in the number of people seeking aid. An affiliate of the church’s global relief and development agency, Caritas Internationalis, Caritas Spain said that Spanish society has “followed a precarious integration model, which has gradually deteriorated and failed, reducing the protective capacity of the public system.”

Caritas reported: “This crisis does not only concern concepts of aid management. It also has sinister con-

crete implications in the loss of jobs, fall in household earnings and weakening in social support.” The Caritas Spain analysis reviewed the effects of the austerity measures put in place by Spain since the nation became engulfed by Europe’s sovereign debt crisis. Released on Sept. 27, the report tracked growing “poverty, inequality and unfairness” as a major concern, despite the agency’s efforts to provide assistance through Catholic parishes. The number of people in Spain receiving aid from the charity has tripled in the past four years, topping one million people in 2011.

“If poverty was not reduced when there was economic growth in 1994-2007 and if social protection was not improved as a share of national growth, it is difficult to imagine that poverty and inequality will be reduced now at a time of crisis,” the agency said.

The report was published as the center-right government of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy announced a new wave of spending cuts and tax increases in its 2013 budget in a bid to cut Spain’s deficit and avoid a bailout by the European Union. The measures were met with angry street protests in Madrid and other cities, as well as calls for secession by the country’s wealthy northwest Catalonia region.

A spokesperson for Caritas Spain, Ana Girao, said on Sept. 28 that

poverty in Spain showed signs of evolving from an acute problem into a long-term one. Those struggling the most during the widespread downturn have been the unemployed, currently 25 percent of the Spanish workforce, as well as immigrants, single mothers and young couples with children, she said.

Ms. Girao expressed gratitude for the work of the Spanish Catholic Church, which traditionally claims the loyalty of 82 percent of Spain’s 40 million inhabitants, which supplemented the work of her agency in individual dioceses by offering money, food and clothing to the growing ranks of the poor. “We are the Catholic Church. So what Caritas does for the needy is also what the church does,” Girao said.

“Although the media has shown interest in our report, we’re not expecting reactions from the politicians,” she added. “But they must be made aware that the situation is becoming more chronic and the needs ever greater.”

The report said Caritas disburses about \$43 million in aid annually. “We also listen to people who come to our parish centers and try to address not just economic needs, but also to offer warmth,” the charity said.

“Actions which address these needs are valuable, since they are significant and transformative for the lives of individuals, as well as for relationships in society.”



Bread lines in Palma de Mallorca.

Peace in Colombia?

Exploratory peace talks were scheduled to begin on Oct. 5 in Oslo, Norway, between the Colombian government and members of the F.A.R.C. guerrillas, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. The rebel group has been fighting the Colombian government since 1964. Gerardina Cardozo is the program coordinator of the Vicariate Foundation for Social Ministry, a partner of the United Kingdom's Catholic Agency for Overseas Development in San Vicente del Caguán. She cautioned against being overly optimistic about the negotiations. "It's a beginning and not much more," she said. "It's not a ceasefire. There have been no concessions from one side to another. And the big issue is that these talks are not taking place at home. We don't even know the agenda or the methodology. As civil society, how are we going to participate?"

First Responders

Hurricane season is a threat that Marcia Boxhill-Haywood, regional coordinator for Caritas Antilles, confronts with meager tools: a \$40,000 emergency fund, a small staff at a warehouse in St. Lucia and a handful of volunteers. Responding to hurricanes "goes right to the heart of what the church does because storms don't just destroy buildings, they really destroy families and communities," Boxhill-Haywood said. Catholic dioceses across the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico are on the front line during the storm season, from June through October. They shelter residents during storms and serve as first responders after they have passed, handing out food, water and medicine and helping residents rebuild their lives. But preparing for the potential damage to church buildings and the

NEWS BRIEFS

Marcello Di Finizio, a 49-year-old Italian, scaled the dome of St. Peter's Basilica to protest Italian and European economic policy on Oct. 2 and remained there unobserved until the next day, when thousands assembled for Pope Benedict XVI's weekly general audience. • The Vatican on Sept. 29 appointed **Roza Pati**, a professor of law at Miami's St. Thomas University School of Law, to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and named Msgr. **Martin Schlag**, a professor at Rome's Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, as a consultant to the council. • On Oct. 20 the Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI) Vatican Foundation will honor the American Jesuit **Brian E. Daley**, a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame. • **Coptic families are fleeing** the city of Rafah in northern Egypt after Islamist militants distributed leaflets warning Christians to leave and then opened fire on a Coptic-owned shop on Sept. 26. • The appeal of blasphemy charges against **Rimsha Masih**, a 14-year-old Pakistani Christian girl, has been postponed, alarming supporters already worried after three of four witnesses who accused an imam of planting evidence against her retracted their testimonies.



Brian E. Daley

financial strain of feeding mouths and housing displaced residents remains a challenge. With funds low, Catholic leaders said they coordinate more closely with governments and other institutions and rely on volunteers and neighboring dioceses to fill gaps.

Infant Mortality Down

In just over two decades Niger has cut its rate of infant mortality in half, highlighting the benefits of universal free health care for children and pregnant women. Since the mid-1990s, the Niger government has been committed to universal access to basic health care for women and children, focusing on measures to reduce deaths from malaria, diarrhea and measles. That effort has paid off. According to a

study in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, Niger improved from 226 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1998 to 128 deaths in 2009. In addition, after receiving a better diet with vitamin A supplements, regular treatment for illnesses and vaccinations, the number of children aged 24 to 35 months with rickets and growth disorders was also reduced. Much work remains, however. According to Unicef, in 2012 Niger recorded the highest number of malnourished children in the Sahel region. More than 330,000 children under 5 years of age are at risk of malnutrition. In the region, heavy drought and rising food prices have left more than 18 million people suffering from hunger.

From CNS and other sources.



The Female Face of Faith

When extremists bomb houses of worship, who are in those churches and schools? Women and girls.

Social science tells us that women are more religious than men, by almost any benchmark and study. Whether you measure belief in God, belief in a supreme being, attendance at religious services, personal prayer and religious practices, teaching religious values to children, raising a family within a faith tradition—by any of these benchmarks, women consistently, across time and cultures, rank as more religious than men. These results are so consistent and accepted that academic debates now tend to focus no longer on whether they are more religious but on why this is the case.

Because women are more religious than men, religious repression, persecution and violence affect women most. When churches are bombed, who are hurt and killed? Women. When people are forced to flee religious persecution as refugees and internally displaced persons, who are those refugees and I.D.P.s? Predominantly women and their children.

When religious organizations like Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Internationalis find their work curtailed or banned because of their religious affiliation, who are hurt most? The women who make up most of the bottom billion of the world's impoverished, who rely on the activities of those religious organizations. Seventy percent of these billion are women and

girls. Seventy percent of the youth not in school are women and girls. Girls are three times more likely to be malnourished. When faith-based organizations are curtailed in their service work, women and girls are harmed. Women are the primary victims of violations of religious freedom.

Women are also on the front lines of those responding to violations of religious freedom. Women lead non-governmental organizations, women like Carolyn Woo, the president of Catholic Relief Services and a former refugee herself. Women refugees advocate for other refugees; women teachers and health care workers report violations and work with victims; women lawyers take up the cases in international venues.

But the female face of faith is often not seen. When victims of religious persecution or violence are counted, they are counted as Christians or Muslims, civilians versus security forces. Women are not counted because, in too many parts of the world, women simply do not count as fully human.

Oct. 27 is International Religious Freedom Day. A recent conference sponsored by the Institute of Policy Research at Catholic University, and recent reports, document a rising trend of religious repression. Seventy-five percent of the world's population live in countries with high restrictions on religion. Yet none of the otherwise excellent annual reports on religious freedom mention the female face of faith.

This is problematic. We cannot

effectively protect religious freedom unless we understand who are the most vulnerable groups. Groups concerned with religious liberty and groups focused on women's issues typically do not work together. Domestically, their common cause is lost in the debates over how to implement the Affordable Care Act.

But the larger context is lost. Internationally, the war on religious freedom and the war on women are the same war. When religious freedom is violated, women suffer, because women are more religious.

To protect religious freedom internationally, we must see the female face of faith and work accordingly to build unlikely alliances across

religious, political, gender and bureaucratic divides.

The Catholic moral and religious imagination help us. Jesus is our model, reaching out to build bridges among unlikely allies, prostitutes, tax collectors, gentiles and foreigners. In our sacraments of Communion and reconciliation, our beliefs in a relational, triune, resurrected God and our institutional structures that seek to make real these relationships of local and global church, the body of Christ, in Catholic social teaching about protection of human life and dignity and preference for the poor, we regularly exercise moral muscles for the common good, a moral imagination the world needs to protect religious freedom and save lives and human dignity.

Religious
repression
and violence
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MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE, a professor of international relations at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., is a member of the Department of State's Religion and Foreign Policy working group.



Waiting for Gabriel

BY TIMOTHY P. O'MALLEY

Do you have children?" For most 30-somethings, this harmless question is the opening volley of a round of acceptable chit-chat. Colleagues at the office fill silences with news of recent pregnancies, first Communion and athletic milestones in their children's lives. At the barbershop, the shearing of hair is accompanied by regaling the barber with mundane details of one's progeny. College reunions become an occasion not simply to reminisce about chemistry class or the bizarre rituals of freshman orientation, but to meet the miniature version of the guy down the hall, who once set up a slip-and-side on the quad when the temperature climbed above 50 degrees.

For my wife and me, however, a question about our brood never offers an escape route from awkward social interactions, but is rather the prelude to uncomfortable conversations with strangers and confidants alike. "No children," we say, our voices revealing our discomfort with the question. How can you say to a complete stranger, a trusted teacher, a friendly cleric, a college classmate: "We're infertile"?

The Diagnosis and Aftermath

In the Old Testament, Hannah gives birth to Samuel after years of infertility and sings, "The barren wife bears seven sons, while the mother of many languishes" (1 Sm 2:5). As a theologian, I am well aware of the function of infertility in the Scriptures. When the aged Sarah, the elderly Hannah and the mature Elizabeth give birth, the reader is invited to remember that God is the major actor in salvation. The surprising reversal of infertility in the Bible is a sign of new life coming from death, an action made possible by God, who is the creator and sustainer of human life. But that part of me who has spent the last six years praying for a child cannot help but read Hannah's song as a cry of relief. After years of barrenness and tears, finally a child!

COMPOSITE PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/AMERICA

TIMOTHY P. O'MALLEY is director of the Notre Dame Center for Liturgy, Institute for Church Life, at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind.

When my wife and I were first married, we never imagined that we might join the ranks of Abraham and Sarah, Elkanah and Hannah, Elizabeth and Zechariah. We met before our senior year at the University of Notre Dame and became engaged a little over a year after we began to date. Like so many Notre Dame couples before us, our nuptials took place at the university's Basilica of the Sacred Heart, where the priest prayed over us: "Bless them with children and help them to be good parents. May they live to see their children's children." In our first year of marriage in Boston, we decided it was time to begin a family. Month one passed. Month two. Month three. Six months later, our home became the anti-Nazareth as we awaited an annunciation that never came. The hope-filled decision to conceive a child became a bitter task of disheartened waiting. After a year, we began to see infertility specialists, who concluded that we should be able to have a child. No low sperm counts. No problems with either of our reproductive systems. The verdict: inexplicable infertility.

Unexplained infertility is a surprisingly miserable diagnosis. Something about my psyche was prepared for a scientific explanation—one in which our very fine doctors acknowledged that unless an act of God took place, no human life would emerge from intercourse between Kara and me. Indeed, a fair number of tears would have been shed by both of us. But with the diagnosis of inexplicable infertility, conception is scientifically possible. With every slight change in Kara's cycle, a glimmer of hope rises in our hearts, only to be dashed with the arrival of menstruation. Kind-hearted family, friends and colleagues who learn about our infertility share stories about a mother or sister who finally became pregnant. But we have no way of knowing if we will one day join the ranks of the middle-aged, first-time parents.

The aftermath of the diagnosis was painful for both of us. It affected not simply our friendships and our own relationship, but also our spiritual lives. Our infertility gradually seeped into our life of prayer. Every morning, I rise and ask God for a child. I encounter the chilly silence of a seemingly absent God. Early on I found consolation in the language of the psalms, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?" (Ps 22:2). Like the psalmist, I had my "enemies": the friendly priest, who, upon learning that Kara and I do not have children, made it a point to say each time he saw me, "No children, right?"; the Facebook feed filled with

announcements of pregnancies and births, a constant reminder of our empty nest. Even God became my nemesis: Why have you duped me, O Lord? Why us? We have given our lives to you, and our reward is pain and suffering.

Such self-pity, while pleasant enough for a time, is exhausting and a sure way to narcissism. We began to imagine that ours was the only life full of disappointment. We closed ourselves off from relationships with others, particularly those with children, as a way of protecting ourselves from debilitating sorrow. I ceased praying, because the words I uttered grew vapid, insipid, uninspiring. I entered Sheol, cut off from the land of the living. Something had to change.

We closed ourselves off from relationships with others, particularly those with children, as a way of protecting ourselves from debilitating sorrow.

A School of Prayer

How did I escape this hell? First, I learned to give myself over to a reality beyond my control. Life is filled with any number of things that happen to us. We are diagnosed with illnesses. Our family, despite our love, falls apart

because of fighting among siblings over how to handle the remaining years of a parent's life. We die. The beginning of true Christian faith is in trusting that even in such moments, God abides with us. This God invites us to offer our sorrow, our very woundedness, as an act of love. As Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., wrote in *The Divine Milieu*:

Christ has conquered death, not only by suppressing its evil effects, but by reversing its sting. By virtue of Christ's rising again, nothing any longer kills inevitably, but everything is capable of becoming the blessed touch of the divine hands, the blessed influence of the will of God upon our lives.... For those loving God, all things are converted into good.

Praying the psalms again was the beginning of my own conversion toward the good. I learned that in uttering these words from a wounded heart, my voice became Christ's. My suffering, my sorrow has been whispered into the ear of the Father for all time. The echo of my words in an empty room called my heart back to authentic prayer. Whenever I was tempted to enter into self-pity, I used short phrases from the psalms to bring myself back toward the Father. The psalms became the grammar of my broken speech to God.

Second, I began to meditate upon the crucifix whenever I entered a church. Gazing at the crucifix for long periods, I discovered how God's silence in my prayer was stretching me toward more authentic love. In contemplating the silence

of the cross, the image of Christ stretched out in love, I could feel my own will stretched out gradually to exist in harmony with the Father's, to accept the cup that we have been given. I found new capacities for love available to me. I became especially attentive to the suffering of the widow, the immigrant, the lonely and all those who come to Mass with a wounded heart. My meditation upon the image of the cross has given me the strength to go forward with the process of adoption and foster care. The cross sustains me as Kara and I continue to wait for a child, who may need more love than we could ever imagine giving.

Third, in my formation into prayer through infertility, I have grown to appreciate the silence and half-sentences of God. Often, words still hurt too much for me to utter. In such sorrow, I have no energy in prayer. All I have left is an imitation of the very silence I hear in response to my petitions. Through entering into God's own silence, I find my own bitterness transformed into trust and hope, a kind of infused knowledge of God's love that I have come to savor. At times, albeit rarely, this silence results in a gift of exhilarating bliss—as if for a moment, I am totally united to God. Most often, it is a restful silence in which I hear no words. I savor such moments because only here do I receive the balm for the sorrow that often floods my soul throughout the day.

Fourth, our infertility has slowly led me to a deeper appreciation of the eucharistic quality of the Christian life. For years, I talked with far too much ease about the "sacrifice of the Mass"—how all of our lives must become an offering, a gift to the Father through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. In fact, true self-gift is hard. It is hard to give yourself away to a God who does not seem to listen to your prayers. It is hard to wait for a child who may never come. It is hard to love your spouse when you are distracted by the phantasms of sorrow that have become your dearest friend. It is hard to muster a smile when your friends announce that they will be having another child. It is just hard.

At such moments, I do not know what else to do but to seek union with Christ himself; to enter more deeply into the eucharistic logic of the church, where self-preservation is transformed into self-gift. The Eucharist continues to teach me that I cannot do it myself. I cannot climb out of the sorrow, the sadness, the misery. But I can give it away. I can slowly enter into the eucharistic life of the church, to become vulnerable, self-giving love even in the midst of sorrow. Knowing, of course, that in the Resurrection, such love has conquered death.

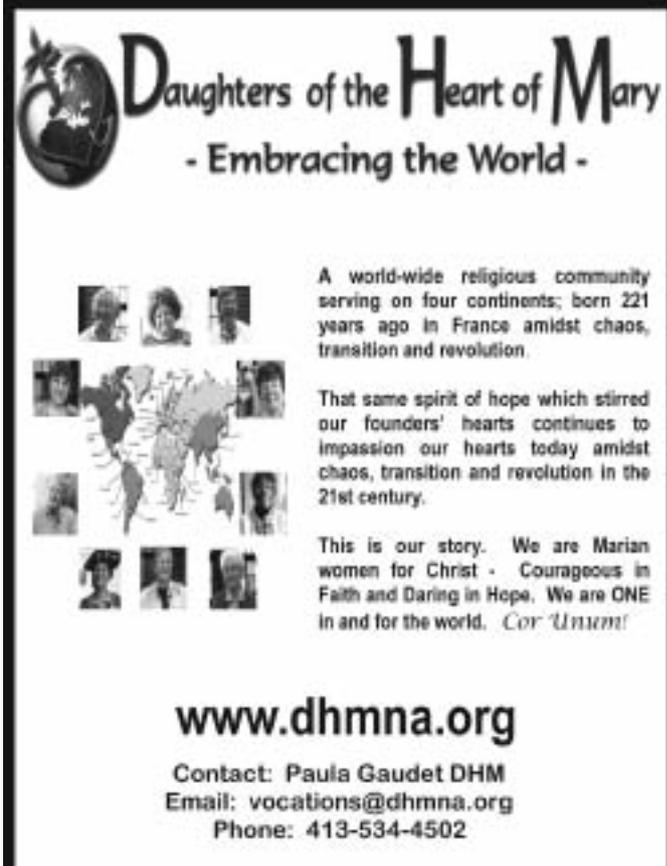
As I have learned most of all through the Eucharist, Kara and I were not married for ourselves. We were married that

our lives might become an offering of love for the world. For our nieces, for our nephews, for a child not biologically our own but whom we hope one day to welcome. Even our infertility is not about us. It's about how God can transform our sorrow into joy, how even in the shadow of this cross, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness will not overcome it. Of course, our woundedness remains. But prayer has given it a shape, a reason, a participation in God's very life. Even through this suffering, the Word desires to become flesh in my life through a prayerful obedience to the will of a God whom I cannot quite comprehend.

Sometimes I allow myself to daydream about having a child. I recognize now that such a moment may never come, that nothing in human life is sure. That is why learning to pray through infertility has been a reformation of my vision of grace as gift, not guarantee. If grace were guaranteed, would such moments be grace, a gift beyond what we could imagine? So we stand waiting for Gabriel, learning to hear the angel's voice in new ways: in time spent with our godchildren, in signing up to serve as foster parents, in delighting in each other's presence. And the more I enter into the grace of prayer, the more I see that Gabriel has already come in these moments: Let it be done to me according to your word. A

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On Their Way

How we grounded our daughters in faith

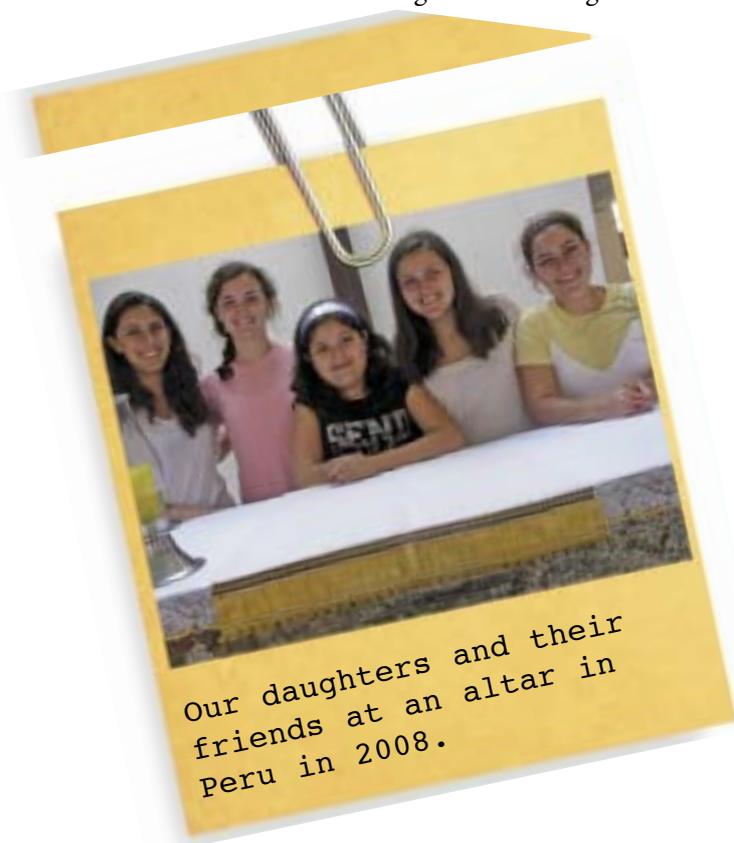
BY ELIZABETH A. DONNELLY AND PHILLIP E. PULASKI

In the last week of August, we loaded up the big rig (a k a our minivan) and drove the youngest of our three daughters to Baltimore to begin her freshman year at Loyola University Maryland. Mission accomplished? We now have three lovely young women enrolled at Jesuit universities and discerning their paths forward. At times all three have been frustrated with and uninspired by the institutional church, but they remain engaged in exploring and wrestling with their

social justice with other people motivated by their faith. They have worked at the ecumenical anti-hunger group Bread for the World, a Catholic Worker house in Boston's South End, Woodstock Theological Center and a center for Central American immigrants in Washington. Our two older daughters have served as freshmen retreat leaders at Georgetown University. They have relished participation in alternative spring break trips during which they have learned from migrant farm workers in Immokalee, Fla., human rights activists in San Salvador and people working with immigrants in Arizona. Our youngest recently continued one of her favorite high school commitments by joining Loyola's chapter of Best Buddies, through which she volunteers with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

While we hope these activities have been inspired by their Catholic upbringing, we can see the girls' faith development most essentially manifested in the simple kindness, humility and curiosity with which they encounter people on a daily basis. We take great delight in how they try to figure out and understand their vocational callings in the world; we enjoy getting to know and host the many wonderful individuals they have befriended on their journeys and witnessing both their joys and struggles.

Growing up in Boston, even before they were disillusioned by the sexual abuse crisis, the girls expressed frustration with the church's failure to incorporate women fully in to its leadership. When our middle daughter, Tessa, was little, she asked, "Mommy, why aren't we Episcopalians? They have women priests." She still asks that question today, and cannot understand why the Catholic hierarchy chose to investigate orders of women religious like those of the two sisters she met who visit detained immigrants in Florence, Ariz. At age 12, Marya, our eldest daughter, was asked to speak at a Boston College event, in which she tried to imagine what role she could play, as she grew older, in a religious community that she saw as denying women leadership positions. Now, almost 10 years later, as a religious studies major Marya struggles to identify herself as Catholic. We have continually responded to our daughters' concerns by insisting that this is our church, and it is worth remaining part of the effort to see that it more fully engages the gifts of all its people in witnessing to the Gospel.



Catholic Christian faith, which—we would like to hope—has grounded them and helped to form them into the thoughtful young women they are today.

All three have demonstrated an interest in working for

ELIZABETH A. DONNELLY is writing a doctoral dissertation about Catholic activism on behalf of heavily indebted low-income countries. **PHILLIP E. PULASKI, M.D.**, is an internist at Boston Healthcare for the Homeless.

A Message of Love

In retrospect, here are a few steps we took to foster both the girls' passions and openness to consider remaining Catholic into adulthood. We have tried to provide a supportive atmosphere in which they learned about the best of their faith tradition, could explore and take risks, knowing that it is ultimately their decision, aided by God's grace, to pursue a faith-grounded approach to their lives.

The essential message we tried to convey throughout their childhood and youth is that God loves us intensely and has created each of us with unique gifts and talents, and that we are called over the course of our lives to discern what they are and how we might use them in the service of and in solidarity with others. The girls grew up witnessing family and friends who concretely lived the language of Catholic social teaching, promoting in their daily work human dignity and solidarity, addressing structural injustice and living a preferential option for the poor.

1. *Looking for inspiration.* The two of us were first blessed by having as role models parents who were both exceptional and yet also completely characteristic of the generation of Catholics who had been formed during the Depression and World War II. Our daughters experienced the love of four grandparents whose deep and active faith had inspired their lives of generous service attuned not only to their neighborhood but also the wider world.

One of Elizabeth's earliest memories was of Oblate Father Matt Menger spreading a map of "Indochina" on the family's living room floor in Pittsburgh. He had worked for many years in Laos and spoke of the people caught up in the political conflict in the region and his efforts to see the Bible translated into several Laotian dialects. Phillip grew up hearing the stories of his uncle, Father Joe Pulaski, who had served as a Maryknoll priest in China, Japan and Hawaii; both of our families had hosted Maryknoll priests and sisters over the years. Phillip was further nurtured by his participation as a teen in Connecticut's Christian Encounter movement. It was a retreat movement founded by a Christian Brother convinced that high school students deserved a program addressing faith issues with which they were grappling. Its central premise: that they were affirmed and loved by God (a favorite button: "God Does Not Make Junk!"). We both



Marya snapped this photo at a vigil before a Fast for Fair Food on Alternative Spring Break March 2012.

read Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day and Henri Nouwen.

When we became parents, we deliberately considered the people beyond our relatives whom we wanted our girls to come to know as role models, those who had dedicated their lives both to direct service and to engaging in the mystery of the Eucharist in the public square. From their earliest years, the girls met Maryknoll lay missionaries, sisters and priests, Jesuits and Franciscans. We took them to Peru where they experienced the generous hospitality of lay leaders and Maryknoll priests with whom Elizabeth had worked. They got to know Phillip's doctor and nurse colleagues treating the physical and psychological wounds of patients who were homeless in Boston. The dining room table remains a wonderful locale for dialogue and growth in our home.

The summer before Marya started ninth grade and Tessa eighth grade, Elizabeth took them and four of their friends to a program designed by the Maryknoll Lay Missioners. The Friends Across Borders trip to El Paso and Ciudad Juarez offered a visceral, faith-based examination of our national immigration debate. As we drove through Ciudad Juarez for the first time, the six girls grew quiet as our host pointed out the many small, black crosses set against pink backdrops, each of which represented a woman whose disappearance had been left unsolved. Later, in a dusty community center outside of town, our group sat together with

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girls their own age who spoke of wrestling between continuing on to high school or leaving school to work in a local plant assembling car dashboards in order to help support their families.

Back on the Texas side of the border, the girls used their limited Spanish to chat with some younger children on the other side of the chain-linked fence, and offered them friendship bracelets they had made earlier in the week. That evening, the girls expressed feeling overwhelmed by how arbitrary their births on this side of the border had been. The trip provided them with human faces of injustice, and through additional meetings, brief talks and films, the girls learned how Catholic teaching, social services and advocacy work approached the complex issues of immigration.

2. *Practicing faith as a family.* We have tried since the girls were little to pray comfortably together—at bedtime when they were young and still today at dinner, holding hands. We have encouraged people to take turns offering prayers that go beyond the food to those whom we are thinking of near and far, relatives, friends and strangers.

In dinner and carpool conversations we would try gently to turn the conversation away from complaints about classmates, teachers, clothes and miscellaneous “stuff.” Instead we encouraged positive attitudes, empathy for others and social

awareness and action. While the girls used to roll their eyes as Phillip would provide a brief history lesson or capsule of a favorite person of faith who wrestled to respond, the girls now smile a little more proudly at him as he asks their friends, “Do you know about so and so?”—and tells the familiar stories.

We sought books on the Bible and saints with lively and evocative—not maudlin or saccharine—texts and illustrations. Our search was made much easier because Elizabeth’s sister, Daria Donnelly, reviewed children’s books for *Commonweal* magazine.

For liturgy we chose to travel a bit farther each Sunday to attend a parish where Jesuits help out. Each became a family friend with whom the girls felt comfortable addressing their thoughts and concerns.

We were also blessed to have had the girls nurtured in an annual Polish family ritual. Every Christmas Eve, Phillip’s parents have hosted the extended family for Oplatek. Before dinner, we gather in the living room as the youngest children carry a baby Jesus figure to the manger while Phil’s mother plays the piano. Phil’s parents then distribute sheets of blessed unleavened communion wafers embossed with the nativity scene. All around the room, pairs of relatives break bread together, review their relationship of the previous year and express their wishes for the other person in the year to

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come. Elizabeth found this completely intimidating when she joined the family 27 years ago, but now loves it. The three girls and their cousins, male and female alike, have developed a natural facility to articulate their feelings and best wishes for relatives of all ages. The annual ritual has also helped instill an enduring attitude of intentional reflection and gratitude.

3. *Choosing schools.* Having been nurtured in Catholic schools, we wanted our daughters to have the same opportunities. Through the generosity of their grandparents, the girls were able to attend Newton Country Day, the Sacred Heart School in Boston. They each appreciated the high school theology sequence, from Judaism and the Hebrew Bible in ninth grade, to the person of Jesus in 10th, Catholic social thought (combined with a community service placement and reflection) in 11th and world religions (Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism) in 12th. Their positive experiences participating in and helping design chapel services and annual retreats have helped all three of them to continue to be interested in effective campus ministry.

Talented faculty animated by their own faith and the wider school community worked hard to incorporate the five Sacred Heart network's goals into every facet of school life: 1. Active faith in God; 2. Respect for intellectual values; 3. Social awareness which impels to action; 4. Building of community as a Christian value; 5. Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom. Back home on school breaks, the girls regularly get together for meals, not only with old schoolmates but also with the teachers who had mentored them.

4. *Connecting with the communion of saints.* Finally, unfortunately something not of our choosing, the girls grew up watching their extended families care—with persistent humor—for an uncle chronically ill due to a childhood brain tumor and for their two grandfathers in their final years. Two beloved aunts—Dana DeBiasi and Daria Donnelly—had lived lives of exceptional, faith-inspired service attentive to the reality and delight of grace. They died after long struggles, respectively, with ovarian cancer and multiple myeloma. Illness has bred further empathy, and a sense of what matters and what does not. Our daughters—and most in our two families—have a vivid sense of having intercessors among the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us.

Now, home alone with the dog, the two of us pause, in gratitude and with hope for the days and years to come. We recognize that, as the girls have grown into women, we are perhaps less in control than ever of how they will or will not choose to identify as Catholics. Still, we hope as they grow in a faith that does justice through action and encounter, that they will come to know the Incarnate in our world and will see the church as a community and body for good. **A**

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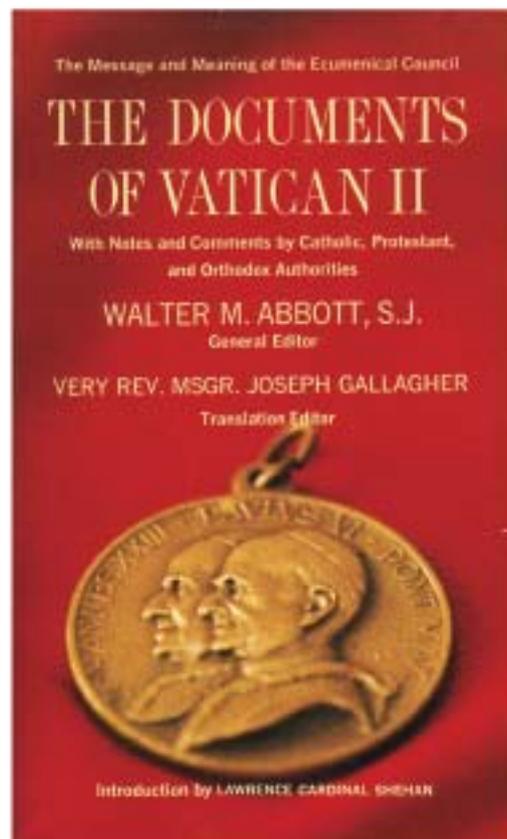


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Deliver Us

The sweet suffering of childbirth

BY ANNA NUSSBAUM KEATING

I gave birth in a quiet hospital room, my husband at hand. Until the final moments, it was just the two of us. We moved and breathed in unison. I never felt so married. When the pain became unbearable, I asked him to read the psalms I had chosen ahead of time. He did so in a low voice, kneeling by my side, those ancient words suddenly appropriate for the work at hand. “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging” (Ps 46:2-3). All became peaceful. Everything unnecessary fell away. There was a sense of purpose. After it was over, I felt euphoric. Anything was possible. We had made it. I did not understand how suffering could become sweet.

Suffering is a mystery. We are never to seek suffering for its own sake, yet it is part of life. Everyone suffers. Sometimes we even look back on moments of intense suffering with gratitude. Anyone who has witnessed a beautiful death or birth has witnessed suffering transformed. St. Thérèse of Lisieux said at the end of her long battle with tuberculosis, “I cannot suffer anymore because my suffering has become sweet.”

In the struggle to make sense of life and death, of intense joy and pain, Catholic women I know bring narratives of suffering with them into the labor room. Some pray without words

or simply slip a saint medal under a pillow. Others have elaborate rituals. At her home delivery, a Mexican-American friend had an altar with an icon of Our Lady of Guadalupe and a photo of her deceased twin sister. She felt her sister’s presence during the birth of her son. A musician herself, she had asked someone to play the guitar and sing.

Some women have friends or family lay hands on them and pray over them before they give birth. Others ask people they know to send their prayer intentions and then dedicate a contraction to each person and their needs. One friend told me, “During labor my husband or sister would read the prayer intentions to me one by one as the next wave of pain was about to crash so I could hold that person with me. I had so much to pray for.” It was incredible, she said, “to ‘bring’ all these people with me during the births of my beautiful daughters.” She also had a carved image of the Holy Family and photos of deceased loved ones as focal points to remind her of the communion of saints.

I do not fully understand how it is possible for suffering to become sweet. Perhaps it results from laboring on behalf of others and not being alone. Christians believe in a God who suf-

fered on behalf of others, and Jesus was born to a woman who suffered on his behalf. Christians also believe in communion with the living and with those who have gone before. One woman told me that after becoming a mother she suddenly felt a sense of kinship with Mary and with other mothers everywhere.

Labor Pains

No one can count on seeing their suffering transformed in the moment. No one can count on the perfect birth, or the perfect child, or even on their labor being productive. Sometimes it is just sacrificial. There is a frightening element of self-abandonment to providence that a woman in labor simply cannot get around. Women whose children die in utero nevertheless have to go through the ordeal of giving birth to a deceased baby. This labor is especially difficult because the woman’s body does not go into labor naturally, nor does the fetus move into position the way a living fetus does. A woman in this situation told me she just prayed that the labor would go quickly. Mercifully, it did.

Another woman labored for days without medication before she was rushed into an emergency Caesarean

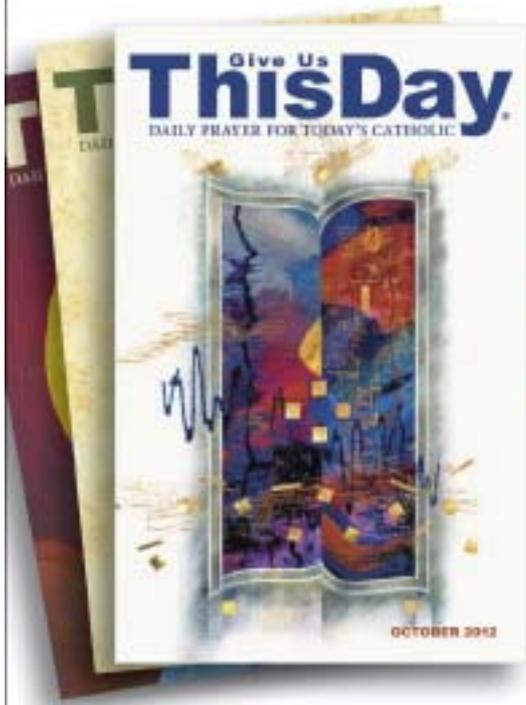


ANNA NUSSBAUM KEATING is the co-owner of Keating Woodworks in Colorado Springs, Colo.

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section. She wanted nothing more than to experience childbirth naturally. Major surgery was the opposite of her plan. She was exhausted and frightened when they gave her an epidural, tied her arms down on the operating table and cut her daughter out. She could feel them tearing the walls of her uterus with their hands. “The first time I saw my daughter I couldn’t touch her because my arms were tied down...and she was on the other side of the drape. It was a long time before I could tell that story without crying.”

A culture that demands perfection of new mothers compounded this woman’s physical and emotional pain. Because she had a C-section, she felt like a failure. We forget that giving birth is a good in itself. We want to be successful. We want natural births and happy, healthy breastfed babies—what good mothers are supposed to want and have. In large part, this is for the good of the child and the mother, but it has also become a kind of competition.

In my case, the labor was a gift, but what followed was the most difficult period in my life. Shortly after my son was born, his heart stopped and he had to be resuscitated. His first days were spent in a neonatal intensive care unit. He had two holes in his heart and experienced “failure to thrive.” He did not eat or sleep or gain weight. He had terrible reflux, so eating was painful and everything he ate came back up. He would become tired and frustrated and just cry or fall asleep hungry. I quit everything else in my life to focus on his health. I have never worked so hard or been so exhausted. I have never felt so low. Even though I nursed him constantly for the first six months of his life, he was too weak to nurse effectively. I agonized over giving him a bottle, believing I was a failure. I tried everything. Then I remembered that my son is the good I labored for. A high I.Q. and an excellent immune system—possible bene-

fits of exclusive breastfeeding—are intermediate goods. Clement is the good. So I gave him a bottle, and people reached out to me. Eventually he got better, healed and grew.

My friend, who labored for days only to be rushed into an emergency C-section, wanted to give birth peacefully and to hold her child in her arms. But her needs were secondary to her daughter's life, so she let go of them, for Cecilia. As the Psalmist says, "May he remember all your sacrifices and accept your burnt offerings" (Ps 20:3).

True Blessings

I used to consider it odd that in the Bible women were described as "blessed with children." It was difficult to wrap my mind around a blessing that involved, among other things, working nights. Yet when I first met my son, I knew in my bones it was an honor to be someone's mother, to be entrusted with so much goodness.

In common parlance *blessing* has

come to mean good fortune without great responsibility. People who are wealthy can speak of being "blessed" in relation to their material prosperity—a nice car or house, for example. So what about the poor woman who refers to her many children as blessings? Perhaps the greatest blessings are not the kind that demand the least from us.

For Aristotle, a person's happiness cannot be measured in the moment. It is not always evident amid some trial. It can be known only when a person has stepped back and looked at his or her entire life. Our greatest opportunities for growth and joy often come from our most difficult and riskiest undertakings, even when in the moment we are simply struggling to survive. In the end, many of these undertakings cannot or should not be avoided. C. S. Lewis writes in *The Problem of Pain*,

"Try to exclude the possibility of suffering which the order of nature and the existence of free-wills involve, and you find that you have excluded life itself." Perhaps this is why people often refer to children or grandchildren as their greatest blessings or sources of happiness, even though childbearing and childrearing involve pain.

In the Mass we celebrate Christ's sacrifice of his life on behalf of the entire world. We in turn offer our lives, our joys and pains.

Someday I want to tell my son the story of the day he was born, on his due date, the Fourth of July. I want to tell him how we labored to bring him into the world and were so excited to meet him. I want to tell him that there were fireflies in the front yard and fireworks in the sky, and that he was never alone—which is to say, it was hard work but beautiful and lovely too. **A**

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- Rosemary Haughton, 1987
- Timothy O'Meara, 1988
- Walter J. Ong, S.J., 1989
- Sidney Callahan, 1990
- John T. Noonan Jr., 1991
- Louis Dupré, 1992
- Merrill K. Hellwig, 1993
- Philip Gleason, 1994
- J. Bryan Hehir, 1995
- Charles Taylor, 1996
- Gustavo Gutiérrez, 1997
- Rev. David Tracy, 1998
- Jill Ker Conway, 1999
- Marcia L. Colish, 2000
- Mary Ann Glendon, 2001
- Mary Douglas, 2002
- Peter Steinfels, 2003
- Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, 2003
- Avory Dulles, S.J., 2004
- David O'Brien, 2005
- Cyprian Davis, O.S.B., 2006
- David Hollenbach, S.J., 2008
- Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., 2009
- Ron Hansen, 2010
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Developing Worldview

From Greenwich to Ghana

BY LYN BURR BRIGNOLI

In 2000 I received a Fulbright grant through Yale University to travel with 11 other teachers to Ghana, West Africa. As a volunteer religion teacher to children with special needs in my parish (St. Mary's in Greenwich, Conn.), I was an anomaly in the group of high school and grade school teachers and one college professor. I returned to the north of Ghana in 2008 and again in 2011, where I have been working on a girls' education initiative.

I meet David for the first time when we are ushered into his office in Bolgatanga where he works for an American-based non-governmental organization. He is wearing a white “smock,” a loose, skirt-like garment worn as a shirt—formal attire for men in northern Ghana. Tall and thin, speaking in British colloquialisms, he reminds me of an English aristocrat, except for the scar on his left cheek that resembles the scratch of a lion claw across his dark skin.

Later David (not is real name) will tell me that the mark is the imprint of the Nankani people for identification in times of war. His father had insisted on it, fearing his mother could take him one day to her people, where he would be mistaken for a Dagomba rather than a Nankani prince. His father, from a royal family and ashamed to be so poor, left his rural village at 18 with no formal education. Eventually he found a job as a police-

man in a gold mine near where David was born and lived until he was 2 years old.

When David's mother became seriously ill, his father took him to be cared for by extended family back in his home village where, in the mornings, “mamas” might offer him five or six peanuts and a cup of dirty water for breakfast. Often the contaminated water gave him worms, he will later tell me, rolling up his pant leg to show the scars where the worms had finally broken through the skin. He had nothing to eat until supper, a bowl of mush made from ground maize and okra.

At 17 David received a scholarship to a Jesuit boarding school for boys located a fair distance away. When he arrived at the school, barefoot in tattered shorts and shirt, the other boys teased him mercilessly, and after a few days he went to the headmaster, a Catholic priest and a native of Ghana himself, to say that he was going home.

The priest said to him, “Look up. What do you see?”

“I see the ceiling,” David said.

“No, I mean, if we go outside at nighttime, what do you see?”

“I see the moon and the stars,” David answered.

“Just so. That is you,” said the priest. “Your purpose is far beyond what is contained here in this little room.” Then the priest opened the cupboard, took out a clean cotton shirt and gave it to David. “Put this on,” he



said. “Every morning you are to report here to me, and I will accompany you to the assembly,” the headmaster said. “But under no circumstances, for any reason whatsoever, are you to leave this school.” It was a turning point in David's life.

David went on to earn a master's degree in economic development in England, but always wanted to return to help his people. He is working now in the region where he grew up, where two out of three people fall below the poverty line, which is about \$98 a year. Of these over 80 percent are women

LYN BURR BRIGNOLI, a dame of the Order of Malta, works with a group of Muslim women in Ghana to promote education for women and establish a girls' school.

ART: DAN SALAMIDA

with dependent children.

The purpose of the nongovernmental organization he works for is to help create and manage farming collectives. During one brief rainy season the collectives can produce food for the year—groundnuts (peanuts), beans, soy, millet, guinea corn and rice. The N.G.O. lends money for seeds, supplies and equipment to about 100 women farmers who participate in the cooperative; they pay back the money as the farms become productive.

“Giving handouts is an emergency measure, but it doesn’t solve economic woes in the long run,” says David as we sit in a circle in his office at the N.G.O.

David is making arrangements for us to spend the following day working alongside the farmers. “You will come away with a better understanding if you work in the fields,” David tells us. “Wear long sleeves and long pants, and wear a hat. It will be hot.”

The fields in Navrongo lie a few miles from the border with Burkina Faso, with the arid Sahel not far off. It is hot, hot. Through an interpreter we talk with the farmers, who are dressed in wonderfully bright colored cloth, with turbans wound around their heads. I ask one her name.

“Howa,” she answers.

The women are enjoying our presence, laughing as if it is a great joke to watch us bend over, our fingers thrust deep in the dirt. But we will not be here long enough to become bone-tired or so hot that we are dehydrated or so hungry that we develop splitting headaches. We are, after all, only voyeurs of poverty.

Later, in an e-mail, I ask David why he chose to live so close to the bone himself, why he did not remain in England. He wrote: “No doubt life could have been easier for me had I remained in the West. I do relish the ‘good things’ of the West, but I realize that one may not have it both ways. The trade-off would be the loss of some part of myself. This work among

my people is a work that I love.”

When we are back in Bolgatanga after working in the fields, David sits beside me at dinner. When he asks me what I do in the United States, I tell him about teaching religion to children with Down syndrome, discovering how gifted they are, even though in the eyes of the world they are seen as inadequate. “This is a work that I love,” I say.

“You don’t need to tell me that because it is written all over your face,” David says.

“Lyn,” he will later write, “I remember in our first meeting you talked about your work with ‘other-abled’ children. What touched me most was your emphasis on their being different, even unique, in such a way that the concept of diversity was not twisted to imply that one human being was inferior or superior to another.”

In his culture the handicapped are seen as cursed by God, less than human. But David realized that after speaking with me, he began to see disabled people differently. To illustrate his point David told me the story of how, a day or two after we had left Bolgatanga, he drove to a nearby village. When he parked his car under a tree, several mentally and physically handicapped adults approached him, he said, holding out their hands to beg. Instinctively, David reached into his pockets. “Let me share my poverty with you,” he said, distributing his money.

The next day, when he drove to the village, the same people were waiting

under the tree. “Oh no!” he called out to them. “I gave you all my money!”

“We don’t want your money,” they replied. “We just want to shake your hand.”

David realized they were waiting to shake his hand because they were feeling a difference in the way he perceived them. There they were again, yearning to be seen as valuable human beings, just one more time. I believe we all have this deep craving to be seen. But perhaps it is felt more acutely by the physically and mentally disabled people, who for many reasons seem to be invisible to the rest of us.

David wrote me to say he experiences “the poorest of the poor” much as I experience my children with Down syndrome. He said that both groups “seem to have received a life sentence to remain ‘invisible’ to the rest of the world. We both share the pain of those who are so thoroughly discounted.”

I cannot help being struck by an overwhelming irony. From my perspective, David seems only slightly less poor than those he serves. No mere voyeur to poverty, David remains nearly invisible to many in more affluent circumstances, along with those he is trying to rescue from invisibility.

It has been said that we are enlightened not when we get a great idea, but when someone truly sees us—that is, sees us with God’s eyes. When we see each other in this way, we not only ensure that we are all are visible, but that we are loved and valued. **A**

Pierre Hegy
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PORTFOLIO | MICHAEL O'NEILL McGRATH

FAITH CIRCLES

Making a mandala with paint and prayer



“Veriditas”

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), one of the most accomplished persons of the entire Middle Ages, finally has been officially declared a saint and is to be named a doctor of the church this month. She was a polymath with many roles, including those of scholar, scientist, botanist, ecologist, healer, preacher, writer, visionary, church

leader and Benedictine spiritual guide. She sprinkled justice and compassion for the poor throughout her writings and composed chants with meditative melodies. She also painted mandalas, which are circles filled with colors, shapes and symbols. Making mandalas

allows one to paint and pray at the same time. The process leads the painter to deeper levels of self-awareness and to the presence of God within.

When I am in the throes of grief or overshadowed by doubts of faith, I also create mandalas. Instead of caving in to despair or allowing anger to consume me, I turn the energy of those emotions into something creative and life-affirming. The process helps me befriend the dark night that oppresses me and tell it that my faith, riddled with doubt though it may be, is alive and well. Making mandalas is a way to welcome growing pains, which eventually pass. When the going gets tough, an artist is inclined to create beauty, to turn grief and misery into inspiration and healing. These days, I feel like a mandala machine. When my attention turns from the miseries of church and state to consider which color works best beside another, then I know I am on a healing path where all will be well.

The mandalas described here are a few of those I have painted in recent years as personal prayers. The time spent creating a mandala is a mini-retreat that teaches me to be still and listen for the quiet voice within. As Teresa of Avila used to say, “God cannot rest in an unquiet heart.”

Veriditas

Upon learning of Hildegard’s canonization, my first impulse was to paint a celebratory mandala of her and for her. Hildegard’s writings, musical compositions and artwork evoke her own encounters with the green freshness of the Holy Spirit, so I placed her in the midst of verdant, abundant life.

ON THE WEB

Michael O'Neill McGrath, O.S.F.S.,
talks about his art.
americamagazine.org/podcast

She coined a word for this, *veriditas*, which means eternal greenness, a concept in keeping with the contemporary emphasis on stewardship of the earth and all living things. Hildegard, like many scientists and physicists today, taught that we are all connected as one with a great cosmic God.

Here, she stands at her keyboard beneath a tree of life with glimpses of the cosmos above and the depths below. Mystics teach that through encounters with nature, we best come to know the deep, high and wide presence of our incarnate God.

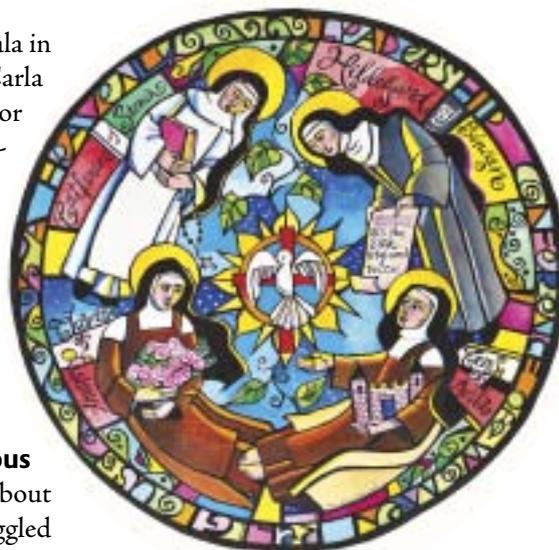
St. Kateri's Medicine Wheel

Devoted to Kateri Tekakwitha ever since I learned her story as a boy, I am very excited about her canonization,

also this month. I created a mandala in her honor with the help of Carla McConnell, an artist-friend, mentor and teacher. Divided into four sections, it is filled with Native American symbols of healing and abundance and was inspired by medicine wheels I discovered while researching American Indian spirituality.

A Heavenly Leadership Conference of Women Religious

There is much to be learned about Jesus from those who have struggled extra hard to know him and to proclaim their message about him. These four women—Catherine of Siena, Teresa of Avila, Thérèse of Lisieux and Hildegard of Bingen—are true



“Heavenly Leadership Conference of Women Religious”

leaders to be admired and imitated. They communicated their experiences of God through the written word. Each had a momentous impact on the church’s spiritual life, which is one reason they qualify as doctors of the church.

Circle of Soul Friends

I painted this trio of favorite saints and heroes (Blessed John XXIII, St. Francis de Sales, Sister Thea Bowman), prophets who read the signs of their troubled times and led the way to reform through joyful optimism against all odds. John, my favorite pope in my lifetime, never lost touch with his peasant roots or with compassion for people, even in the face of suffocating curial resistance to anything that smacked of a good time in the Lord. De Sales, a doctor of the church, was both a civil and canon lawyer and a bishop who put the love of God above all else. He used to teach the faithful, “Be who you are and be that perfectly well.” Sister Thea, a Franciscan troubadour with roots in the Jim Crow South, sang her black and beautiful self into the hearts of the American bishops and the soul of the church. She used to say, “Remember who you are, and whose you are.”

What I would give to have coffee



“St. Kateri's Medicine Wheel”

“Circle of Soul Friends”



“Madonna of Wisdom”



with any one of them for an hour! Yet I am content to see them at my fingertips in living color, and I trust some of their courage may come my way through the act of painting them. They remind me that I am made in the image and likeness of God, not the other way round.

Madonna of Wisdom

Black Madonnas are ancient devotional images that recall the fertile soil, the contemplative quiet of caves and cathedrals, the nighttime sky. For me, nothing says “Incarnation and salvation” more clearly than a black madonna and child. The pearls of great price are somewhere deep within you, too, I am sure, waiting to be revealed in the light of day. The creative path is the best way to find these hidden treasures. I have painted dozens of them, each a prayer for God’s children wounded and excluded by society and the institutional church across time: women, gays, Jews, Protestants, Muslims, people of color, victims of abuse, divorced people—whoever has needed shelter in the arc of Mary’s wisdom and the abiding love of her son.

You do not have to be an artist or a visionary to create a mandala. And you do not have to be an art therapist to interpret one. You need only an open mind, a searching heart and an inner child with an ample supply of crayons, markers or paint. Cultivate your inner eyes and ears so that you can see and listen to the still, small voice within. The goal is not to create a frameable artwork, but to look at unfamiliar things for the first time and familiar things as if for the first time. When that happens, you come face to face with the Holy Spirit who tells you, “I will make all things new.”

MICHAEL O’NEILL McGRATH, O.S.F.S., is an artist and author who lives and works in Camden, N.J. His latest book, *Saved by Beauty* (World Library Publications, 2012), is a visual journey with Dorothy Day.

MISSION TERRITORY

NEW WORLDS

A Religious History of Latin America

By John Lynch

Yale University Press. 404p \$35

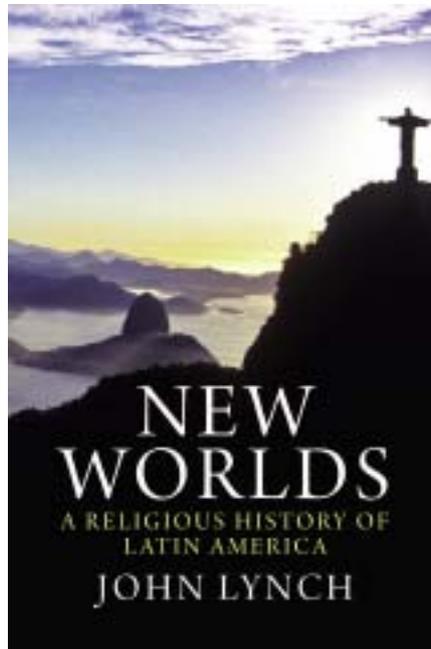
Latin America is a continent of believers, but what they believe defies simple classification. Catholics include ultra-conservatives, traditionalists, Vatican II progressives and devotees of popular religion, which is a world in itself. Protestants (or *evangélicos*) range from mainstream to Mennonites and Pentecostals. Brazil and Haiti especially house many syncretic forms of African cults. And, of course there are Jews, especially in Argentina.

In this sweeping overview of religion from pre-Columbian days up to the present, John Lynch masterfully weaves together all these variant religious expressions into a very readable account. The author, former director of the Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of London, briefly overviews the pre-conquest religions and then moves on to cover the main theme of the whole book, Catholicism in its myriad forms.

This is more than a traditional church history: it is also a study of the underlying mentalities that influenced religious thought throughout Latin American history. The early missionaries attempted to evangelize the Amerindian population without really understanding the cultures of the Indians, who frequently accepted baptism without resistance. But the lack of overt resistance did not necessarily mean acceptance.

Lynch touches the heart of the problem when he notes that the missionaries did not understand the difference between culture and religion. Of course, religion is part of culture. But by

imposing European cultural ways on the Amerindian and black populations, the missionaries did not understand that in fact many Indians did accept



Christianity, but on their own cultural terms. Popular religiosity frequently arose in conflict with the official church. From the 16th century until today, two religious systems have coexisted in Latin American Catholicism: what the official church wants and demands, and what the people want and practice. The two systems were, and are, often at odds with each other.

The author covers all key aspects of the colonial church: Bartolomé de las Casas' struggle in defense of the Indians, the Jesuit missions, the Inquisition (the Indians were exempt, but could still be investigated), Bourbon authoritarianism and the decline of church influence in the 18th century, as well as the emergence of creole nationalism. Everywhere creole priests took up the cause of independence, not so much for doctrinal reasons, but rather because they were patriots fighting for their homelands. The

author takes the papacy and bishops to task for condemning the movement, a shortsightedness that aroused needless anger in Latin American liberals.

Lynch's assessment of Romanization (by which Rome took charge of the Latin American church after the period of royal patronage) is balanced and acute: Latin American Catholics freed themselves from dependence on the state but became overly dependent on Rome. The church weathered the storms of anticlericalism and entered the 20th century relatively intact, and more conservative. But popular religion also went its own way. Although connected tenuously to the official church, lower class Latin Americans often supported charismatic figures who were rivals to the church. When Eva Peron died, 40,000 admirers wrote to Rome asking for her canonization.

The author's portrayal of the church under the late 20th century dictators is very well researched and detailed. He covers the Central American countries where real martyrs gave witness to a living faith, especially El Salvador. Archbishop Miguel Obando in Nicaragua has often been criticized for not dialoguing with the Sandinista regime. But as Lynch points out, that regime was also very sectarian and in the end harbored corruption. Lynch's assessment of the Argentinian church during the Dirty War military regime is fair. There were individual bishops who spoke privately to the generals, but sadly there was no public protest, collective outcry or defense of the "disappeared." Cardinal Silva Henríquez and the Vicariate of Solidarity in Chile stand in stark contrast.

Naturally, the rise of Pentecostalism, the religious expression of the majority of Latin American *evangélicos*, receives special treatment. Lynch suggests that Latin America is witnessing a "re-Christianization" from below and from above: from below



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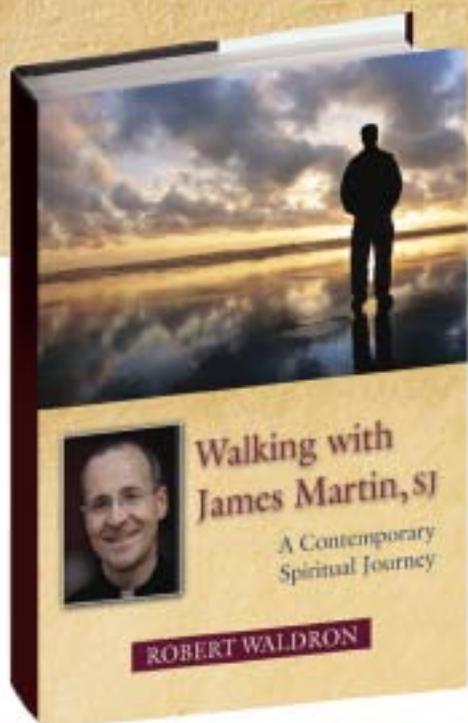
Christian Foundation for Children and Aging is an international movement of people who support and encourage children, youth and the aging in developing countries. Founded by lay Catholics acting on the Gospel call to serve the poor, CFCA works with people of all faiths. To learn more, visit www.hopeforafamily.org.

because the poor are becoming Pentecostals, and from above because the wealthy and powerful are also being attracted to a form of religion that does not question their status. Lynch's treatment of the Brazilian and Caribbean African cults, and especially the Jewish presence in Latin America, is very informative and enlightening.

The author reserves a special place for liberation theology. While sympathetic toward Gustavo Gutiérrez, O.P., he considers Leonard Boff's treatment of Marxism and dependency theory a bit "naïve." Nevertheless, whatever its limitations, as Lynch acknowledges, liberation theology did give a new vitality and sense of identity to a church excessively dependent on Rome. The author concludes that the Latin American church is now past the period of "Christendom," but the future is very uncertain. Some bishops aim to reimpose a pre-Vatican II church, while others struggle to carry on the banner of the council.

One could quibble with small points. The author's treatment of José de Acosta, a 16th century Spanish Jesuit in Peru famous for his missionary manuals on evangelizing the Indians, seems a bit harsh. He notes, correctly, that Acosta had no sympathy for pre-Christian religions, which he believed were infested with the devil. But Acosta's greatest contribution to missiology was his call to missionaries to treat the Indians with kindness. All in all, however, this is a masterly, in-depth study of religion in its many forms in Latin America. Too often, secular histories marginalize religion or simply ignore it. But Lynch's history should serve to remind all students that religion has always been at the core of Latin American culture and history.

JEFFREY KLAIBER S.J., is a professor of history at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, Lima.



WALKING WITH JAMES MARTIN, SJ

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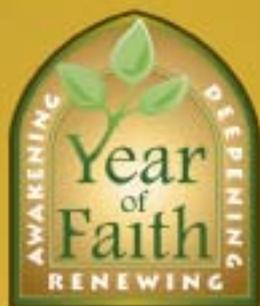
Robert Waldron

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PAUL MOSES

OBEDIENT AND ORTHODOX?

FRANCIS OF ASSISI

A New Biography

By Augustine Thompson, O.P.
Cornell University Press. 299p \$29.95

In each generation and in many languages, writers have sought to interpret Francis of Assisi anew. In a significant book that will play an important role in the continued debate over this elusive medieval holy man, the Dominican historian Augustine Thompson offers what he subtitled “A New Biography”—new not just because it was released this year but also, as he writes, because it “presents a new portrait of the man.”

The Francis who emerges in this account is strongly obedient to church authority, highly orthodox and at times plagued by anguish. He is said to have a strong devotion to

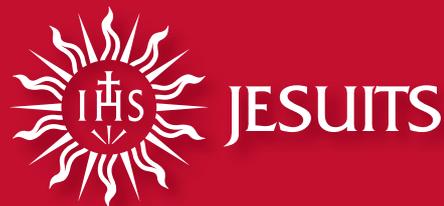
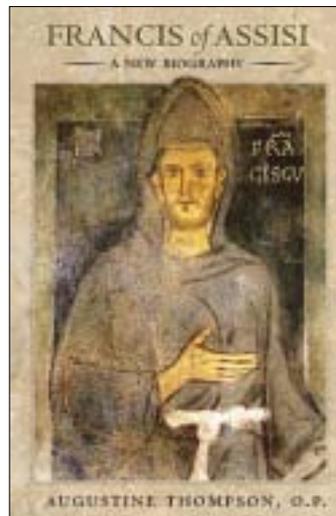
the Eucharist and is not as concerned about voluntary poverty as many accounts since the 13th century would have it.

In short, Thompson has focused on Francis’ piety and religious orthodoxy. It is true that to lose sight of this is to lose the essence of who Francis was—he was not a hippie. But it is not necessarily new. G. K. Chesterton, for example, responding to the secular-minded writers of his day, made a similar point about Francis’ religious vision in a 1924 biography.

What is different in this new biog-

raphy is that this Francis is not as countercultural as the saint one can read about elsewhere. The vow of poverty he adopted is said to be similar to that of other established religious orders. He is reported to have had smooth relations with the authority figures in his life: popes, cardinals, bishops (even Pietro, his father, is presented in a positive light rather than as tyrannical and abusive). He had no program of social or religious reform, Thompson writes.

Another new aspect to the book is its format. The concisely written biography itself is limited to 140 pages; the second half of the book is given over to a discussion of “Sources and Debates”—a set of long-form endnotes that will appeal



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THE MONKS WHO MADE *The Book of Kells*

Who were they?—the monks who made this book,
the scribes and artists, once fishermen and farmers,
this son or that a father had given as tithe,
the orphans—left as infants, as children—
who stayed the rest of their lives, and those few
suffused with a sense of a calling. Men
who wore goatskins over their tunics, sandals
in the extremes of heat and cold. The Rule
stressing obedience, order infused
throughout the day: when to pray, to work. Fast
on Wednesdays and Fridays. Conversation
kept to a minimum. Diet, as routine:
vegetables, peas, beans, a small loaf of bread.
Milk and butter. Beer. Those close to the sea,
seal meat and fish. Scholars able to say
four such men copied these gospels, Hand
A, B, C, D, they call them, making the part
suffice for the whole. Who were they? If The Rule
had to remind them to read what they wrote—
yes, errors in text passed down book to book—
what's the fission, what's the fusion that explains
such abundance amidst the austere:
two thousand initial letters enlarged
and colored, then embellished with flourishes
of tendrils and spirals, interlacing knots,
serpents undulating around and through,
not one design in this book repeated?

MOIRA LINEHAN

MOIRA LINEHAN was the winner of *America's Foley Poetry Contest* in 2010. She is the author of *If No Moon* (Southern Illinois University Press).

mainly to scholars and other serious readers.

The reason for such a lengthy discussion of the sources is that any biography of Francis must make sense of medieval accounts of suspect accuracy. Like many others before him, Thompson has analyzed these early accounts to extract what he believes is historical; he rejects the parts that are not.

The author reasonably rejects any works written more than 34 years after Francis' death in 1226 and avoids earlier material in which Francis serves as a mouthpiece for competing Franciscan factions that were arguing over the question of poverty. As other scholars have done, he tries to mine historical facts from passages that he believes are skewed by the writers' desire to portray Francis as a miracle-making saint. (But he does not reject all miracles; he accepts the stigmata as historical.)

This approach puts a premium on Francis' own writings, which Thompson looks at very closely. At the same time, it means that such fabled stories as those about Francis and the wolf of Gubbio and Francis' challenge before the sultan of Egypt to a trial by fire are rejected as not historical.

According to Thompson, Francis' new life followed the "self-loathing and guilt" he endured after barely surviving a battle the town of Assisi fought with Perugia and a harsh imprisonment. This led Francis to adopt a life of penance and then, as a movement began to form, to preach repentance and peace.

Thompson finds much significance in Francis' devotion to the Eucharist. He notes that Francis wanted the Eucharist to be honored "on bended knee" rather than with a bow, as was customary at the time. And he analyzes letters in which Francis inveighed against the use of dirty chalices and altar linens. He

writes that Francis was ordained a deacon and probably was scandalized at seeing priests treat the sacred host with indifference.

Thompson makes a good case that this devotion was important to Francis, and then criticizes modern writers, “including Franciscans,” for not appreciating Francis’ “fixation.” He contends that Francis’ writings deal with the Eucharist far more often than they concern poverty, adding: “This has to be taken seriously. If we want to know what concerned Francis, we have to start with his own writings. I am determined to do this.”

True enough, but I do not see a need to place Francis’ eucharistic devotion in contrast to his embrace of poverty, a form of penance. Each sustained the other, as would later be the case for Mother Teresa and Dorothy Day.

In any case, the importance of poverty to Francis is spelled out very clearly in his Earlier Rule, starting with its opening chapter. He did not need to write letters about it to his friars. In addition, his personal example provided the best lesson about how important poverty was to Francis.

I would have liked Thompson to explore more fully the messages Francis sent to his society through his deliberately dramatic personal example. If his example is indeed Francis’ “greatest sermon,” as Thompson writes, then it is important to decipher its signs and meanings.

For example, Francis never preached against the Cathars, but his demonstrative love of animals and nature conflicted with the heretic movement’s view that the material world was evil. So, too, did his love of the Eucharist conflict with the Cathars’ attack against it. Was Francis responding to the signs of his time?

Thompson maintains that Francis never proposed programs of social or religious reform, and this is true if the saint is limited to his writings. I would not use the contemporary term “social

reform program” to describe what Francis attempted. Rather, framing the matter within Francis’ medieval and religious worldview, the question is to what extent did he hope that his example of peacemaking, penance and poverty would help transform the world around him so that its ways conformed to God’s will?

Thompson suggests there was a more “political and social flavor” in the movement as time passed. He points to Francis’ preaching in Perugia around 1221 as an example of “the peacemaker in action”—he urged a group of knights who were taunting him to change their lives. But for the most part, Francis comes across in this book as somewhat oblivious to the controversies of his era, including those in the church.

Although I have expressed a few reservations, I recommend this book strongly to anyone serious about understanding Francis of Assisi. I

admire the clarity and brevity of the writing. With decisiveness, Thompson cuts through the conflicting medieval accounts of each event in Francis’ life, adjusts for the hagiographers’ spin and creates a credible chronology out of the blurry dates. His knowledge of medieval Italy allows him to provide insightful explanations of the legal, liturgical and ecclesiastical practices of the time.

There will always be a degree of guesswork involved in filtering the story of Francis from the 13th century accounts of his life. As an accomplished historian and a Dominican friar, Thompson brings great expertise to this task. His solutions are interesting and often provocative.

PAUL MOSES, professor of journalism at Brooklyn College/CUNY, is the author of *The Saint and the Sultan: the Crusades, Islam and Francis of Assisi’s Mission of Peace* (Doubleday).

R. BENTLEY ANDERSON
AFTER APARTHEID

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

By Nadine Gordimer
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 432p \$27

The Nobel laureate Nadine Gordimer examines the complexities and contradictions of life in post-apartheid South Africa in her most recent novel, *No Time Like the Present*. Through the lives of Steven Reed and Jabulile Gumede and their children Sindiswa and Gary Elias, Gordimer navigates the socioeconomic and political contours of South African realities that life in the new dispensation present: corruption, injustice, violence, inequality. The demise of the apartheid regime did not usher in a republic of virtue.

In the first half of the novel,

Gordimer introduces the reader to the protagonists, their families and friends and South Africa. Steven and Jabulile met during the struggle. She, a black South African young woman, had been sent out of the country by her father in order to obtain a university degree—which in and of itself subverted both black and white cultural norms of the day. He, a white South African with a degree in chemical engineering, was putting that knowledge to use against the regime, aiding the cause by constructing bombs.

The two met in Swaziland during the struggle. This joining of black and white, through the experience of the struggle, made their lives acceptable in the post-apartheid period. Their chil-

dren represent the future of the country: a blending of the old into the new.

The second half of the novel focuses on the choices the Reeds must make in a corrupt, violent and dysfunctional world. This middle-class couple struggles with the desire to develop the new South Africa, promoting democracy, the rule of law, economic justice for all and the desire to protect their children, shielding them from senseless acts of violence, providing them with a quality education, allowing them to embrace their cultural heritages so as to understand who they are as South Africans. The Reeds have to decide: do they stay or do they go? Do they remain in South Africa or emigrate to Australia?

The problems facing South Africa in the novel and the problems faced in contemporary society are one and the same: corruption, violence, inequality. Gordimer pulls no punches. She is highly critical of the current political leadership of the country, especially the president, Jacob Zuma, of the African National Congress, and the leader of the A.N.C. Youth League, Jacob Malema. Zuma's trial on charges of rape and corruption are woven into

the narrative as a way to introduce the reader to Jabulile Reed, a lawyer, and also to introduce the reader to the fact that there are those, including Jabulile's father, who believe the charges against Zuma were politically motivated. Gordimer's characters fear that Malema, a brash young populist, might one day come to real political power, unleashing a reign of terror in the country.

To stay or to go? To help build the nation or to depart, leaving the nascent nation-state to fend for itself? What was the struggle for and why did one even participate in it, if one were only going to abandon the movement (the new state) at its time of greatest need? This is the heart of *No Time Like the Present*.

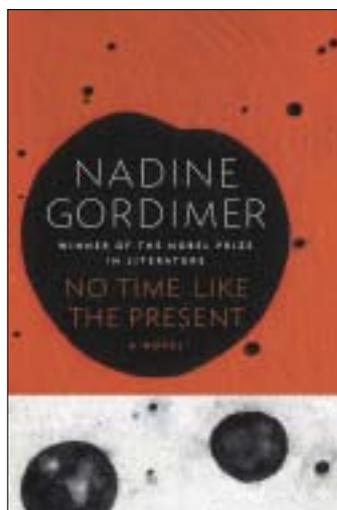
In a seamless narrative, Gordimer weaves the past with the present, the new with the old and the potential with the real. Modern South Africa is undergoing a transformation and

Gordimer is presenting and representing that transformation for her readers. Its citizens are struggling to find a way to respect the past, as embodied by Jabu's father with the future, her

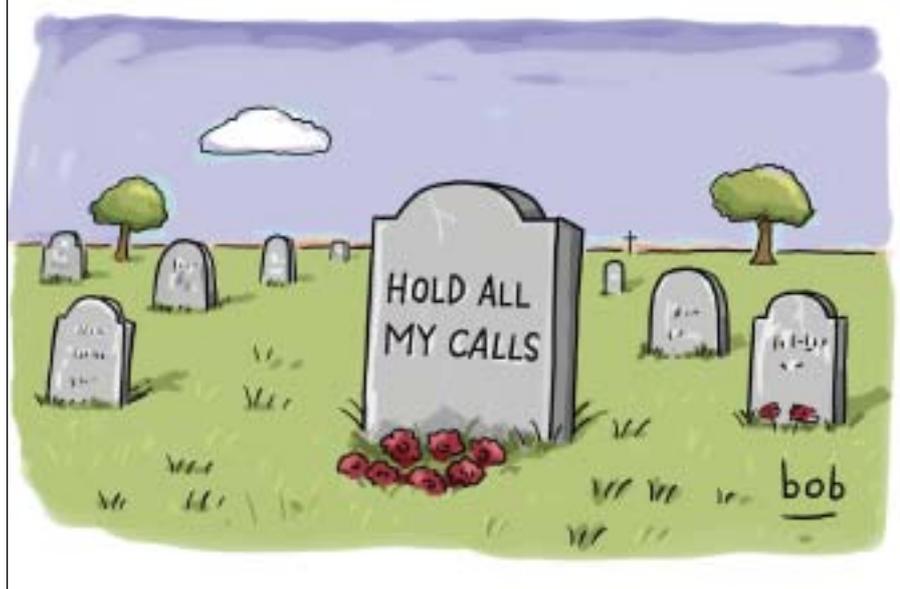
children, his grandchildren. What should be kept of the old: respecting one's elders, honoring one's ancestors and acknowledging cultural contributions? What should be embraced of the new: urbanization, gender equality and socio-economic opportunity? While the past informs the present, the future cannot be held hostage to that past. The

potential of South Africa, Gordimer subtly presents, will be unrealized if the country does not face reality and deal with its problems, instead of fleeing from them. Should the Reeds migrate, they take the future, the potential and the hopes of South Africa with them. Those left behind are destined to repeat the past.

For the reader uninitiated in the ways of South African history, Gordimer's work presents a challenge. The reader needs to know the political players of the African National Congress—from Albert Luthuli, the Noble Peace Prize-recipient in 1960, to Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela, the Noble Peace Prize-recipient 1993, along with the current A.N.C. leaders Joseph Zuma and Jacob Malema. And some understanding of the current socioeconomic difficulties facing the country, including housing shortages, xenophobia, affirmative action hiring, H.I.V.-AIDS and educational deficiencies, would enhance one's reading experience.



WITHOUT GUILE



CARTOON BY BOB ECKSTEIN

R. BENTLEY ANDERSON, S.J., is professor of African and African-American studies at Fordham University, New York.

CLASSIFIED

Call for Papers

The Religious Studies and Philosophy Department and the Graduate Program in Holistic Spirituality at **CHESTNUT HILL COLLEGE** will host an **INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE** on "The Irrepressible Energy of the Spirit: Vatican II and Beyond," April 12–14, 2013.

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WHY (NOT) WOMEN?

Readers respond to Bishop Emil A. Wcela's call for women deacons (Oct. 1)

Help Wanted

Our parish has three deacons, but we are getting rather long in the tooth and less able physically to serve as we once did. We could easily use several additional deacons. Women deacons, in particular, would be extremely helpful. There are many roles in which their insights would be invaluable: whole family catechesis, marriage preparation, preaching, children's ministry and youth ministry. We also could attract younger women to the ministry of deacon, benefiting from their vitality and energy.

Today it takes four to six years of formation before ordination to the diaconate. The sooner we overcome the reluctance to ordain women to this critical ministry, the better.

(DEACON) MIKE EVANS
Anderson, Calif.

I Feel Called

Thank you for the courage and wisdom to publish this article. For years I have experienced a call to the permanent diaconate. Bishop Wcela gives me hope that my sense of vocation will become a reality in this church I love.

I am a cradle Catholic and have lived through all the changes in the church before, during and after Vatican II. I was raised in a household where women were expected to share their gifts and talents. It had nothing to do with gender but with a sense of responding to the values of the Sermon on the Mount.

I never thought I had a call to enter a religious community or become a priest, but I have always had a nagging desire to serve the church in some ministerial role. When friends were ordained to the permanent diaconate,



a light went on. Over the years I have seen the amazing gifts deacons have brought to our communities in the areas of liturgy, ministry of the word and charity. Having the voice, life experience and sensitivity of women in the role of deacon is essential if we are to grow and meet the needs of people in our churches, and even more important, those who are alienated from the Catholic Church.

We must allow the Spirit to drive away the fears that bind the creativity we need in our church. We need to look at our roots. In Bishop Wcela's article we see firsthand the historical documentation that women were deacons. I look at the ministry of Jesus, a perfect example of persons being called, responding and entering into an inclusive and collaborative ministry. My patron, Mary of Magdalene, responded to the call to be a companion in ministry with Jesus. I challenge all of us to keep the dialogue open if

we are to be a whole and holy body of Christ.

CONNIE WALSH
Maplewood, Minn.

A Sign of Christ

I am very grateful for Bishop Wcela's article. From my early experience working with the training of permanent deacons in the Diocese of Oakland, I have witnessed deacons' wives working collaboratively in ministry with their husbands. I have also worked with women in team ministries on campuses and in parishes. These women were effective leaders, enablers of lay ministry, healers and social justice prophets. Their gifts ought to be supported by the sacramental grace of diaconal ordination. What a wonderful sign of the Christ who embraces the fullness of humanity!

(REV.) JIM SCHEXNAYDER
Pacheco, Calif.

Women Cardinals

The diaconate looks "priestly," but it is not. It is "ministerial," in service to Christ and his church. So Bishop Wcela's suggestion may be ecclesially sound.

But why stop with women as deacons? How about lay women and men in the College of Cardinals? The cardinalate is honorary, having no sacramental or intrinsic connection to holy orders. Its members function as papal advisors and diplomatic envoys and so forth. These are ecclesial jobs that laypeople can handle very well. Of course, some cob-webby church requirements would have to be negated, but it would not be the first time that our church wisely negated some directives on the books. Is this sugges-

tion absolutely off the wall? May the Holy Spirit guide!

BRUCE SNOWDEN
Bronx, N.Y.

Dignity of the Diaconate

Bishop Wcela has presented a fine and reasoned explication of the question. It should serve as the basis for parish and other group discussions. The most important point: Deacons, while ordained to the one sacrament of holy orders, are not priests and are not intended to be priests. In fact, it might clarify things if priests today were not required to be ordained as deacons until after they were chosen to be pastors or bishops.

Also, the diaconate is not a “second class” vocation. Look at the lives of the many deacons in history (St. Francis of Assisi, St. Radegund and St. Lawrence) and the deacons of today, whose lives are dedicated to the word, the liturgy and charity. The diaconate is not below the priesthood. It stands beside the priesthood as a full and holy order with different aims and goals. Only in the diocesan bishop (and, to a lesser extent, the pastor) are the diaconate and the priesthood fully exercised in one person.

PHYLLIS ZAGANO
Hempstead, N.Y.

The author has written extensively on women in ministry.

Gospel Obedience

Women, without ordination, are not “second class citizens.” We have Mother Mary as co-redemptrix and patroness of the Americas, St. Catherine of Siena as patroness of Italy, St. Brigid as patroness of Ireland and so forth. There are roles, and you cannot always get what you want in life. This does not mean you are being treated unfairly. Our American and Western culture is so obsessed with “what I want” that we lose sight of the Gospel message and, dare I say, obedience. If Jesus can be

such a model to us through his relationship to the Father, can we not try to do the same?

DAN MOORE
Dallas, Tex.

Equally Capable

I am glad Bishop Wcela supports ordaining women as deacons. Aren't we all supposed to represent Christ? Aren't we all empowered, only by Christ, to serve each other in the min-

istry of the liturgy, the word and charity? Call me simple, but a child of God is a child of God, whether a man or a woman. Each is equally capable of hearing God's call loud and clear. No one should be prevented from following where that call leads.

Is our church trying to promote or prevent growth? Women are a valuable and essential part of our society, our world and our church. Depriving the church of the much-needed energy and

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contribution of women is like depriving a plant of water and sunlight yet expecting it to grow. Let the Holy Spirit flow where she may and watch the fruits of the Spirit flourish as never before.

JUDITH RACZKO
Mount Sinai, N.Y.

Work of the Spirit

As Bishop Wcela points out, literally thousands of women are functionally keeping our local churches alive and increasingly serving in diocesan, regional and Vatican-level jobs and ministries. This is unprecedented in the history of the world and our tradition. It is a "new thing," a sign of the times and surely the work of the Holy Spirit.

Even if some faded deaconess tradition were restored by the Roman Catholic Church, it would have to speak to the times and so would probably look very different from the "permanent diaconate" of today. While institutional legitimation would be great, I am consoled that God sees the functional reality.

CAROL STANTON
Orlando, Fla.

Let Women Preach

Women are doing diaconal service now. As a Catholic school teacher and spiritual director, I can do many things. I serve as a lector, eucharistic minister and music minister. I serve on the liturgy board and parish council. I have led retreats and workshops in my diocese. When our priest was on retreat, I led liturgies of the word and Communion services (when allowed). As a delegate for our synod, I spoke at the unofficial meeting about ordaining women to the diaconate.

Deacons preach. We need to hear a woman's voice, too! We have a lot to say. Having received the gift of an awesome education, I do not want to bury it. If women were truly allowed to use all their gifts and talents, the church would be thriving now.

TERRY FRITZSCHE
Elk Grove, Calif.

Origin of Holy Orders

Does Bishop Wcela believe that the sacrament of holy orders comes from Christ, or does he think it simply developed in the community? Because frankly, the latter is the Protestant theory of ministry. Holy orders, while having different ranks, is one sacrament instituted by Christ. If you choose not to believe it, that's fine, but you're not a practicing Catholic.

BRENDAN DOYLE
Dublin, Ireland

Spirit, Not Institution

When we look at the now well-cemented tradition of ordination for men only—despite Scripture and archeology that suggest otherwise—we are only seeing through the lens of the institutional church. The institutional model unilaterally teaches, sanctifies and rules from the top down.

If we had implemented models like "servant church" and "community as the body of Christ," which see the divine rather than the institution as the center of the church, we might have continued—or established and welcomed—the gifts of women in a sacramental role.

The people of God are often denied sacramental life because of rules, not calls. There is much to be learned from the ways in which the Spirit wishes to invite her people into the work of this world.

SHEILA DURKIN DIERKS
Boulder, Colo.

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Seeing Is Believing

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), OCT. 28, 2012

Readings: Jer 31:7–9; Ps 126:1–6; Heb 5:1–6; Mk 10:46–52

“Master, I want to see” (Mk 10:51)

Mark recounts the beginning of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem with the healing of a blind man (8:22–26). In today’s Gospel reading, the city of Jericho represents Jesus’ last stop, and again he heals a blind man, Bartimaeus. Throughout his journey, Jesus had been sharing with his disciples truths about himself, his mission and what it means to be a disciple. Through it all, we find the Twelve often blind. They hear about receiving a powerless child as one would the Lord himself; they are told to imitate the Son who came to serve and not be served; and they learn about his coming rejection and the way of the cross. Their responses include a rebuke to Jesus, a debate about who among them is the greatest and an attempt to secure seats of glory.

Now comes Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, lying at the edge of the road. He knows his condition; he knows his need. And he hears that Jesus is passing by. “Jesus, son of David,” he calls out, “have pity on me.” He will not be dissuaded by the crowd trying to silence him and calls out “all the more.” Jesus commands that they call him forward, and he eagerly complies. “What do you want me to do for you?” the Lord asks. “Master,” he replies, “I want to see.” “Go your way,” the Lord says, healing him; “Your faith has saved you.” The end of the story is crucial:

“Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.” It turns out for Bartimaeus that to “go your way,” means following Jesus on his way. This is a clear reference to discipleship.

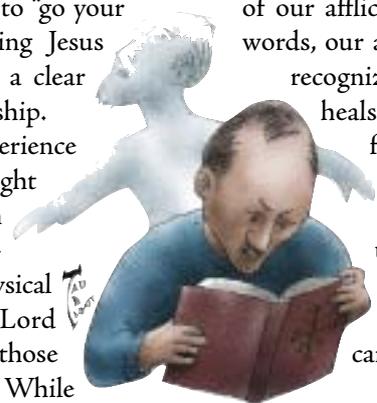
Bartimaeus’s experience is more about the light of faith—“your faith has saved you”—than it is about physical healing. The Lord promises his light to those who come to him. While miraculous physical healings can happen, as they did here, they often do not. Jesus did not promise to release us from the human condition, but to offer us his saving presence through it all.

We find this offer in Jeremiah, our first reading: “Shout with joy for Jacob.... The Lord has delivered his people...with the blind and the lame in their midst.... I will lead them to brooks of water.... For I am a father to Israel.” In this wonderful prophecy of God’s plans for the release of the captives we do not see the blind and lame healed, but rather guided by God, who walks with them. Earlier in this chapter God proclaims through Jeremiah, “With age-old love, I have loved you” (31:2).

We should avoid the temptation to see our physical and mental suffering as a kind of rejection or hardness of heart on God’s part. Being faithful does not mean being released from the human condition. Indeed, our faith

witness can be all the more enhanced by faithfulness in the midst of our own trials, where “power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

Our second reading, from the Letter to the Hebrews, highlights this point, insisting that being “beset by weakness” helps a high priest “deal patiently with the ignorant and erring.” With the eyes of faith we see the love and presence of God right in the heart of our afflictions and needs. In other words, our acute suffering helps us to recognize Jesus as our healer. He heals the blindness that comes from sin; he heals the timidity that comes from lack of faith; and he frees us from the imprisonment of our own delusions, our greed and our anger. We can pray for physical healing



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Meditate on the Bartimaeus story, imagining the scene completely.
- Imagine that you are Bartimaeus, in front of the Lord.
- What is your soul’s deepest desire to ask the Lord?

but not for release from the human condition. God guarantees that he and the light he brings guides us through the journey.

We ought to be like Bartimaeus. We ought not to be hindered by fear—our own or that of others—of the source of light and sight. If we let the Lord in, if we open and receive him, he will help us dismantle the walls that keep us from seeing, the walls that keep our hearts and minds from coming to life. We too can “follow him on the way.”

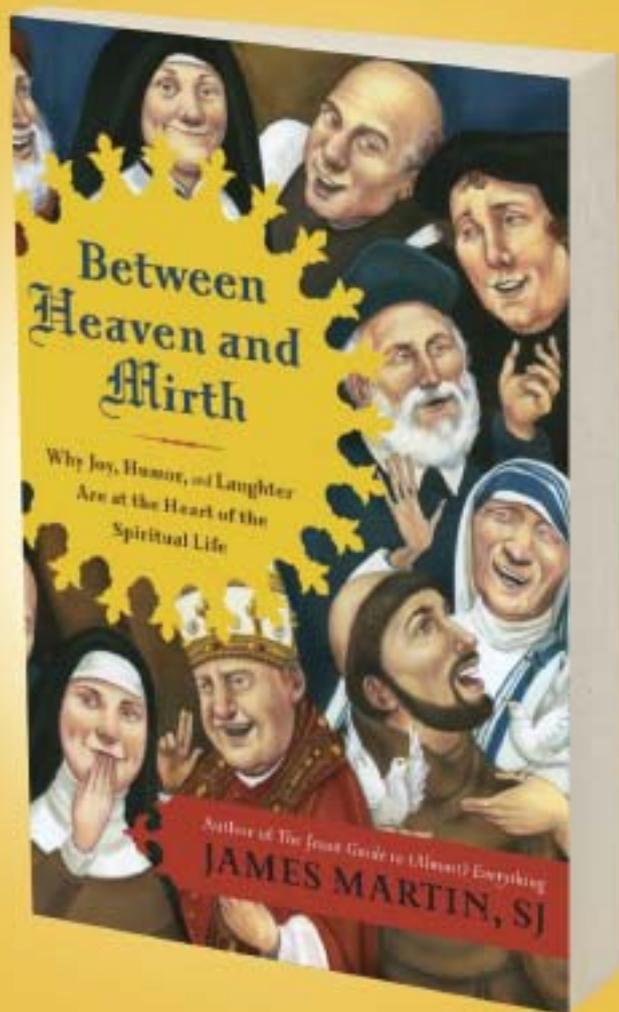
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