America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

OCT. 29, 2012 $3.50

A Historic Race

FINAL QUESTIONS FOR THE CATHOLIC CANDIDATES

More Election Coverage

JAMES L. OBERSTAR

RICHARD RYSCAVAGE

ROBERT M. VEATCH

OF MANY THINGS

What could we possibly need to hear about the 2012 election that we haven't heard already? Most of us are already in full flight from the verbal tsunami rushing the shores of our various, ever-present screens. And yet, one of the paradoxical features of the information age is that voters have rather little information about what is most important and very little detailed information even about what isn't. The candidates' own ads and stump speeches are designed to conceal just as much as they disclose; the masters of modern political "messaging" give pride of place to consistency (read: predictable; see also: boring). Neither is the secular media much help. The blathering cauldron of cable news stews and shrinks our brains into partisan bite-sized pieces, only to serve them up on a platter for advertisers. It's too much and yet too little.

All that is to say that it's understandable if you are asking yourself right now whether you really need to read anything more about U.S. politics. With apologies to your beleaguered attention span, we here at **America** think that you do and that your efforts will be rewarded in the present case. In this issue we have one question in mind: what important questions still need to be asked? Crazy as it seems, there are quite a few. First off, we decided to talk with the pair of Catholics running for vice president. We asked each of them the same five questions about faith and politics. We leave it to you to judge whether they answered the questions fully. One exegetical hint: the most interesting bits are between the lines.

Elsewhere in this issue, former Congressman James L. Oberstar talks about transportation, and Rick Ryscavage, S.J., looks at immigration policy. Robert Veatch, a Protestant and a professor at Georgetown University, looks at Obamacare from an interesting angle, suggesting ways in which we might avoid some of that law's ethical pitfalls. Lastly, Meghan J. Clark examines the causal connection between economic disparities and the quality of public health, and Edward Michael Gomeau looks at how the Occupy movement is asking some really big questions about the future of democracy and capitalism.

Pretty good stuff. The last two pieces, Clark's and Gomeau's, are especially close to my heart because they are reminders that the "dreary choice" between the Republican and Democratic parties, as this week's editorial puts it, is not the sum total of Christian political witness. Indeed, Catholic voters face a tough choice on Election Day. In a way, however, the political choices of faithful citizens should never be easy. Catholic social teaching is not the Democratic Party platform minus abortion rights. Nor is it the Republican Party platform plus economic justice. In fact, the moral and best parts of both platforms put together would not add up to Catholic social teaching. Why? Because Catholic social teaching transcends the shopworn categories of left, right and center.

Catholic teaching is far more radical than our secular politics, precisely because it is rooted in the Gospel, which is itself a call to radical discipleship and solidarity. It is safe to say that if, after an encounter with the Gospel, we find our ideological or partisan worldviews affirmed, then we have probably missed the point. We would also be one step closer to imagining the church in terms clumsily imported from our secular politics, categories that are foreign to the church's intrinsic identity.

That is always dangerous. The church of Jesus Christ is not a *polis*; it is a sacrament. We are not the body politic; we are the body of Christ. Perhaps that is the most important thing to remember come November, the most helpful thing we can say to one another. I hesitate to suggest that what we need is more words; still, the right words are always welcome.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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Cover: Representative Paul D. Ryan (left) speaking in Tampa, Fla., on Aug. 29, 2012; Vice President Joseph R. Biden (right) speaking in Charlotte, N.C., on Sept. 6, 2012. Reuters/Mike Segar (L)/Jason Reed (R)

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Joel K. Goldstein discusses the history of the **vice presidency** on our podcast, and Archbishop Rino Fisichella, right, writes on the **new evangelization**. Plus, web videos from **Catholic News Service**. All at americamagazine.org.

The Lady Compromises

When Daw Aung San Suu Kyi visited Washington, D.C., last month, she was given a hero's welcome. Rare is the individual who wins praise from both John McCain and Hillary Clinton, but a leader like Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi only comes along once or twice in a generation. Like Nelson Mandela, she spent more than a decade in detention, and her release marked the beginning of a new chapter for her home country. Like Vaclav Havel, she has the opportunity to help guide her country through a crucial period, as Burma emerges from a military dictatorship and begins the journey to democracy.

So far she has proved to be adept at the difficult work of peacemaking. As the leader of the opposition party in Parliament, she has shown willingness to work with the military, her former captors. Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi must be practical: the military still holds a quarter of the seats in the legislature. She knows that to help her country, still reeling from years of international sanctions, she must be willing to work with those in the opposing party. "We must learn to compromise without regarding it as humiliation," she said.

Much has been written about the deep ideological divisions in the United States. Yet those divisions need not hamper the work of government. Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi may be an international icon, idolized by Bono, among others, but she is not above the messy business of negotiation. "You can't be driven by ideology or romanticism," she said. Whether the democratic movement in Burma succeeds will depend largely on whether her fellow citizens share her pragmatism.

Two Go Marching In

"How many American saints are there?" is a tricky question. The answer depends on what *American* means. American-born? American citizen? A person who worked in the United States? Or who worked in the United States before there was a United States? Tricky or not, most lists would include: Isaac Jogues, René Goupil and Jean de la Lande, French Jesuits martyred in New York; Frances Xavier Cabrini, the Italian missionary to immigrants; Elizabeth Ann Seton, the American-born foundress of the Sisters of Charity; John Neumann, a Bohemian immigrant and bishop of Philadelphia; Rose Philippine Duchesne, a French missionary to Native Americans; Katharine Drexel, the Philadelphia heiress-turned-foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament; Mother Théodore Guérin, the French-born foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods; and Damien de Veuster, the Dutch apostle to people suffering from Hansen's disease on Molokai, Hawaii—again, not part of the United States at the time.

To this tricky but inspirational list can now be added Marianne Cope, a Sister of St. Francis who worked with St. Damien and assumed his responsibilities after he fell ill. Marianne will be canonized on Oct. 21 along with Kateri Tekakwitha, a 17th-century Mohawk woman who converted to Catholicism and died at age 24. Among American Catholics Kateri's canonization is especially welcome news for Jesuits and their colleagues. The new saint was welcomed into the faith by Jesuit missionaries in upstate New York. Early on, her canonization was also assisted by John Wynne, S.J., her vice postulator. Father Wynne worked tirelessly on Kateri's behalf, writing not only a biography but also scores of letters as part of the investigations in the early part of the 20th century, after he set aside his other labors—as the first editor of **America**.

Pay to Pray?

Last year 126,488 German Catholics chose to remove their names from a national registry recognizing their membership in the church. Individuals included in this registry pay a so-called church tax equal to approximately 8 percent of their income tax. The moneys collected are passed on by the government to designated religious groups. This arrangement brings in approximately $6 billion a year to the Catholic Church in Germany, much of which goes to church-sponsored international humanitarian aid programs. The German Bishops Conference, during its meeting in late September, announced that German Catholics who withdraw from the registry and do not pay the tax will not be allowed to participate in the sacramental life of the church.

While some Catholics may decline to pay the tax as a way of officially declaring their separation from the church, others may do it for financial reasons alone. Pastors are to contact those who have removed their names to explore their reasons for that step and explain its conseqences. This will present an opportunity for pastoral dialogue; it may also be perceived as an attempt to press Catholics to pay the tax. While Rome has approved the bishops' actions, the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts explicitly stated in 2006 that a "formal act of defection must have more than a juridical-administrative character (the removal of one's name from a Church membership registry maintained by the government in order to produce certain civil consequences)." The church in Germany must proceed with caution as well as charity.

EDITORIAL

Electoral Responsibility

How will the United States change after Nov. 6? The political rhetoric has verged on apocalyptic. Yet while the outcome of the U.S. presidential election will have far-reaching consequences, especially for those who live at the margins of American society, candidates and voters alike should recall the words of the Psalmist: "Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save" (Ps. 146:3). That caution is especially poignant for many Catholic voters, who are once again caught between their desire to participate in civic life and the sad fact that both presidential candidates have taken positions that are incompatible with the moral law. That the candidates' moral miscalculations extend even to the gravest questions of life and death only further vexes the Catholic conscience.

Some Catholic voters are tempted to give up, to sit out this election cycle; to choose, in effect, by not choosing. Yet this course is also problematic; the U.S. bishops' declaration "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" reminds us that faithful citizenship is itself a moral duty. At the same time, the U.S. bishops are keenly aware of the Catholic conundrum: while there is a discernible hierarchy of moral concerns, no one party, one candidate or one issue is dispositive. The complexities and limitations of modern American politics necessarily mean that our individual political choices require a prudential moral calculus. They are a matter of conscience. The U.S. bishops, however, also caution "against misguided appeals to 'conscience' to ignore fundamental moral claims, to reduce Catholic moral concerns to one or two matters, or to justify choices simply to advance partisan, ideological, or personal interests."

Unfortunately, the campaign debate thus far has been shaped almost entirely by partisan and ideological voices that find an all too-eager ear in the electorate. The Catholic voter, therefore, asks not simply whether it is morally troublesome to vote for this or that candidate, but how it is possible to contribute to the public discourse with reason and charity. In a nation as vast and complex as the United States, no general course of action can be prescribed; here, a difficult judgement of conscience is also required.

Yet one straightforward and immediate way for Catholic voters to make a meaningful contribution to the public discourse would be to draw the larger public's attention to issues that, while central to Catholic social thought, have been neglected by the candidates and the secular media. While several issues familiar to Catholic voters, including the economy and the middle class, same-sex marriage, the legal status of abortion on demand and the ethical implications of Obamacare, have received consistent attention this campaign season, two especially pressing concerns have not been addressed: poverty and defense spending.

The important but narrow focus on the economic well-being of the middle class obscures the fact that 46.2 million Americans live below the official poverty line ($22,314 for a family of four), the highest number in more than 50 years. Over 20 million Americans, 6.7 percent of the population, have fallen into deep poverty, earning less than $11,000 a year. Many of these are without any shelter. The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, for example, reports that 67,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, and that 1.5 million other veterans "are considered at risk of homelessness." The fact that so many of our fellow citizens live in abject poverty, sleeping curled up in doorways or under bridges, is a national crisis; the fact that the country is not even talking about the problem is a national shame.

Americans must ask also whether it is just to spend six times more than any other world power on national defense during this time of increasing social hardship. Should the nation's political leaders fight over trifling savings from cuts to the Public Broadcasting System while the well-armed elephant in the deficit debate remains undisturbed? Neither of the presidential candidates has proposed substantial reductions in defense appropriations; such cuts are politically unpopular, even viewed by some as unpatriotic. Yet apart from the moral question, Americans must also ask whether it is even rational to build the world's most technologically advanced military when most of the contemporary global threats are represented by teenagers shouldering AK-47s. "A nation," wrote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."

Conscientious Catholic voters in 2012 must once again navigate the tricky waters of contemporary American politics, avoiding the twin shoals of moral hazard and neo-sectarianism. Along with tens of millions of their fellow citizens, Catholic voters will make their choice on the first Tuesday in November. For many of them, however, it is a dreary choice. Will America change on Nov. 6th? Yes, it will; but not nearly enough.

ARAB SPRING

World Watches As Syria Suffers

As the suffering of ordinary Syrians and the slow destruction of Aleppo, Damascus and other communities rich in religious expression and historic and cultural value continues, why can the United States and the world community not do more to end Syria's civil war? George Lopez, a professor at the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, says the United States and United Nations have few good options for a speedy resolution to the crisis.

The Obama administration has been criticized for resisting the equipping of the Syrian opposition with what they need to neutralize the Syrian army's advantages in aircraft and heavy weapons. Some argue that this policy will only delay the inevitable fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime and will prolong a grinding struggle that is taking thousands of lives. Lopez points out, however, that "once you arm the Syrians on the ground, you unleash forces that you can't control." He adds that the administration is not worried just about the possible flow of sophisticated weapons to Al Qaeda elements working alongside the native opposition groups, but also about a redline drawn months ago by the regime: that it would resort to chemical weapons if outsiders intervened to arm the resistance. That outcome could escalate the civilian toll far beyond its current measure.

Lopez does not expect much to change on the ground in Syria until after the elections in the United States on Nov. 6. Right now, he says, the Obama administration faces a complex situation—will Turkey, a NATO member, draw that alliance into the struggle? Will the Kurdish minority see the chaos as an opportunity to strike for statehood?—and few easy choices. And whatever moves it does make are subject to acute scrutiny dur-

VATICAN II

Pope Recalls Spirit of Renewal, Stresses Return to Text

Marking the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the start of a special Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI called on Catholics to revive the "authentic spirit" of Vatican II by re-proposing the church's ancient teachings to an increasingly Godless modern world.

The pope spoke at a special Mass in St. Peter's Square on Oct. 11, half a century to the day after the opening ceremonies of Vatican II, before 400 bishops from around the world, including 15 of the 70 surviving members of the 1962-65 council. The Orthodox ecumenical patriarch, Bartholomew of Constantinople, and Archbishop Rowan Williams of Canterbury attended as special guests.

Vatican II, Pope Benedict said, had been "animated by a desire...to immerse itself anew in the Christian mystery so as to re-propose it fruitfully to contemporary man." He noted that Blessed John XXIII, in his speech at the opening of the council, called for both the safeguarding and the effective teaching of the "sacred deposit of Christian doctrine...this certain and immutable doctrine, which is to be faithfully respected, [and] needs to be explored and presented in a way which responds to the needs our time."

Pope Benedict's homily celebrated Vatican II but deplored much of what followed in its wake. Many Catholics misunderstood or ignored the council's teachings under the influence of secular culture, he said, and "embraced uncritically the dominant mentality, placing in doubt the very foundations of the deposit of faith, which they sadly no longer felt able to accept as truths.... Recent decades have seen the advance of a spiritual 'desertification.'"

Calling for a revival in the church of

Members of the Free Syrian Army patrol in Aleppo.

ing the election season.

Lopez thinks that means the status quo of stalemate and suffering will continue. His says the United States may be ready to undertake several meaningful initiatives to end the crisis once bipartisan resolve can rematerialize in Washington. Lopez thinks humanitarian aid could be delivered and sanctions stepped up against the al-Assad regime, and perhaps a liberated zone could be established to deliver aid and extract refugees safely. He expects that the Obama administration will make further efforts to coordinate these multilateral moves through the United Nations but that a Russian veto on the Security Council is almost a certainty.

That prospect, he suspects, may be behind the intelligence sharing with Turkey that led to the forced landing of a Syrian passenger jet and the discovery of Russian radar equipment on Oct. 10. While technically not illegal, since Russia has repeatedly squashed tough sanctions against Assad, a U.S. spokesperson called Russia's attempt to re-equip the regime "morally bankrupt." A clear demonstration of Russian involvement with the Assad regime and its unwillingness to allow the United Nations to use its authority to intervene could allow the United States and its European allies to work around the United Nations. They could begin their own efforts on behalf of the Syrian opposition, according to Lopez. He cites the Clinton administration's decision to commit U.S. air power to the intervention in Kosovo when it was clear that Russian intransigence was crippling a U.N. response.

"They will eventually just go around the Security Council," he said. "They will want to go back one more time and get a visible 'no' from the Russians, so [the United States] can say, 'Just as in Kosovo, you gave us no choice.'" Lopez said U.S. diplomats will also press the opposition to come up with a viable, comprehensive plan for a post-Assad Syria that will include protection of minority religious and ethnic rights. Meanwhile the fighting and dying will continue. "Sometimes civil wars just have to play themselves out," Lopez said.

—KEVIN CLARKE

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the "yearning to announce Christ again to contemporary man," the pope stressed that any new evangelization "needs to be built on a concrete and precise basis, and this basis is the documents of the Second Vatican Council."

He reaffirmed past statements rejecting expansive notions of a "spirit of Vatican II" that might be used to justify innovations diverging from traditional doctrine. "I have often insisted on the need to return, as it were, to the 'letter' of the council—that is to its texts—also to draw from them its authentic spirit," the pope said. "The true legacy of the council is to be found in them."

During a private audience the next day, Pope Benedict fondly recalled the council, saying it was a time that was "so vivacious, rich and fruitful." He praised Blessed John XXIII's usage of the term "aggiornamento" or "renewal" for the church, even though, he said, it is still a topic of heated and endless debate.

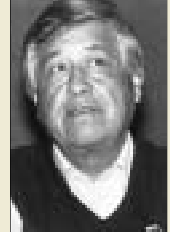
"But I am convinced that the insight Blessed John XXIII epitomized with this word was and still is accurate," he said. "Christianity must never be seen as something from the past, nor lived with one's gaze always looking back because Jesus is yesterday, today and for all eternity," Pope Benedict said. "This 'renewal' does not mean a break with tradition; rather it expresses a lasting vitality."

A candlelight vigil in St. Peter's Square marks the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

Fear Takes Hold in Mali

Radical Islamists who seized northern Mali earlier this year are maintaining their hold through fear and imposing an extremist version of Shariah law, U.N. Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Simonovic said on Oct. 10. Among the human rights abuses committed by the Islamists, he cited "very drastic punishments," the recruitment of child soldiers and forced marriages that are a smoke-screen for forced prostitution. "They have tremendous resources to buy loyalty because they are now having kick-backs from narco-traffickers in the region," Simonovic said at U.N. Headquarters in New York. Mali is a transit corridor for cocaine and other drugs from South America to Europe. Fighting between government forces and Tuareg rebels broke out in January. The renewed clashes, drought and political instability in the wake of a military coup d'état in March have led over 250,000 Malians to flee to neighboring countries, with 174,000 Malians internally displaced.

NEWS BRIEFS


Cesar Chavez

Bishop **Marco Antonio Ordenes Fernandez**, 48, of Chile resigned on Oct. 9 as a Vatican investigation into his alleged sexual abuse of a minor continued. ✦ The **Meaningful Chocolate Company,** a fair trade enterprise in Great Britain, was forced to redesign its seasonal packaging after being advised that legally "Advent purple belongs to Cadbury," a candy giant. The position was unwelcome to the Anglican Bishop Stephen Cotterell, who noted that the color purple "was around" before Cadbury and "perish the thought—after they have gone, it will still be here." ✦ President Barack Obama on Oct. 8 proclaimed the **Cesar Chavez National Monument** on 120 acres around the United Farm Workers headquarters in Keene, Calif. ✦ The Archdiocese of Atlanta, the Diocese of Savannah and other Catholic entities in Georgia filed a federal lawsuit on Oct. 5 challenging the Health and Human Services' **contraceptive mandate**. ✦ The United Nations on Oct. 11 marked the first **"International Day of the Girl Child"** by calling for an end to child marriage. ✦ The bishops of the European Union called the awarding of a Nobel prize to **John B. Gurdon** and **Shinya Yamanaka** an "important milestone" in recognizing the superior potential of adult stem-cell research over experimentation on embryonic stem cells.

'Nones' Gain Most

People unaffiliated with any religion constitute nearly 20 percent of the American public, making them almost as numerous as Catholics, who accounted for 22 percent of the participants in a recent Pew Research Center study. The survey, released on Oct. 9, found that people who say they are atheist, agnostic or "nothing in particular" grew by almost 5 percentage points since 2007, from 15.3 percent of the population to 19.6 percent. The greatest shift toward "nothing in particular" apparently came from Protestants, who now make up 48 percent of the population, compared to 53 percent in 2007. "These are not necessarily nonbelievers," said Greg Smith, senior researcher for the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. "They're just not associated with any faith in particular." The unaffiliated tend to be younger than the general public, the survey showed, with 35 percent between ages 18 and 29.

'Parsley Massacre' Remembered

"Tonight we are breaking the silence," said Regino Martínez, the Jesuit priest who is head of Solidaridad Fronteriza, a human rights and immigration organization in the Dominican Republic. "Tonight, we lose the fear." On Oct. 4 he led a candlelight procession to the aptly named Massacre River on the border with Haiti in a commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Parsley Massacre. During a five day period in early October 1937, Dominican soldiers slaughtered thousands of Haitians, many of them born in the Dominican Republic, under orders from the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo. Between 9,000 and 30,000 people died in the violence, a slaughter now largely forgotten. Haitians call it *kout kouto-a*, "the stabbing. "Dominicans refer to it as *el corte*, "the cutting." It earned the nickname Parsley Massacre because some soldiers are said to have carried parsley sprigs. When they showed the parsley, victims were told to say the word. If people could not pronounce it in the Spanish way, they were killed.

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Just a Few M

The 2012 election marks the first time in history that both vice presidential candidates are Catholic. In an effort to learn more about the candidates' thoughts on matters of faith and public life, we and asked each man to answer the same five questions. Their answers, sent by e-mail, are printed below, edited only for punctuation and house style.

America: In what circumstances is war morally justifiable?

Congressman Ryan: American foreign policy needs moral clarity and firmness of purpose. Only by the confident exercise of American influence are evil and violence overcome. That is how we keep problems abroad from becoming crises. That is what keeps the peace.

Mitt Romney has said that he would only send troops into combat in very specific circumstances. Number one, there needs to be a vital American interest at stake. Number two, there needs to be a clear definition of our mission. Number three, a clear definition of how we'll know when our mission is complete. Number four, providing overwhelming resources to make sure that we can carry out that mission effectively. And finally, a clear understanding of what will be left after we leave. All of those would have to be in place before Mitt Romney would deploy American military might in any foreign place.

AM: Political ideologies carry assumptions about what is best for "the poor." Describe a personal experience with people who live in poverty and how this helped shape your political ideology.

PDR: I volunteered at soup kitchens when I was younger. Today, I take my own kids to help serve meals at a Catholic nursing home in Janesville. A lesson I share with my children is that to begin to understand the human suffering involved, it is important to look at those you serve in the eye. We must recognize the dignity of every one of God's children.

Policymakers have a responsibility to tackle the root drivers of poverty, not merely treat the symptoms of this tragic reality. My Catholic faith champions a preferential option for the poor. This does not translate into a preferential option for bigger government.

A Romney-Ryan administration will advance solutions that maximize growth and opportunity, upward mobility and economic security. We reject a failed approach of an ever-expansive federal government which displaces the institutions of meaning—families, civic organizations and faith communities—where we truly do look out for one another. Yes, a government safety net is needed to help those who have no other means of support. But I believe the church's command requires more rigorous action than support alone—it calls for action to break the entire cycle of poverty, and this requires a fundamentally different approach than the one taken by President Obama,

PAUL D. RYAN (Republican)

BORN: Jan. 29, 1970, Janesville, Wis.

SCHOOL: Miami University of Ohio, B.A. 1992

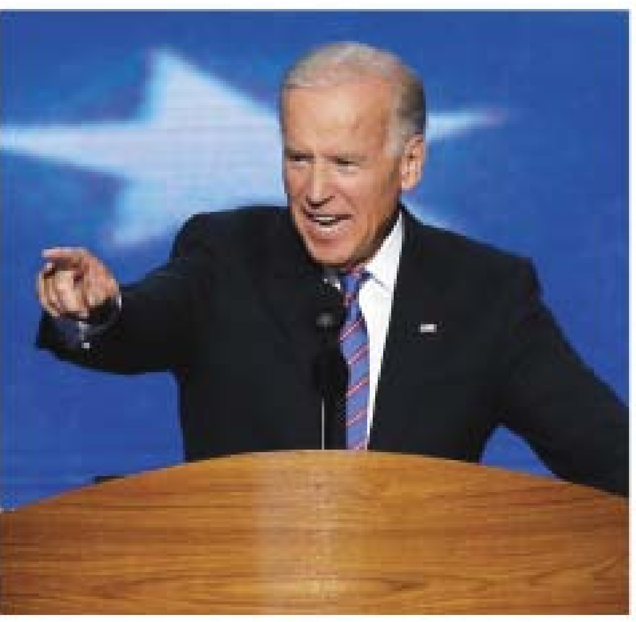
CAREER: U.S. House of Representatives (1999–)

PERSONAL: Married (Janna); 3 children.

HOME PARISH: St. John Vianney, Janesville, Wis.

ore Questions

America talks with the Catholic Candidates



JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR. (Democrat)

BORN: Nov. 20, 1942, Scranton, Pa.

SCHOOL: University of Delaware, B.A.1965; Syracuse University, J.D. 1968.

CAREER: Vice President of the United States (2009–); U.S. Senate (1973–2009).

PERSONAL: Married (Jill); 3 children, 1 deceased. Widower (Neila).

HOME PARISH: St. Joseph on the Brandywine, Greenville, Del.

America: In what circumstances is war morally justifiable?
Vice President Biden: War is morally justified when it is necessary to protect the safety of innocents from an aggressive act. The threat must be grave and certain. Every effort must be made to peacefully avoid conflict.

AM: Political ideologies carry assumptions about what is best for "the poor." Describe a personal experience with people who live in poverty and how this helped shape your political ideology.
JRB: First, I would say not all political ideologies carry the assumption of what's best for the poor. But in my view, any legitimate political ideology must consider this fundamental question.

My experience with people who live in poverty spans the globe, from Darfur and Chad to India, to Latin America. But most profoundly, I have witnessed poverty here at home, whether it's in parts of Appalachia that I have visited or in my home state of Delaware.

When I was a kid, my dad would never walk by a beggar on the street, even if someone said to him, "You know Joe, all he's going to do is go buy liquor." My dad would say, "Do you think if he had a real choice, he'd be standing here?"

In understanding how to alleviate poverty, I start with the assumption that given a legitimate opportunity, people will strive to take responsibility for their own lives. Given the chance, and the mental capacity, people will respond to incentives. That's why I was able to support the welfare-to-work legislation when I was a senator. That's why I have supported nutrition and health care programs for children. A mother may choose not to take responsibility, but her young son or daughter has no such capacity. The president and I support an African food security initiative that is aimed not only at alleviating hunger, but also at bringing stability to African nations. These are all our children. They are the kite strings that lift our national ambitions aloft.

AM: If you had five minutes with the pope, what would you say to him?
JRB: I had the great honor last year of visiting with Pope Benedict at the Vatican, and we had a wide-ranging discussion on many matters. It would be inappropriate of me to discuss that private conversation. But I was impressed by his openness and insights. If we had a chance

whose economic record has resulted in the highest poverty rate in a generation.

AM: If you had five minutes with the pope, what would you say to him?
PDR: I would humbly ask him for his prayers for the well-being of the people of our nation without exception.

AM: Do you think there is such a thing as a political vocation? How is it expressed in your life?
PDR: My first vocation is to be a good husband and father. One of the requests that I made when I joined the campaign is that I come home to Janesville, Wis,. on Sundays to go to Mass with my family. I'm home most Sundays, and when I'm on the road, I'm always able to find a church service to attend.

The church holds that all Catholics have an obligation to be active citizens, but there is also a political vocation for some who are so called. I believe public servants are called to help create economic opportunity and the conditions for a wholesome and strong family life. I believe in the power of helping individuals, living in solidarity with each other in our communities. I also believe that government which is closest to the governed governs best. We don't believe in what Blessed Pope John Paul II called a social assistance state, or an all-encompassing welfare state, which has been criticized by Pope Benedict XVI. We think the traditional family is the nucleus of our society, and that the individual dignity of the human person should be expressed in a free economy.

America's political representatives have a moral and constitutional duty to protect the First Amendment right to religious liberty. We are very concerned about the assault on religious liberty from the Obama administration. We should not require churches, charities and hospitals to do things that violate their religious freedom and their conscience. Our government has now put our churches and colleges in a position where they must sue our government to protect their First Amendment right to religious freedom.

AM: What in your life as a U.S. politician has caused the greatest conflict for you as a Catholic? How have you resolved that conflict?
PDR: Frankly, I have never had a serious conflict of conscience as a Catholic in politics. The reason for this is that I have come to recognize that my obligations as a Catholic are in agreement with my political obligations under our Constitution. It can sometimes be frustrating when certain policies or laws are inconsistent with moral truth as well as I can understand it. But the greatest reason America remains an exceptional country is that we the people still govern ourselves in freedom—which means that policies in conflict with our moral principles can be changed through the election process, as we are about to witness once again on Nov. 6.

to meet again, I'd like to hear more about his recent trip to Lebanon, his thoughts about the Arab Spring and his concerns about religious intolerance. In addition to matters of war and peace, I'd like the chance to discuss some of the issues confronting our church around the world and in America.

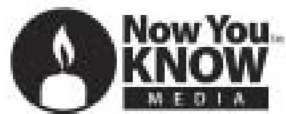
AM: Do you think there's such a thing as a political vocation? How is it expressed in your life?
JRB: I think there are different types of vocations. Like many Catholic boys, when I was young, I contemplated entering religious life. I was raised in a household where there was absolute convergence between the values my parents taught me and the values my faith taught me. Those values concluded that you do have an obligation to reach out to your brothers and your sisters in need, that you have an obligation to stand up when you see injustice and that you have an obligation to speak out when you think you can make things better. My political awareness as a high school student and young college student was shaped by the presidency of John F. Kennedy and the civil rights movement of Martin Luther King. President Kennedy made me believe that being engaged in politics is a noble profession, and Dr. King made me realize that it was a means to change the world for the better.

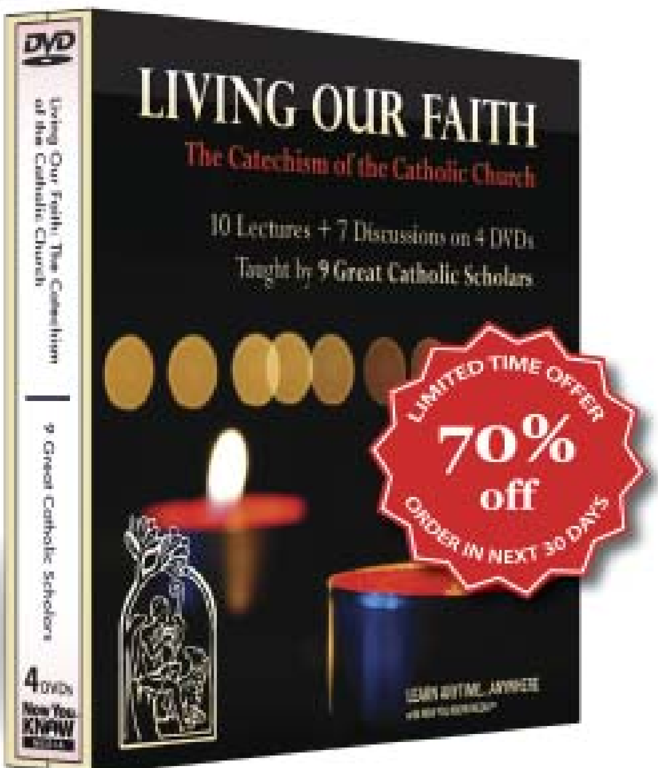
But it can take many forms, as it has in my family. My wife is a dedicated educator. My daughter is a social worker. One of my sons is deeply engaged in dealing with poverty and hunger worldwide as chairman of World Food Program USA. My other son is absolutely committed to ending the abuse against women and children as attorney general of his state of Delaware. There are many ways to be engaged. But as I was taught in my family, you must be engaged.

ON THE WEB
Vice presidential scholar Joel K. Goldstein analyzes the Ryan-Biden debate.
americamagazine.org/podcast

AM: What in your life as a U.S. politician has caused the greatest conflict for you as a Catholic? How have you resolved that conflict?
JRB : In my life, raised by a devout Irish Catholic mother, schooled by nuns and priests, and practicing my faith all these years, my faith has not caused me conflict, but has given me grounding.

It has informed my politics in a way that nothing else has. Catholic social doctrine has been the principle that has guided the votes and positions I have taken throughout my career, on issues from anti-poverty programs to violence against women, to the criminal justice system, to international relations.





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Voting Matters II

More issues to consider before election day

In order to help readers make informed choices in November, we composed a short list of often neglected issues we think are important and asked experts to focus briefly on one of them. What follows is the second installment in a series.

The Editors

Toward 21st-Century Transportation

BY JAMES L. OBERSTAR

Our nation has a rich history of visionary leaders with a strong commitment to transportation infrastructure investments. Our forefathers knew that for a fledgling nation to prosper, trade and commerce had to thrive. The federal government invested in roads, locks, inland waterways, lighthouses and ports. These leaders got it right. Not only did our nation's economy expand; it grew into the world's strongest.

Today's intermodal transportation network is the backbone of our economic security and competitiveness, as well as our quality of life. It facilitates the movement of people and goods and links our communities to each other and the world. It is the foundation of America's economy.

Other nations have recognized the advantages of the U.S. transportation system. They do not share our complacency, however. They are investing in and expanding their transportation networks to compete with the United States in the global marketplace. But while global competitors make robust investments in infrastructure, the United States has failed to update its systems, much less accommodate future growth. That failure to invest has begun to undermine the prosperity the nation has long enjoyed.

The consequence of failure can be described in one stark statistic: The cost of congestion in our 100 major metropolitan centers exceeds $110 billion a year. Not only are we losing ground to international competitors; parents are stuck in traffic, wasting precious time that they could be spending with their children, and goods move more slowly at higher cost. There are achievable options. For example, a shift of just 10 percent among car commuters to mass transit would save 500 million barrels of oil a year and reduce congestion.

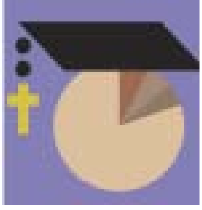
Many in Washington today ignore the lessons of our forefathers. They propose reducing public investment and scaling back federal leadership in transportation. They claim that devolving major aspects of transportation policy to the states and providing them greater flexibility will allow us to "do more with less." I think we all know that with less, you get less. This shortsighted, ideological approach fails the test of developing an economically competitive, nationally integrated transportation network. It also fails the quality of life expectations of our fellow citizens.

Renewing the nation's infrastructure is an enduring, job-creating investment in our future. It will nurture a competitive economy, restructure the rural and urban setting and enhance the common good of all Americans. Building a 21st-century transportation system will require bold vision, leadership and a zealous commitment to finding the resources necessary to make multi-billion dollar investments—an arduous challenge in today's contentious political and legislative environment. But the overarching goals of social and economic justice demand no less than putting America's transportation network first.

JAMES L. OBERSTAR, *a Democrat, was a member of Congress from Minnesota's Eighth District (1975-2011) and chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (2007-11).*

Open Doors to Immigrants

BY RICHARD RYSCAVAGE



In the first years of the American republic, the Catholic community consisted primarily of British immigrants anchored in Maryland where the first Catholic bishop and the first Catholic colleges took root. Catholicism strongly influenced the French and Spanish colonial territories, but on the northeast seaboard everyone assumed that Catholicism would find its niche as a minor religious group. At the founding of the republic there were only about 35,000 Catholics. Who could have predicted that by the time of the Civil War there would be three million?

By the middle of the 19th century, Catholics had become the largest single religious denomination in the United States, and by the century's end they had established 63 Catholic colleges and universities. Immigration propelled this astonishing growth. Most of the colleges established after 1840 coincided with the massive flows of immigration.

These Catholic educational institutions preserved the Catholic intellectual tradition in American higher education while preparing students for civic life in America. The descendents of these immigrants gradually entered the U.S. mainstream, as did the institutions themselves. Eventually much of Catholic higher education lost its special connection with immigrants.

Fast-forwarding to the 21st century, we find Catholics continue to make up the largest single religious denomination, and we find the United States facing another immense immigration influx. The number of foreign-born in the United States today almost equals the proportion around the beginning of the last century. Since the 1990s, one million people a year on average have been legally entering the country. As in the 19th century, most of these newcomers are Roman Catholics under the age of 35. But unlike the response in the 19th century, the recent response of many Catholic colleges and universities has been tepid.

The majority of new immigrants cannot afford to send their children to Catholic schools. Surprisingly, even when scholarships are available, the schools do little to reach out to the 40 different non-Hispanic Catholic ethnic groups establishing themselves in the country. Some schools in California, New York, Texas and Florida have large immigrant student populations, but this is usually not because of any strategic plan on the part of the church. The multicultural student body simply reflects the demographics of a globalizing region.

The Catholic Church has been much more welcoming to the new immigrants than Catholic colleges have been. The bishops are coming to terms with the fact that immigrants are redefining Catholicism in America. The church struggles with the dynamics of migration because the newer immigrants are bypassing the traditional gateway cities. More jobs, lower living costs, less crime and family-friendly communities are driving immigrants into the American South and rural Midwest, where Catholic pastoral services are weaker than in northeast or West Coast urban centers. Most big Catholic institutions of higher education remain outside this new immigration zone. The chances of an immigrant finding a local and affordable Catholic college are not good.

Can Catholic higher education reconnect with immigrants? There could be multiple pathways for such engagement if the universities put themselves at the service of the church through more interdisciplinary migration research and teaching, public education about immigration, dedicated scholarships and explorations of the rich Catholic theology and spirituality of migration.

The ultimate test for U.S. Catholic colleges and universities will lie with the immigrants themselves. If our schools reach out to the young newcomers and help the American people understand them, the new immigrants can give Catholic higher education renewed life for a new century.

RICHARD RYSCAVAGE, S.J., *is professor of sociology and international studies and founding director of the Center for Faith and Public Life at Fairfield University in Connecticut.*

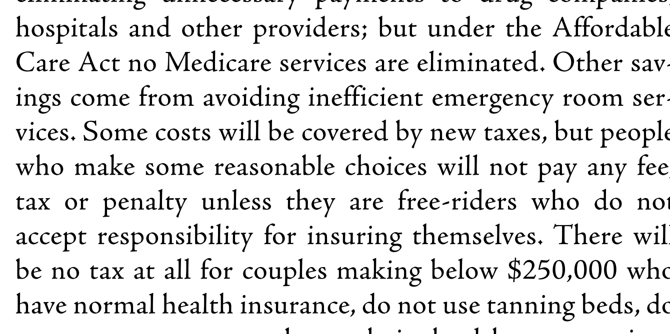
Beyond Moral Hazards in Health Care

BY ROBERT M. VEATCH

Now that the Affordable Care Act has been found constitutional, Americans will finally join the rest of the developed world in offering nearly universal health coverage. Caring for the sick is a fundamental obligation of a responsible society. It has taken the United States a long time to realize that the common good requires at least a decent minimum of health care for all. Speaking as a non-Catholic who takes Catholic moral teachings seriously, I do not see how anyone who shares this perspective can conclude otherwise.

Though he has promised to repeal Obamacare, even Mitt Romney acknowledges many virtues in health care reform (once derided, now embraced as "Obamacare")—guarantees for those with pre-existing conditions, insurance purchasing pools, ending discrimination against individual insurance purchase. Unfortunately, he does not realize that the only way to fund these innovations is to require everyone to share the costs.

To pay for them, some savings come from Medicare by eliminating unnecessary payments to drug companies, hospitals and other providers; but under the Affordable Care Act no Medicare services are eliminated. Other savings come from avoiding inefficient emergency room services. Some costs will be covered by new taxes, but people who make some reasonable choices will not pay any fee, tax or penalty unless they are free-riders who do not accept responsibility for insuring themselves. There will be no tax at all for couples making below $250,000 who have normal health insurance, do not use tanning beds, do not abuse their health care savings accounts and do not have flexible spending accounts over $2,500.



ON THE WEB
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Another feature should be of interest to those concerned about moral limits on services covered by insurance. Those who do not want their insurance dollars used for abortion, physician-assisted suicide or other ethically questionable services should be pleased that Obamacare does not envision a single, everyone-included health plan. Had we chosen either a public health service or a single list of required medical services, we would face an impossible dilemma. The package would either include services like abortion or it would not.

One of the essential features of insurance for pluralistic societies is what I call "multiple lists." People should be able to spend their health insurance dollars on plans covering the services they consider critical while excluding those they find offensive. Obamacare preserves multiple lists along with the freedom to pick among plans based on one's moral positions.

Unfortunately, however, most of us get insurance through employers, which means limited choices. Many employers will have to cover some services they (and some of their employees) consider unethical. A right to universal insurance with multiple lists and the freedom to buy coverage (with subsidies for the poor) outside our employment setting would be better. That avoids mandatory spending on objectionable services. It would free employers from offensive requirements.

With proper tax law adjustments and nondiscrimination against individual purchases, we could receive as pay what we and our employers now spend on insurance, pick insurance from a list of acceptable plans and take tax deductions on what we spend. Only this arrangement fulfills our duty to the community while preserving our freedom to obtain services we consider essential and avoiding contributions to those we find objectionable.

ROBERT M. VEATCH *is professor of medical ethics at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.*

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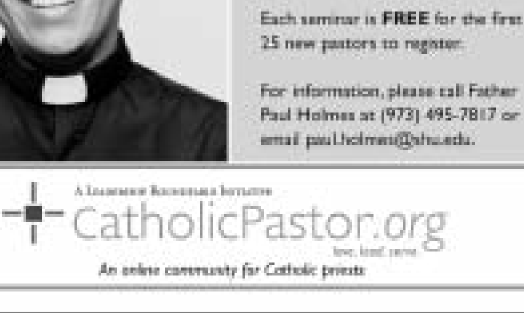

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Preference for Equality

How economic disparity threatens our health

BY MEGHAN J. CLARK

In one neighborhood on the East Side of Manhattan the average household income is $101,000. A few miles away, in a section of the South Bronx, it is $19,800. This troublesome income gap within New York City was highlighted in a statement on poverty issued by Cardinal Timothy Dolan and Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio on Sept. 27, the feast of St. Vincent de Paul. But religious leaders are not the only ones bringing this issue to the fore. The debate over inequality has also become a substantive issue in the 2012 presidential race, in which comments about fairness and social structures of opportunity are often met with accusations of inciting class warfare and envy.

What both sides often overlook, however, are the social and health costs of this growing inequality. In short, inequality is making Americans sick and contributing to premature death. According to public health research, more than 800,000 U.S. deaths can be linked to excessive economic inequality. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development found that in 2010 the United States spent 17.6 percent of its gross domestic product on health care ($8,233 per person), nearly double the 9.5 percent average in other developed countries. But the United States ranks 50th in life expectancy and 41st in infant mortality. Americans have a lower life expectancy than residents of South Korea and Bosnia.

New public health research is showing that the economic crisis and the health crisis are linked by far more than just the cost of health care. In 2007, one-third of U.S. deaths—883,914 total, or the equivalent of the population of San Francisco—were deemed "excess deaths." What are excess deaths? Experts in public health and epidemiology have developed tools to calculate how many people should be expected to die, on average, in a given location and time frame; anything above that number is considered a premature death. These tools are used not only for examining the effects of inequality but also in epidemics and natural disasters. According to the New York City Department of Health's primer on health disparities, individuals living in

MEGHAN J. CLARK *is an assistant professor of theology and religious studies at St. John's University, Queens, N.Y.*

A free health clinic in Los Angeles

PHOTO: LUCY NICHOLSON / REUTERS

the South Bronx are twice as likely to die before the age of 75 as those on the city's Upper East Side. The neighborhoods themselves are vastly different, and the health disparity between the residents is equally stark. Higher economic inequality translates into higher health disparities for almost everyone in society.

When we think of our health, we usually focus on two things: family history and individual choices. Imagine the questions asked of you on your most recent trip to the doctor: Do you have a family history of cancer? Have you ever smoked? But genetics and personal choices are not enough to explain the health disparities between the rich and the poor, and the reality of your health status is far more complicated. It is common knowledge that smoking increases the risk of lung cancer; but most of us also know at least one person with lung cancer who never touched a cigarette or a smoker who smoked for decades but never got cancer.

The economic crisis and the health crisis are linked by far more than just the cost of health care.

Health and well-being are also greatly affected by social determinants of health, like nutrition, education, safe housing, social inclusion or exclusion and poverty. Analyzing and separating the individual social determinants of health is often difficult because they are interrelated. The negative health effects of lack of proper nutrition or safe housing are rather obvious. It is easy to imagine that homelessness causes illness and early death. Economic inequality, however, is a social determinant of health that is difficult to picture but one that public health research is finding has a powerful effect on our individual and social health.

Imagine our society as a ladder. As inequality grows, the gap between the steps grows wider, making the ladder harder and harder to climb. The space between levels is the social or wealth gradient. Climbing up and down the ladder is social mobility. Public health research finds that with each step down the wealth gradient, individuals have a lower life expectancy and increased health concerns. This research, pioneered by Sir Michael Marmot, a professor of epidemiology and public health at University College London, demonstrates significant health differences at each level of the ladder. These differences kick in long before one reaches the poverty line in the United States, as well as in the United Kingdom, and remain when the data is adjusted for personal unhealthy behavior like smoking.

An excellent presentation of this research is the 2009 documentary film series "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?", which examines in detail the negative health effects of inequality on the health and well-being of Americans. The film follows employees of a hospital—including the chief executive officer, the manager of a laboratory, nurses and janitors—who are at a range of income levels. Where previous assumptions held that a chief executive officer is more likely to have a heart attack, because of a high level of stress and responsibility, the medical research showed that the janitor is more likely to have heart disease and a heart attack, even if he or she is not in poverty. This holds up and down the ladder of the hospital: A greater gap between the C.E.O. and the janitor correlated to a greater health outcome gap affecting every level of society.

The effects of inequality could also be seen when researchers compared health outcomes in states with higher and lower levels of equality. Americans living in states with greater equality live on average four years longer than in those with greater inequality. "Unnatural Causes" walks the viewer through Louisville, Ky., where the total gap in life expectancy between the richest and poorest ward is about 10 years. This research focuses specifically on other developed countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2010 data). The United States has a life expectancy of 78.7 years and an infant mortality of 6.1 per 1,000 births. Japan and Sweden are both developed countries with greater economic equality. Japan has a life expectancy of 83 and infant mortality of 2.3 out of 1,000 births. Similarly, Sweden's life expectancy is 81.5, with an infant mortality rate of 2.5 out of 1,000. Turkey and Mexico are the only Organization for Economic Co-operation countries with higher infant mortality in 2010 than the United States.

A Threat to the Common Good

How does inequality make us sicker? It contributes to a complex combination of chronic stress (and elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol), anxiety, housing disparities, poverty and social sins like racism. The intersection of these lead to concrete health effects as well as social division. In its pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All" (1986), the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops recognized that "extreme inequality is a threat to the solidarity of the human community, for great disparities lead to social divisions and conflict." Greater inequality can lead to greater narcissism among those higher on the ladder, a good example of which is the excessive pay and bonuses for Wall Street traders. The extent of fraud in the financial industry, which is becoming more and more apparent with the Libor scandal, exposes

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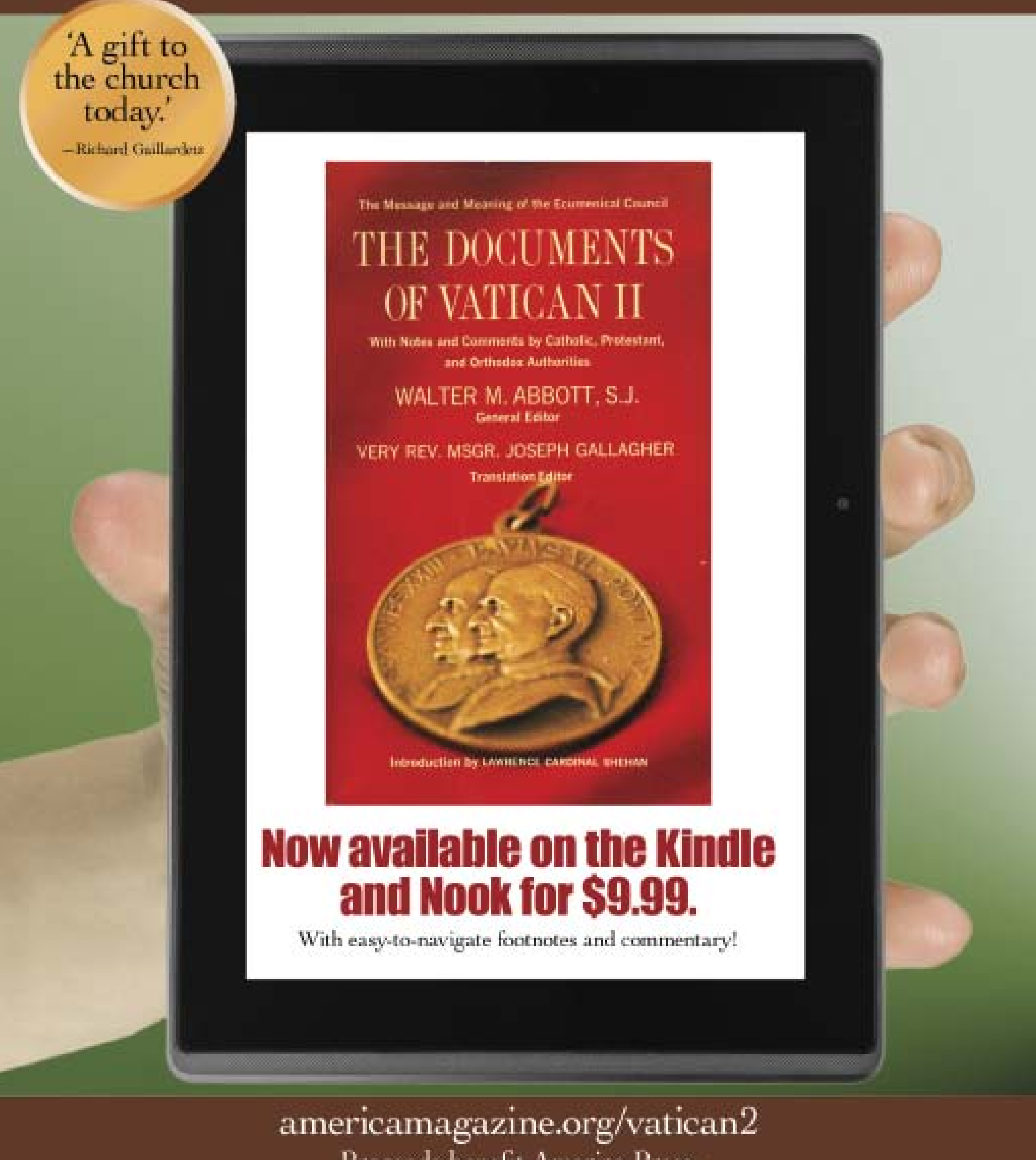

the deep levels of social division—one set of rules for the financial sector and another for everyone else.

In their groundbreaking book *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett provide an empirical argument connecting health factors like life expectancy, infant mortality and cancer rates to the weakening of community bonds. As the ladder becomes taller, the social anxiety and chronic stress experienced by people at virtually every point on the ladder rise.

Social anxiety to keep up with others or appear successful is overwhelming within American culture. Perhaps the clearest illustration of this is the strong social value placed on having the latest technology. The value associated with having the latest iPad or smart phone is not based on the item's usefulness but on the social status associated with the item. While the latest edition of technology will have new features, the desire or need for such upgrades is not always rooted in practicality. Too often we consider our value as human beings to be linked to economic status. As the ladder grows taller, the distance separating people grows greater and the likelihood of interacting with those significantly higher or lower than ourselves on the wealth gradient lessens. The resulting economic segregation erodes any broader community bonds. *The Spirit Level* concludes: "At its most fundamental level, what reducing inequality is about is shifting the balance from divisive, self-interested consumerism driven by status competition, towards integrated and affiliative society. Greater equality can help us develop the public ethos and commitment to working together which we need if we are to solve the problems which threaten us all."

According to Catholic social teaching, the gap between people—not only between rich and poor but also between those in the middle—is a significant moral issue. At the heart of "Economic Justice for All" is its robust definition of justice as participation: "Basic justice demands the establishment of minimum levels of participation in the life of the community for all persons." Participation is central to the public health studies that examine the clinical effects of marginalization upon individual and public health. Great disparities in income and wealth are directly related to disparities in power and participation—social, political and economic. In 2007 the top 1 percent of the population received 23.5 percent of the national income, a concentration matched only in 1928 on the eve of the Great Depression. Statistics like this have fueled the battle cries of the Occupy movement. Equality of opportunity and fairness are highly prized values within American culture. But in Catholic social teaching the focus is not only on fairness but on participation and power. This provides a helpful overarching lens through which to begin moral reflection on inequality.

A Presumption Against Inequality

Within the framework of Catholic social teaching, the question of inequality is often addressed tangentially in relation to poverty. The preferential option for the poor has provided a clear and narrow lens through which to view inequality, as evidenced by the criteria in "Economic Justice for All," which puts a priority on "meeting the basic needs of the poor and increasing [the] level of participation by all members of society in the economic life of the nation." Both human dignity and the common good require that as a society we meet the basic needs of all. In light of the global financial crisis, we have placed a renewed focus on the effects of inequality. In his encyclical "Charity in Truth" (2009), Pope Benedict XVI noted, "The dignity of the individual and the demands of justice require, particularly today, that economic choices do not cause disparities in wealth to increase in an excessive and morally unacceptable manner." We have therefore not only a presumption against extreme inequality but a preference for relative equality.

A preference for relative equality is not, as some critics might argue, an attempt to create an egalitarian, socialist society. Few would advocate the elimination of all differences in income or wealth. The goal is not equality of outcome but equality of opportunity, a priority in American culture. But there are distinct social conditions necessary in order to realize this. As the ladder becomes taller through rising inequality, social mobility and equality of opportunity decrease, because what is required to reach the next level grows. President John F. Kennedy said that "a rising tide lifts all boats," and it was believed that growing an economy addressed the basic needs of all. Research on health and inequality has demonstrated that, in today's society, this is no longer true.

Inequality can be addressed in two ways: We must achieve greater equality in compensation. As detailed in *The Spirit Level*, in 2007 the average salary of C.E.O.'s of the top 365 companies was 500 times that of the average worker. While examining the manufacturing industry, the filmmakers found that in the United States the ratio was 44:1, whereas in Japan it was 16:1; in Sweden 21:1; and in the United Kingdom it was 31:1. Sweden achieves greater equality by redistribution of wealth through taxes and benefits. Redistribution is treated as if it is a four-letter word by many in the United States, but from the perspective of public health, this option must also be examined as a way to achieve greater equality. But greater equality is not solely a matter of choosing big government or small government. In both there are ways to achieve good in society. The Occupy movement and the financial crisis have put inequality in the spotlight, and we must not let the issue fade away without taking steps to investigate options, acknowledge the public health concerns and work to find solutions. A

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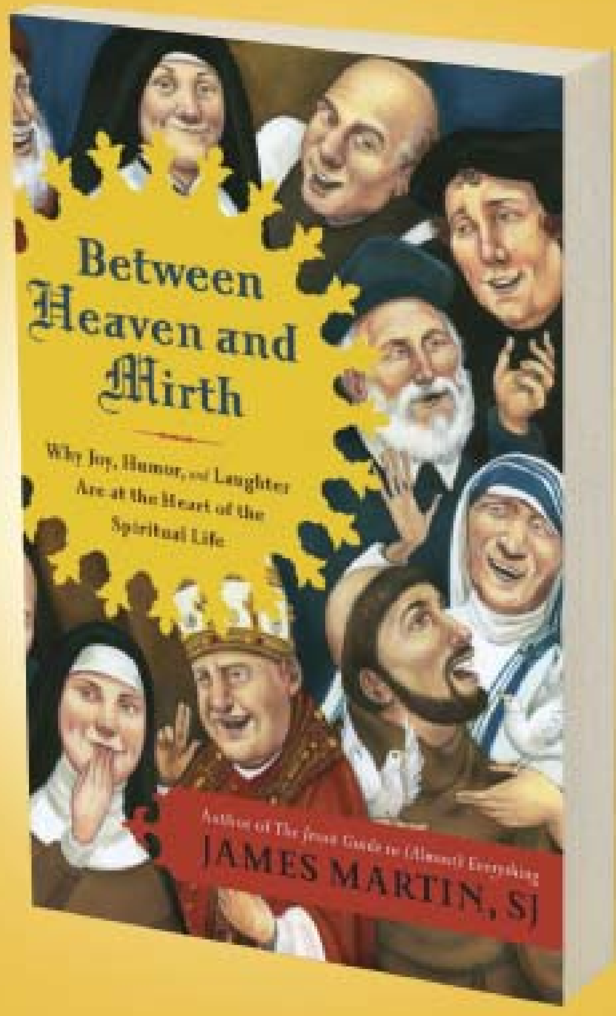

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IDEAS | EDWARD MICHAEL GOMEAU

STILL OCCUPIED

The Wall Street protests one year later

Last fall I visited Zuccotti Park numerous times between its initial occupation on Sept. 17 and when it was violently emptied in the middle of the night by New York City police officers on Nov. 15. After that event I resolved to return two days later to walk with Occupy Wall Street as the movement attempted to close down, or at least delay, the opening bell of the New York Stock Exchange. Outnumbered and overpowered by the police, the attempt failed, of course, and over 300 people were arrested. In the past year more than 7,600 arrests have occurred during Occupy-related events nationwide.

This past month I traveled from the Midwest for the one-year anniversary of the occupation of Zuccotti Park and a movement that despite many premature obituaries has continued to thrive. The movement, of course, is more than the sum of its direct actions or the reactions it induces in some. Occupy activists call attention to the economic alienation and deprivation in contemporary capitalism by creating communal spaces of solace and loudly exercising their voices against an unjust state of affairs. Visual records from the movement—young men and women in assemblies, each waiting their turn to speak, marching in streets with banners, chanting, engaging in civil disobedience and then (usually) being met with police violence—have reintroduced images of mass protest and solidarity to the public eye.

Alienation Today

Many young people today face "no future," a phrase used in the late 1970s in Great Britain and in the Autonomist movement in Italy to describe a life stamped with perpetual debt to the state or to banks, with little hope of ever escaping this economic and psychological stranglehold. A scarcity of jobs, accompanied by mailboxes loaded with bills totaling the principal and interest owed on debt, results in stress, apathy, disappointment and powerlessness.

In contemporary society people have become passive subjects at the hands of finance, the media, the state, the police

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/A KATZ

New York, N.Y., on Sept. 17, 2012

and by what the philosopher Michel Foucault called "biopower," meaning the entire apparatus of modernity in which our bodies are constantly scanned, surveilled and most importantly, managed for profit. The artisans of capital have created a false idol of the human person—that we are what we make, that we are our debts and that we are something to be managed. Biopower and the invisible hand of the market measure human worth solely on their own terms—whether we are in "the black" or "the red" in the game of monetary accumulation.

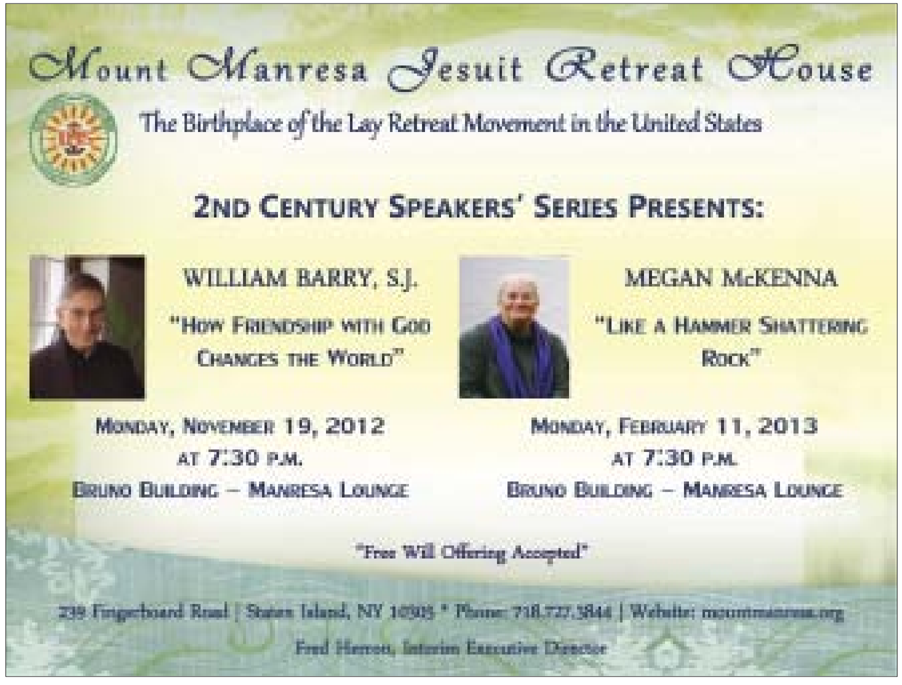
Throughout the anniversary weekend I noticed civilians passively observing Occupy activities. This seems consistent with the alienation alluded to above. We have, within technological modernity, become strangers to ourselves. On subways, buses and sidewalks, we push past one another, tuning out our world with smartphones, iPods, tablets, Kindles—any technological apparatus that can form a virtual barrier between us and the natural world. But this need for perceptual isolation is foreign to human nature. We are not here only to watch, as if life were simply unfolding in front of us as a spectacle, beyond our power to influence at any level other than the details of our everyday life. This phenomenon is part of what Occupy seeks to address.

Modeling Solidarity

Those who first gathered in lower Manhattan on Sept. 17, 2011, and have continued their efforts throughout the last year, want to create (the term *prefiguration* is used) a different model of living in which we are no longer treated as merely passive subjects to be acted upon by the nearly-invisible forces of financial capital. Those who resist this subjectification, those who insist that it is their world as much as the state's or a bank's, are met with apathy or outright opposition. Resistance may seem pointless; Margaret Thatcher often said there is no alternative.

But there is: solidarity. Within a religious or secular context, this involves formerly atomized individuals coming together to recognize each other as more than what dominant ideologies reduce us to. Occupy calls everyone to reclaim the possibility of communal experiences in which real human recognition—social relations which predate the rise of capital—becomes possible again. Religious institutions, working on behalf of those who are marginalized and often discarded entirely by capital, must summon those in politics, finance and policing to re-examine their conscience, their role in oppression, their participation in the misery biopower inflicts upon the weak and the poor, who often sit beside them in communities of faith.

Through the general assemblies,



the "spokes councils," the celebration of Rosh Hashana and the implicit trust and solidarity placed in total strangers, participants in the Occupy anniversary observance were reminded to re-appropriate their lives from those institutions seeking to reduce them solely to economic subjects. To conceive of life in a different fashion—to resist this subjectification, to be free of the "self" imposed upon us—is radical in the truest sense of the word. It is a re-examination of our roots. We need to reclaim what has been ceded by our willing or unwilling consent, by zip ties or even by our own chains.

Into the Unknown

In *After the Future*, the Italian philosopher Franco Berardi writes that he must act "as if" better things were to come. In the face of contemporary cynicism, apathy and despair, he explains he must continue to fight, even with no alternative in immediate sight. "I must resist," he writes, "simply because I cannot know what will happen after the future, and I must preserve the consciousness and sensibility of social solidarity, of human empathy, of gratuitous activity.... Just in case, right?... I must resist because this is the only way to be in peace with myself."

If we are to love others, we must first begin to love ourselves. The recent anniversary reminded us that our isolation, anomie and atomization—all created by the power of capital with our consent—need not be the future. As the media remain obsessed only with arrest numbers, the Occupy movement demonstrated once again the solidarity and love that long predate capitalism and have resurfaced both here and abroad. As the demonstrators' placards in Madrid and Lisbon read on Sept. 29, we can say no.

The first anniversary activities of Occupy left their mark on those members who were present in New York, and emphasized a key message of the movement: Get rid of oneself. This echoes what St. Paul wrote to the Colossians: "Take off the old self…and put on the new self" (3:9-10). We should adopt the type of life that Berardi envisions—one of empathy, free activity and fraternity. Refuse to be subjectified. To resist in this way—to take to the streets with the willingness to be opposed by police, passersby and family—is to stand as a witness against what we have falsely learned to value in our consumerist society. Most important, this witness acts as a sign of what may come. This will never please skeptics, critics or supporters of our ancien régime. It should, however, say something to those familiar with visitations and incarnations, and what those events prefigure. We are called to point to something infinitely more valuable than wealth, toward a life and a time that can come. Some might ask, "Why witness, why protest?" To echo Berardi: Just in case, right?

EDWARD MICHAEL GOMEAU *is a lecturer in philosophy at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wis.*

JAMES M. O'TOOLE

PATRIOTS AND PROPHETS

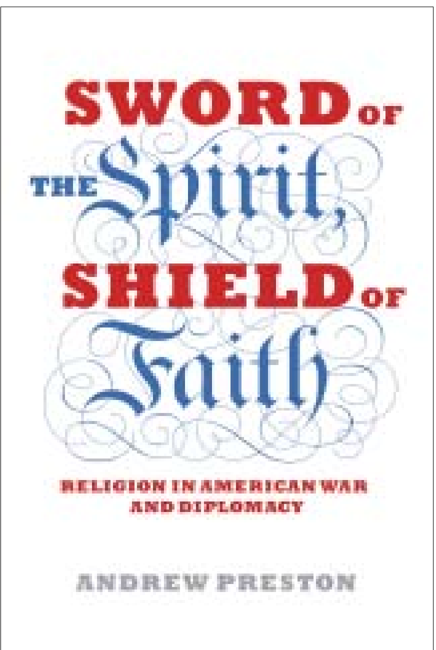
SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, SHIELD OF FAITH

Religion in American War And Diplomacy

By Andrew Preston
Knopf. 832p $37.50

For the most part, academic historians stay in the tight little boxes of their own specialties. They may teach broad survey courses, but the world they know best is usually a much smaller one. An expert on military maneuvers in the Civil War does not know nearly as much about, say, economic policy during the New Deal or the role of women in the civil rights movement. Scholars brave enough—and capable enough—to jump the fences of historical subdisciplines and to cover long sweeps of time are rare, and their work is thus all the more valuable.

Andrew Preston, a Canadian teaching at Cambridge University in England, is just that kind of scholar, combining two different fields: the history of religion and the history of the United State's foreign relations. The question, as he frames it at the outset of his book, is not whether religion affected the way America defined its role in the world, but how. The book is a staggering achieve-



ment, both in size (600 pages of text, another 150 of footnotes and bibliography) and in scope (from European "discovery" of North America to Barack Obama). More than likely, few but specialists will read every, or nearly every, word, but the richness of coverage will inform anyone seeking to understand how these two subjects

intertwined throughout our history.

A familiar cast of characters is here, leaders and policy makers who framed their actions in expressly religious terms: in the 20th century alone, figures like Woodrow Wilson, John Foster Dulles and Jimmy Carter; and in the 21st, George W. Bush. But there are also many less obvious touchstones for the interplay of faith and policy as the nation looked outward. George Washington, for instance, not the deist often described, was only conventionally religious. Still, his firm belief in a providential God who "intervened in the world on behalf of the righteous and the virtuous" was transmitted to succeeding generations who were sure they knew who the righteous and virtuous were and who were only too willing to give that God a helping hand.

Abraham Lincoln, a formidable lay theologian—read the Second Inaugural Address if you doubt that—was necessarily more absorbed in domestic than international concerns during his presidency. But his notion of the United States as "the last best hope of earth" was applied as easily on foreign shores as here.

Nor were presidents the only voices in this chorus. Thousands of missionaries went abroad to spread the Christian faith, simultaneously bringing "civilization" to Filipinos, Chinese and others, confident that civilization had reached its high point in the free market of American Protestantism. God, said a senator (a Congregationalist deacon) from Connecticut during the Spanish American War, was using the conflict to promote "the spread of liberty, education, social order, and Christianity." Where church and state had similar interests, so much the better.

American Catholics sometimes had a harder time reconciling their faith with national mission. They might well have been expected to sit out any "Protestant Crusade" where the enemy (Mexico in 1846, Spain in 1898) was a predominantly Catholic country. But they were eager to perform the mental gymnastics, often welcoming such conflicts as a chance to show skeptical nativists just how patriotic they were, even if they did attend a slightly suspicious church on Sundays. This often uncritical patriotism, perhaps best expressed by such figures as New York's Cardinal Francis Spellman, would be countered by other Catholic voices that proved more "prophetic": the Berrigan brothers and their colleagues, for example, in anti-Vietnam War protests of the 1960s and 70s. Possibly the first young man to burn his draft card publicly was a member of the Catholic Worker; another worker protested by self-immolation on the steps of the United Nations. Readers of this magazine will also be pleased to see a recovery of the work of Robert Drinan, S.J., on behalf of Soviet Jews during his decade in Congress.

Preston's command of all this is surefooted. Any quibbles would be self-serving exercises of the "look at what I know" variety. As noted, the research is exhaustive—and perhaps for the author himself exhausting: three dozen archives, countless obscure government publications (I cannot seem to find my copy of the weekly dispatches, 1941-45, from the British embassy in Washington) and a full roster of specialized monographs by other scholars.

Moreover, he writes smoothly, so nonspecialists will get caught up in the story. His ability to encapsulate a personality or a movement in a few words is very impressive. Many readers will no doubt dive in selectively to find out about one specific episode or historical figure; those who do will look up 20 pages later, having continued to read about others as well, simply because that is where the ideas and the prose so easily led them. To describe a book as encyclopedic is not always a compliment, but this one deserves that praise. Those who shape American foreign relations in the future—and that, of course, includes all citizens—will learn much from the past recounted here that they can apply to the task.

JAMES M. O'TOOLE *holds the Clough Millennium Chair in History at Boston College.*

DENIS R. JANZ

SEX, ART AND ALTARPIECES

THE SERPENT AND THE LAMB
Cranach, Luther, and the Making of the Reformation
Steven Ozment
Yale University Press. 344p $35

It is common knowledge that Martin Luther (1483-1546) changed the religious landscape of Western Europe. Fewer of us are familiar with Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553), the most prolific and arguably the most accomplished artist of the time. And only specialists know that the two were close friends who struggled together on a united front for many of the same goals. Steven Ozment, a distinguished Harvard historian, scrutinizes this relationship between theologian and artist and argues that working in tandem, they shook "the foundations of established religion and established art."

They concurred entirely, for instance, on the issue of iconoclasm, beating back the opponents of religious images and art in 1521-22. Even more intriguing is Ozment's contention that the two cooperated entire-

ly in dethroning "the great idol and fiction of the age," namely "Renaissance Man." In fact, already in 1511, while Luther was still a humble and obedient Augustinian friar, Cranach was busy deconstructing this illusion in his art: dignity, manliness, moral clarity, effortless superiority, purposeful action and so forth, all were overshadowed now by loss of meaning, moral ambiguity, Angst and doubt. Over the next years, Luther's thinking evolved in the same direction, a process which reached its apogee in his 1525 attack on the Renaissance and scholastic notions of a human free will that is autonomous and sovereign. Here art and theology spoke their own languages but said the same thing.

A final example of this is Chapter 8, entitled "Women on Top." Yes, it is about sex. Ozment's main contention can be summarized as follows. One can read today in popular historiography that by the end of the Middle Ages, Western Christianity had developed into a "sex-hating religion." Experts describe this in more nuanced terms: in the late Middle Ages, the dominant attitude toward human sexuality among the church's celibate male leaders was a "horrified fascination" with the subject. Collectively, they struggled mightily to control the sex lives of the laity on an unprecedented scale. The sex drive, they taught, should and could be dealt with only in one way—massive and unrelenting repression. Precisely here, Ozment thinks, the Luther-Cranach alliance had its most decisive influence:

> Cranach's art and Luther's sermons warn time after time against misguided repression of the sex drive.... [I]t requires and responds best to the internal pressures and pleasures that only the intimacy and privacy of the estate of marriage can properly deliver.

God's will for humanity points in the direction of marriage, sexual fulfillment and family; not in the direction of celibacy and sexual repression—what church leaders had long called "the state of perfection."

Luther wrote more to exalt the human sex drive than any other late medieval or early modern theologian. The same impulse, Ozment argues, captivated Cranach. It is well known that he painted a great many nudes, inventing in the process what art histo-

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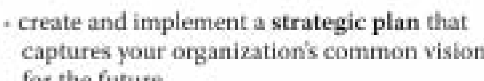

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rians call "the Cranach woman." What first strikes the viewer, we are told, is "the absence of volume": the "ponderous woman" of the high Renaissance gives way to a "lithe, willowy female ...with reduced breasts and deemphasized derriere." Luther was hardly oblivious to all this, and in fact, he registered no objection. On the contrary, he commissioned his friend to illustrate his complete German translation of the Bible; appearing in 1534, it was printed with 123 Cranach drawings. These were not nudes, of course, but artistic renderings of the biblical narrative by a painter famous for his nudes. Who knows what this did for the marketing of Luther's German Bible among the laity? Maybe there was a grain of truth in the remark by the 19th-century German Romantic poet Heinrich Heine: "The loins of Cranach's Venus are far more substantial theses than those the German monk placed on the door of the church in Wittenberg."

By now it should be clear that Ozment's book is no stodgy, dreary tome on art history or the history of theology. Rather it is an example of scholarship at its best: carefully researched, elegantly written, spirited and provocative. Another of its outstanding features is the selection of 77 black and white plates and 11 color plates, accompanied by Ozment's invariably insightful and thought-provoking commentary. Cranach's "Wittenberg Altarpiece" paired with Ozment's explication, for example, is a gem and an eye-opener. Of course, even in the midst of such excellence, reviewers can find faults. But measured against this book's towering virtues, quibbling seems somewhat lame. Relatively few of the books I see are worth a "slow read." This is one of them.

DENIS R. JANZ *is the Provost Distinguished Professor in the department of religious studies at Loyola University in New Orleans. His latest book is* The Westminster Handbook to Martin Luther *(Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).*

KYLE T. KRAMER

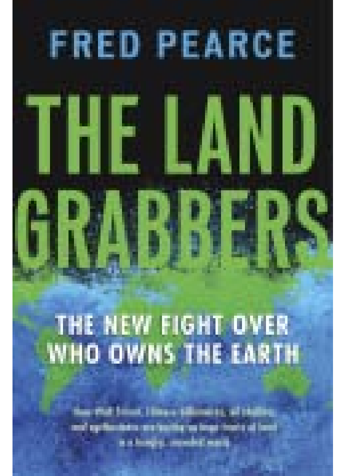
FEEDING INVESTORS, NOT FAMILIES

THE LAND GRABBERS
The New Fight Over Who Owns the Earth

By Fred Pearce
Beacon Press. 318p $27.95

"Buy land. They're not making it any more." This fitting quotation from Mark Twain opens the scathing investigation by the British science writer Fred Pearce of how "Wall Street, Chinese billionaires, oil sheiks, and agribusiness are buying up huge tracts of land in a hungry, crowded world." With prose that is well-honed in style but blunt in relating the facts on the ground, Pearce reports his findings from the year he spent circling the globe to document the phenomenon of "land-grabbing."

The Land Grabbers explores a fundamental question: Does feeding the world and protecting its last remaining wild places require wresting the remaining "global commons" from native inhabitants and delivering it into the hands of wealthy countries, corporations and individuals? Pearce answers with an emphatic no, sharing heart-breaking vignettes from Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America and elsewhere to make his case.



The land-grabbing Pearce describes takes several different forms, ranging from bare-knuckled, profit-driven capitalism to well-intentioned environmentalism and economic development. Some corporations seek raw materials: Indonesian trees for paper and plywood, Burmese rubber latex for car tires, Ghanaian jatropha plants for biofuels. Investors—from aggressive hedge funds to conservative pension funds—see profit to be made by developing foreign land they deem as "underutilized" (though local inhabitants tend to disagree).

Some countries are striving for food security. Desert-challenged Saudi Arabia and population-challenged India, for example, lease enormous swaths of the Gambella lowlands of Ethiopia, growing rice for export back to their home country. In the last 25 years, Brazil has plowed under almost 300 million acres (an area the size of Britain, France, and Germany combined) of its *cerrado*, the most biologically diverse savannah grassland in the world—mainly to grow soybeans to feed beef cattle in China.

Some allege benevolent intentions for grabbing foreign land. The wealthy Christian evangelist Calvin Burgess's Dominion Farms is draining the Yala Swamp in Western Kenya to grow rice on an industrial scale. Burgess came with the ostensible philanthropic goal of helping the local people with economic development and was initially hailed as "the father of food." But many of the swamp's displaced inhabitants now complain that "in the end he brought us hunger."

Finally, Pearce documents the phenomenon of "green-grabbing." Tycoons like Ted Turner and the Italian Bennetton family (of clothing empire fame) purchased multi-million-acre chunks of Argentine and Chilean Patagonia as ecological reserves: their own private "slice of Eden." Huge sections of the Tanzanian Serengeti have been carved into wildlife enclaves that cater to rich

white tourists and hunters. In the name of mitigating climate change, "carbon cowboys" grow rich selling carbon credits from Indonesian jungle, while only a fifth of the income finds its way to the native forest communities.

Whatever the motivation, landgrabs inevitably hurt the native inhabitants, the landscape itself or both. Ly Yong Phat, Cambodia's well-connected "senator for sugar," has commandeered the land of Cambodian smallholders with "casual indifference to people's rights." Those pushed off their farms in favor of foreign sugar conglomerates compare their displacement to the Khmer Rouge: "'Pol Pot killed us quickly. This is slow. But they are killing us just the same.'"

In the Serengeti, the native Maasai, whose cattle and shifting cultivation have long co-existed with wild big game, have been pushed into smaller and smaller parcels of land—and then blamed for overgrazing. The Maasai "want to be in charge of their own land, not 'reduced to bead sellers and recipients of philanthropic help from foreigners.'"

The environmental devastation of for-profit land-grabbing is hard to comprehend. Diverse forest ecosystems in Sumatra, Indonesia, were given away as logging concessions, mainly to Asian plywood and pulp companies; Riau Province went from 80 percent forest cover to 20 percent in just 20 years. Such voracious deforestation makes Indonesia the third-largest emitter of carbon dioxide in the world. Biodiversity suffers when jungles or swamps are replaced by large monocrop plantations. Rivers and underground aquifers are pumped nearly dry to irrigate thirsty crops like sugar and rice.

How has this happened? Among other factors, Pearce blames corrupt leaders, such as Charles Taylor in Liberia, who sold timber for years to finance that country's civil war. Many poorer nations often see industrial-scale agriculture as the key to economic development—and rich foreigners have the money and knowledge to invest.

Perhaps the largest problem of all, though, is that many developing countries have little or no tradition of formal, legally recognized property rights: "about four-fifths of [Africa's] 6 billion acres is not formally owned by anyone other than the state." If rural inhabitants lack legal title, their land may be sold or leased out from under them. International law also tends to favor the investor: "Even if the locals are starving or parched with thirst," writes Pearce, "in law the rights of the foreign investor come first."

Throughout his well-written exposé, Pearce grapples with four key issues: food security, economic development (especially for the poor), a concern for native inhabitants and the need to preserve the ecological integrity of the global commons. In his conclusion, he contests the widespread assumption that only large-scale operations can provide viable solutions. The purpose of big farms, he writes, is ultimately "to please their investors, rather than to feed families." He argues instead, with ample evidence, that providing resources and assistance to indigenous small-holders is "among the most efficient and effective ways of raising people out of poverty" and stewarding the land well.

ON THE WEB
This month's
Catholic Book Club selection.
americamagazine.org/cbc

Although *The Land Grabbers* does not refer to any formal theological or moral framework, attentive readers will encounter almost every major principle of Catholic social teaching in the book's thematic elements. Anyone concerned with land use and the plight of the rural poor in developing nations would do well to let Pearce inform them about an insidious new form of exploitive colonialism.

KYLE T. KRAMER *a farmer and regular columnist for* ***America****, is the author of* A Time to Plant: Life Lessons in Work, Prayer, and Dirt.

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LETTERS

Lesson in Civics

Re "School Daze" (Editorial, 10/15): As a former Chicago high school teacher, resident and taxpayer, I must strongly disagree with your conclusion that the strike was "civically irresponsible." Public-sector unions are under immense attack. The administration of Mayor Rahm Emanuel is enamored of (and some would say economically beholden to) private, for-profit charter school reform and has stacked the appointed, not elected board of education with its advocates. A strike was necessary. And it was effective.

Also, the diversity of the marchers gave an object lesson in civics, creativity and good manners: grade school kids, parents pushing carriages with infants, high school students and high school bands, teachers of all ages and races, workers from other endangered unions. Students and teachers and the general public all learned something invaluable that week. The strike was an unparalleled lesson in democracy and, as such, was well worth any inconvenience it caused.

DAVID PHILIPPART
Chicago, Ill.

Liturgical Movements

Re "Of Many Things," by Raymond A. Schroth, S.J. (10/15): I am not a fan of liturgical rigidity marked by the kind of rubrical precision that can rob worship of its vitality, but it was precisely the loosey-goosey celebrations that Father Schroth refers to that launched the counter-reformers.

There was indeed a time when worship involved few if any written texts, but the prophets and presbyters did not just make it up as they went along. They had memorized certain Scripture texts and liturgical formulations that had been handed down. Eventually these led to written texts which contained the prayers that expressed the very faith of the church.

Unfortunately the sacramentaries and missals that developed over the centuries led to forms of the Mass that eliminated the fully active and conscious participation of the faithful. Mass was reduced to a mysterious drama focused almost entirely on the priest's consecration of the bread and wine. All of this led to a liturgical movement begun by Pope Pius X and further influenced by Pius XII that reached its fruition at Vatican II. But the reforms triggered by "Sacrosanctum Concilium" (1963) never envisioned many of the experiments that followed.

JACK FEEHILY
Moore, Okla.

Different Starting Point

In "The New Evangelization" (Web only, 10/15), Archbishop Rino Fisichella means well, but he misses the real challenge of evangelization: the theological starting point. None of the three popes since Vatican II has taken seriously enough the orientation of "Gaudium et Spes," which sees the world, or *saeculum*, as the primordial sacrament of God. Holiness already resides there because God pervades it. The church, in the spirit of Jesus, can foster God's work already in process in the world, but the church's evangelization doesn't start this work.

A new evangelization needs to recognize the work of God in efforts of justice, peace, healing and compassion already going on in the "secular" world—Unesco, Amnesty International and so many other individuals and groups. Then the church can collaborate in its own ways with these movements. Otherwise evangelization can come across as salesmanship, an attempt to add more paying adherents to the church's rolls.

EUGENE BIANCHI
Athens, Ga.

Conscientious Pragmatists

Re "The Home Stretch," by Thomas Massaro, S.J. (10/1): There is an old

saying: People get the government they deserve. Many Americans have become intolerant of others, and this seems to be reflected in the opposing, absolute views of many politicians. This is known as gridlock.

In the past, elected government leaders could find common ground through compromise without denying their fundamental principles. They were neither absolutists nor relativists. They were conscientious pragmatists. They were prudent. What happened to them? Is there no longer a place for them in society or politics?

VINCE VARNAS
Aloha, Ore.

Council Deeply Embedded

Re "A Change of Season," by Robert J. Nogosek, C.S.C. (Web only, 10/1): I was a student in Rome under Father Nogosek's direction from 1965 to 1966. Our professors at the Gregorian University taught us in the morning and served as council experts in the afternoon. Cardinals, bishops and world-class theologians were to be met with everywhere. Rome was alive. Father Nogosek captures some of this immediacy in his article.

But to the council itself: It is now deeply embedded in the church's experience, life and language. The 16 documents transcend simplistic dichotomies like "liberal versus conservative." If you have any doubt, look at "Ecclesia in Medio Oriente," the document prepared by the bishops of the Middle East and signed by Pope Benedict XVI on his recent trip to Lebanon. It shows pain over religious strife and emphasizes the importance of Christian unity, dialogue with Jews and Muslims, the in-migration of Christians to the area, open accountability of church finances, more important roles for women in the church, revival of biblical studies and devotion, strengthening of the church's health and educational institutions and a re-emphasis on the importance of the intellectual and spiritual patrimony of the East. This whole agenda is deeply imbued with conciliar thought.

It is a good practice in the present age to examine the very rich life of the church at the international and local levels, and to discern the influence of the council. It is everywhere.

EDWARD STARKEY
San Diego, Calif.

Author Responds

In his letter "What Catholics Do Best" (10/1), Douglas Cremer incorrectly claims that the Catholic Church in the United States "has a greater retention rate than almost any other faith tradition." The Pew survey explicitly warns that "the disproportionately high number of Catholics among immigrants to the U.S." must be taken into account when analyzing Catholic demographics because that influx "obscures...the large number of [native-born] people who have left the Catholic Church." Thus the "high retention" rate of which Mr. Cremer writes is in fact a "high replacement" rate.

I affirm Mr. Cremer's call for a "robust and energizing faith formation." But he eliminates from his mix a basic knowledge of Scripture and church teaching—knowledge he dismisses as "just reciting." Mr. Cremer's strategy will make it increasingly hard for bad statistics to look good.

DAVID IMPASTATO
Alexandria, Va.

The writer is the author of "Back to Basics" (9/10).

Better Comparison

I found the essay, "Constancy of Change in Sexual Ethics," by James T. Bretzke, S.J. (9/24), rather troubling. To begin with, Father Bretzke compares an ethicist to an information technologist who, as technology changes, has to help the user understand the way to use the latest technological gimmick. This is a false comparison. Although technology does change, certain physical laws remain immutable. No matter the change in technology, the law of gravity remains in effect. The speed of light remains the same.

A better comparison: an ethicist is like a theoretical physicist. Just as certain physical laws are immutable, so too it must follow that certain moral laws are also immutable. Such laws are not a matter of tradition but are inherent in the nature of humanity. Sometimes traditions change. In the past most marriages were arranged by families. Today each person chooses his or her own mate. There are changes in customs, just as there are changes in technology. But such changes in custom do not generate a "new morality."

WILLIAM COONEY
Philadelphia, Pa.

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Love Grounds All

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), NOV. 4, 2012

Readings: Dt 6:2-6; Ps 18:2-51; Heb 7:23-28; Mk 12:28-34

"Which is the first of all the commandments?" (Mk 12:28)

The Talmud records a story about a young gentile man who approached Rabbi Shammai (a contemporary of Jesus) and promised to convert if Shammai could teach him the Torah while the young man stood on one foot. Shammai, who did not suffer fools easily, smacked him with a stick he happened to be holding. He must have thought, "The depth and breadth of the Torah in a few words? This is impossible." The man then went to Rabbi Hillel with the same challenge. Hillel replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. This is the entire Torah; the rest is commentary. Now go and learn it." Shortly thereafter, the man converted to Judaism.

Synthesizing the Torah was not unusual. There are traditionally 613 laws in the Torah. Rabbi Simlai (third century) taught that they represented 365 prohibitions given to Moses corresponding to the days of the year and 248 positive commandments corresponding to the limbs in the human body. Simlai taught that they could be reduced to doing right and keeping justice. Rabbi Akiva (first century) reduced the laws to just one: love thy neighbor.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus receives a challenge like that posed by the young gentile man. A scribe asks Jesus which of the commands is the greatest. This challenge is not simply to come up with the most important commandment, but to reveal the lens through which all the others, and perhaps even the whole of life, should be viewed. Jesus responds by quoting the lines from Moses that we also find in our first reading from Deuteronomy: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." Then Jesus adds, quoting Lev 19:18, "The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The scribe is delighted, noting that such love "is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

We should consider these two commandments as one, for love by its very nature has a unitive quality. To love God but not others is impossible, and to imagine loving others without cultivating a love of God—the very source of all love—is to make a colossal error. The First Letter of John puts both together: "Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 Jn 4:8). Loving another fulfills the law (Rom 13:8); love is the one thing that is eternal (1 Cor 13:8), the new and complete commandment (Jn 13:34). Love then is both the means of union with God and the principal expression of what it means to be Christian (1 Jn 2:10). In short, Christian life is "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6).

In my experience, my love for others (or lack thereof) is a telltale sign of the quality of my prayer life. When my spirit exudes a natural (or supernatural?) love and affection for others, I know that the Lord is deeply active in my soul, even if my prayer seems dry. And when my prayer seems gratifying, if I do not experience love for others, then I know I am in some kind of spiritual desolation. This is when I know I have to buck up and attend to others even if I lack feelings of warmth. I also remind myself that love is not merely emotional affection. Love expresses itself as service, generosity, care.

One of the most difficult challenges to our faith is to love those who are very difficult to love, especially those banes in our lives. Being grounded in God helps us to recognize their intrinsic value and change our spiritual posture toward them.

I was once living in a house with a very difficult person. Daily I raised him up in prayer. Picturing him and invoking the Lord, I asked that he be happy, be well, be filled with joy. I repeated these intentions for many minutes every morning. After a month I noticed that I was rooting for him and I genuinely cared how his day went. We never became friends, and my aversion did not vanish. But I think I started to love him. Who would have guessed?

PETER FELDMEIER

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

• Think of someone in your life who is difficult to love.

• Hold this person in prayer daily for the next month.

ART: TAD DUNNE

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Loyola's Institute of Pastoral Studies
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