Maurice Timothy Reidy on the Art of Borysewicz

America

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Running With the Money

Fundraising and the Presidential Campaigns

Costas Panagopoulos

Of Many Things

IT IS NOT OFTEN that popes cancel scheduled addresses, but after protests by professors and graduate students at Rome's La Sapienza University, the Vatican canceled a lecture by Pope Benedict XVI scheduled for the opening of the university's academic year on Jan. 18. In the end, the controversy underscored how prejudiced and ill-informed the scientific community can sometimes be. It also showed how difficult a task Pope Benedict has set himself in attempting to dialogue with today's secular European culture.

La Sapienza was founded in 1303 by Pope Boniface VIII. In 1870, with the fall of the Papal States, it was re-opened as the public university of the city of Rome. Today it is the largest public university in Europe, with 138,000 students. The Vatican cancellation came after 67 faculty members signed a protest against Pope Benedict's giving the concluding speech of the convocation on grounds that the pope is hostile to science. As evidence, the critics cited a 1990 address in which the then-Cardinal Ratzinger quoted the Austrian philosopher Paul Feyerabend, who argued that Galileo was wrong in believing he had discovered in empirical observation a rationalist method for the attainment of all truth. In most academic circles today, scholars acknowledge that different fields employ different methods and that these change over time. Even within a single field, investigators in one sub-field find the literature in others unintelligible. These observations hardly merit an anti-papal campaign.

The protesting scientists, however, approached the philosophy of science the way many outsiders approach fields in which they are not proficient, reacting to symbols (like the mere mention of Galileo), applying amateurish litmus tests and fanning into flames burnt-out ideological fires. Pope Benedict's citation was not an endorsement. He cited Feyerabend as an example of the relativism of post-modern thought and characterized the philosopher's judgment as "drastic" overreaching. Nonetheless, for a churchman, especially the former prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to make a passing, critical mention of Galileo was a red flag to Italian academics.

The Vatican later released the pope's intended text. Had the protesters bothered to read it, they would have found that Pope Benedict had endorsed academic freedom. He observed that today La Sapienza is "a public university with that autonomy...which must be bound exclusively to the authority of the truth." "Surely," he added, the pope "must not impose the truth on others in an authoritarian way." He also offered soothing admissions of cognitive humility, admitting, for example, that "things handed down in practice by ecclesial authorities have been shown by history to be false, and today they confuse us." At the same time, he affirmed his unflagging commitment to fulfill "his duty to keep the sensitivity to truth alive."

I must confess that when Pope Benedict speaks abstractly about reason and truth rather than the Gospel, I get a little nervous myself. I am apprehensive that the Christ of faith is being displaced by the God of the philosophers. I fear as well that I am being presented with what the pope himself once called premature judgments cloaked in the mantle of reasonableness. I realize, however, that I am put on my guard not by the pope's own measured phrases and pastoral discretion but by the bullying way that the pope's self-anointed partisans abuse his authority with know-it-all sneering and snobbery.

The La Sapienza speech was an effort to articulate the pope's relation to university life. How he envisages the role of the church and the pope in contributing to keeping alive sensitivity to truth reveals a thoroughly pastoral grasp of his mission. Faith should have a place at the symposium of reason, he argues, because "over the course of generations" the Christian way of life has yielded proof of "its reasonableness and its enduring significance." "The history of the saints, the history of the humanism that grew up on the basis of the Christian faith," he writes, "demonstrate the truth of this faith in its essential nucleus, thereby making it an example for public reason." It is by this collective witness, he writes, that the church provides "a purifying force" for the interest-driven thinking that dominates postmodern secular society.

Drew Christiansen, S.J.

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Articles

This week @ America Connects

Alfonse Borysewicz narrates an audio slide show of his art work, and Sidney Callahan talks about her new book, *Created for Joy: A Christian View of Suffering*. Plus, James T. Keane, S.J., reviews the Bob Dylan biopic, "I'm Not There."

The Finger of Suspicion

"I just don't believe that people in this country are going to choose their candidate based on which church he or she goes to," former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney said in a recent Republican primary debate in Florida. The problem for Mr. Romney's presidential hopes is that at least some voters have already voted against him using precisely that criterion, according to polling data. And a recent NBC News/Wall Street Journal poll indicated that 44 percent of Americans believe that a Mormon president would have a difficult time uniting the country.

We have seen this before. This magazine, for much of its history, railed against similar bigotry directed against Catholic politicians. Its name, **America**, was chosen in part to evoke a seminal ideal at the heart of the American founding: no religious test is permitted or ought to be expected of any candidate for public office.

Forty-eight years ago, then-Senator John F. Kennedy, responding to Americans' unease with his candidacy, said: "While this year it may be a Catholic against whom the finger of suspicion is pointed, in other years it has been, and may someday be again, a Jew—or a Quaker—or a Unitarian—or a Baptist.… Today I may be the victim—but tomorrow it may be you."

This year the finger of suspicion is pointed at a Mormon. There may be good reasons not to vote for Mr. Romney, but his faith is not one of them. The anti-Mormon whispers and, in some quarters, the outright bigotry directed against him are unfair, un-American and un-Christian.

New Wineskins

The news coming from Rome during the Jesuits' 35th General Congregation includes startling information on how dramatically the Society of Jesus has changed in recent decades. Once dominated by Europeans and Americans, the Jesuits now have more members of Indian background than any other grouping. As the order continues to shrink in Europe and America, the Indian Assistancy, with more than 4,000 Jesuits, is becoming increasingly prominent in the Society's governance and apostolic priorities. The days of the West sending missionaries to the East are over, replaced by a phenomenon already visible in many parishes—South Asian priests and religious coming to the West.

How will this affect Jesuit apostolic work in the United States? In their own country, Indian Jesuits are part of a tiny religious minority (Christians make up less than 3 percent of the population in India) and are accustomed to a cultural context requiring far more interreligious dialogue than their American brothers. Many will have lived and studied at Western educational institutions, so they will have some familiarity with U.S. religious culture (far more than American Jesuits will have with theirs). They will also be less tied to the Irish-American hierarchies that have dominated the ranks of American priests and religious. They will also face serious challenges, because foreign priests are often not privy to our own national internecine struggles and concerns, particularly around hot-button issues like the role of women and the laity in the contemporary church. American Jesuits will have much to learn from their Indian brothers, but also much to offer them about the American cultural experience of Catholicism.

Big Pharma and the Poor

The pharmaceutical industry is failing to make key medications available to millions of people in developing countries, according to a recent report from Oxfam International, *Investing for Life*. The study examined the practices of the world's 12 biggest pharmaceutical companies—practices that include putting protection of intellectual property rights ahead of the critical health needs of people in the world's poorest countries. The companies mount fierce resistance to cheaper generic drugs, which they see as unacceptable competition. And yet generic competition, the report observes, "is the most effective...method to reduce drug prices."

Oxfam's executive director has said the industry should recognize that smothering generic competition and fighting for stricter patent laws amount to a "moral outrage." Currently, over 85 percent of world consumers are either underserved or have no access at all to essential medications the companies produce. Poor people therefore continue to face diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, cancer and H.I.V./AIDS without affordable medicines. The report also faults the industry for neglecting research and development into diseases that disproportionately affect people in developing countries. Between 1999 and 2004, it says, there were only three new drugs targeted at diseases affecting the developing world, out of 163 brought to the market. The author of the Oxfam report, Helena Vines-Fiestas, points out that even for people suffering from tuberculosis—which kills nearly two million people a year—the most recent medicine is 30 years old. The report's executive summary calls for the pharmaceutical companies to incorporate "a social equity bottom line into their thinking" when it comes to pricing. That bottom line has yet to be put in place.

Responding to Recession

THERE IS GENERAL CONSENSUS among economists and business leaders that the United States is entering a recession. The indicators look bad, including a decline in consumer spending and confidence, the collapse of the housing industry, the credit crunch and increases in unemployment.

What went wrong? The immediate cause of the recession was the crisis in the subprime credit market. Banks made loans for home purchases to people with poor credit ratings. Often the loans had low down payments and initially low interest rates that would later jump to higher levels. Many of these borrowers did not understand the contracts they were signing. Banks then packaged these loans as securities and sold them to investors.

Why would mortgage companies, banks and investors make loans to risky borrowers who were likely to default on their loans? The answer is simple. With housing prices going up, if borrowers could not meet their payments, banks and investors would hold an asset that was worth more than it was when the loan was first made. The house could then be sold to another unwary buyer. But when housing prices fell, investors were left with assets that did not cover the amount of the loans.

The financial institutions that made these predatory loans and marketed them to investors deserve no sympathy. They are simply being punished by the market for gambling that housing prices would not fall. Investors who were fully informed and understood the risks also deserve little sympathy.

But the question remains, were investors fully informed? Wall Street's enthusiasm for deregulation has come home to haunt it. If government regulations for financial institutions had required more transparency and clearer disclosure to borrowers as well as investors, we would not be in this crisis today. It is ironic that those who sang the praises of an unregulated free market as long as they were making money are now rushing to Washington for help. One important lesson of this recession is that not all government regulations are bad for business.

The subprime credit crisis has caused a crisis in the entire credit system. It will take time for the system to digest billions of dollars in losses. Meanwhile, investors and lenders have lost confidence in the system itself. In the short run, there is little the government can do. Providing fiscal stimulus and reducing interest rates will not do much to restore confidence. In the long run, requiring more transparency by banks and marketers of securities is needed.

Even without the subprime crisis, this recession was inevitable. The U.S. government and consumers have been spending beyond their means for years. Credit card debt is too high; our balance of payments has been out of whack for decades; and for the first time in history, we are waging a war without raising taxes. As a result, we have become dependent on the equivalent of loans from China and the oil producing countries.

NOW THAT WE ARE IN AN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, what will Washington do? Surprisingly, a bipartisan consensus has developed in favor of a fiscal stimulus that is timely, temporary and targeted. This consensus has more to do with the coming election than with agreement about economics.

Timely. The stimulus is needed as soon as possible if it is going to help at all. One problem is that for technical reasons, the I.R.S. probably cannot send out refund checks before the third week in June. Food stamp payments could be increased more quickly. Extending unemployment insurance payments would also have an immediate effect, but public works programs would take too long to activate.

Temporary. Any tax cuts or spending that increases the deficit permanently will not deal with our long-term economic problems. In fact, such measures could be counterproductive. Unfortunately, President Bush reiterated in his State of the Union address his desire to see the tax cuts of his first term made permanent.

Targeted. President Bush and House leaders have agreed to an income tax rebate. The working poor, who pay Social Security taxes but not income taxes, will also receive a check. Studies of earlier rebates show that the poor first use their rebates to pay down their credit card debt, but within a couple of months they stimulate the economy by increasing their spending.

A $150-billion stimulus package will have a limited impact on our $14-trillion economy. But if $100 billion of it is spent in one quarter, it could increase growth by 3 percent, which might be just enough to move the economy from negative to positive numbers. Will this encourage us to face our long-term economic issues, or will we again put our heads in the sand and go about business as usual?

Rector of Seminary Murdered

A group of displaced Luo people aboard a van points sticks and clubs at ethnic Kikuyus during clashes Jan. 29 in Naivasha, outside the Kenyan capital of Nairobi.

A Catholic priest of the Diocese of Nakuru, Kenya, was killed on Jan. 26 as vicious interethnic violence claimed more lives in the Rift Valley. The Rev. Michael Kamau Ithondeka, 41, was killed at an illegal roadblock set up by armed youths on the Nakuru–Eldama Ravine Road. He was vice rector at St. Mathias Mulumba Senior Seminary in Tindinyo.

According to the Rev. Simon Githara, parish priest of Eldama Ravine, Father Kamau was accosted by youths who claimed they were on a revenge mission after one of their own was killed in Nakuru. His pleas for mercy fell on deaf ears as the youths descended on him with crude weapons, killing him on the spot. The Rev. John Mbaraka, a local priest, said Father Kamau knew his attackers because he used to pay their children's school fees when he was a parish priest in the Diocese of Eldoret.

The news comes as other reports indicate that public mortuaries in Nakuru have received at least 51 bodies, and police are still collecting more from around the town. The violence appears to be revenge against members of the Kalenjin, Luo and Luhyia communities following the recent killing of members of the Kikuyu community in the Rift Valley. The death of Father Kamau comes in the wake of threats to Kikuyu Catholic personnel working in the Rift Valley Province. In Eldoret, two priests based at Moi University escaped death narrowly last week when armed men attacked their house at night.

Zimbabwe Elections Under a Cloud

Church officials said it is unlikely Zimbabwe will hold a free and fair presidential election this year, since Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe has refused demands for a new constitution to be implemented before the poll. "Mugabe knows he can play games and get away with it," said Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenburg, South Africa. The 83-year-old president of Zimbabwe "has the security forces on his side, and his opposition has no protection under the law, so he doesn't need to make any concessions," Bishop Dowling told Catholic News Service. Mugabe has rejected the opposition's requests that the election, scheduled for March, be postponed until June to allow for a new constitution to be put in place.

Mugabe, who has ruled Zimbabwe since its independence from Great Britain in 1980, "is untrustworthy and does not intend to make significant changes to bring stability to the country," said the bishop, noting that until a new constitution that protects human rights is in place "there can be no free and fair elections."

Turkish Officials Silent on St. Paul Anniversary

A church official in Turkey said the country's authorities are failing to consult him about plans for the 2,000th anniversary year of St. Paul's birth in the southern city of Tarsus. "Although government representatives from Ankara have been here, they haven't spoken to me," said Bishop Luigi Padovese of Anatolia, Turkey. "Our own preparations are well advanced, so they need to know about our plans. But they haven't announced any decisions, so everything still looks uncertain." Bishop Padovese told Catholic News Service in a telephone interview on Jan. 25 that he had asked the mayor of Tarsus to provide facilities for pilgrims and rooms for priests to prepare for services. "But I said we need a church above all, since people will be coming here not just as tourists, but also to pray," the bishop said. The city's 12th-century St. Paul Church currently is a state-owned museum. "I think the central Turkish government is well disposed toward us. But we must know what they're doing," he said. Pope Benedict XVI designated 2008-9 a special Pauline year and said the celebrations should have a special ecumenical character.

Catholic-Mennonite Peace Proposals

A convocation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Mennonite World Conference have submitted a joint proposal to the World Council of Churches for consideration in planning the concluding international ecumenical peace convocation of the W.C.C.'s Decade to Overcome Violence in 2011. The text presents a brief shared theology of peace, treating creation, Christology, ecclesiology and discipleship. The discipleship section stresses nonviolence, forgiveness, truthfulness, prayer and active peacemaking. The statement sees the ecumenical movement itself as a contribution to peace and recommends further healing of memories to advance common Christian witness for peace.

The statement affirms that "nonviolence is normative for Christians" but

acknowledges a range of Christian attitudes toward serious conflict—from just war to active nonviolence and pacifism. It urges the convocation to "work toward the goal of achieving an ecumenical consensus on ways Christians might advocate together to replace violence as a means to resolve serious conflict in society." It suggests exploring ways to build consensus around conscientious objection, selective conscientious objection, the responsibility to protect (more commonly called international humanitarian intervention) and just policing as an alternative to just war.

The statement is an outgrowth of the International Mennonite-Catholic Dialogue, which concluded in 2003, and it drew on the dialogue's five-year report *Called Together to Be Peacemakers*. The communication was prepared by the consultation at the Centro pro Unione held in Rome from Oct. 23 to 25, 2007. The Mennonite team was headed by Larry Miller, general secretary of the Mennonite World Conference. Msgr. John Radano of the pontifical council led the Catholic participants.

More Productive Discussion on Immigration

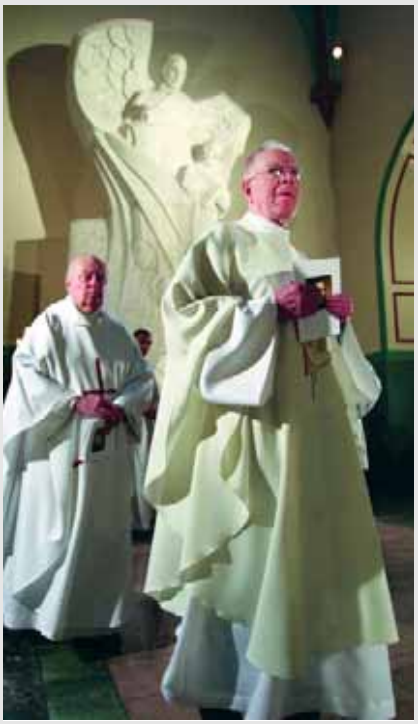
The Catholic Legal Immigration Network called on presidential candidates and elected officials to have a more productive discussion of immigration. It also decried delays that it said will keep many new citizens from voting this year. In the 2007 fiscal year, 1.4 million people applied for U.S. citizenship, double the previous year's applications, said Don Kerwin, director of the U.S. Catholic Church's umbrella organization for immigration services, known by its acronym, Clinic. It now takes 18 months to process a naturalization application, up from seven months before the latest surge, said Emilio Gonzalez, director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, at a Jan. 17 hearing before the House Judiciary Committee. That means many people who filed for citizenship before the cost went up last year have little chance of being able to vote this year, Kerwin told Catholic News Service. "Instead of building on the momentum created by this massive influx of naturalization applications," said a Jan. 16 statement from Clinic, "many members of Congress and...presidential candidates have supported the denial of citizenship—which is guaranteed by the 14th Amendment—to children born in the United States to parents without legal status."

Catholic Schools and State Support

While officials in Illinois hailed a victory that will allow Catholic schools there to use state funds for health and safety improvements, others in Maryland and New York decried decisions by their governors that would reduce the assistance available to Catholic schools and their students. The Illinois measure, included in the budget implementation bill signed by Gov. Rod Blagojevich in early January, allows nonpublic schools to spend their share of the $75 million Educational Improvement and School Safety Block Grant on mandated teacher background checks, fire safety, automatic defibrillators and other items designed to protect the well-being of students. "This victory is huge," said Zachary Wichmann, associate director for education at the Catholic Conference of Illinois. In Maryland, meanwhile, Catholic school leaders criticized Gov. Martin J. O'Malley's decision to cut $400,000 from a state program providing nonreligious textbooks and technology to nonpublic school students. In New York, an official of the state Catholic Conference expressed disappointment that Gov. Eliot Spitzer failed to follow through on a public pledge made last October to include a tax deduction for tuition expenses at independent and religious schools in his budget proposal, which was released Jan. 22.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

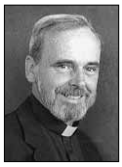
Sainthood Cause Opened for Paulist Isaac Hecker



Paulist Fathers Donald Campbell, right, and Lawrence McDonnell in procession near the tomb of Father Isaac Hecker, C.S.P.

Isaac Thomas Hecker was "a real-life saint like you and me," Cardinal Edward M. Egan of New York said Jan. 27, describing the founder of the Missionary Society of St. Paul, known as the Paulist Fathers. "He was a person who suffered, who made his way through life bearing crosses and who taught that sanctity can be captured in many different ways," the cardinal added. He made the comments during a Mass that marked the opening of the cause for Father Hecker's canonization and the 150th anniversary of the Church of St. Paul the Apostle, the parish he established on Columbus Avenue in New York City. More than 1,000 people attended the bilingual Mass, concelebrated by several priests. Before the Mass began, Cardinal Egan blessed the tomb of Father Hecker, which is inside the church at the northeast corner. In his homily, Cardinal Egan traced the "troubles and tribulations" that led Father Hecker to found the Paulists to pursue a distinctly "American approach to announcing the Gospel."

Visit our new blog, In All Things, for daily coverage of the presidential primaries from Matt Malone, S.J., and Michael Sean Winters at americamagazine.org.



Hope and Change

'I imagine a world less hostile, a nation less arrogant and a politics less calcified into ideology.'

'I'M NOT MAKING THIS UP, folks." That's Bill Clinton, the man who somehow could say he was "against the Iraq war from the beginning," making up a story about a himself as if he really had been against the war from the beginning. I am tired of politicians making things up with stories, usually prefaced by the now ugly word "frankly." That's why I am so relieved that we will have only one more year of a president who promised a compassionate conservatism with a humble foreign policy. The last two times I voted for a party nominee were for Jimmy Carter and Bob Dole. All the rest were disgruntled write-ins, born of frustration, boredom or anger.

Well, I am no longer frustrated or bored, although I am still a little angry.

That has something to do with my own hopes for change in the United States of America. Although I have no doubts that our country is remarkably blest in its commitment to give everyone a voice, in its economic, health, educational and media achievements, and in its great victories won for religious liberty, women, blacks, labor folks and the poor, I have deep-seated worries about the path set by the last few administrations. Power, property and popularity have driven many of our communal and political decisions, but these goals are essentially divisive within our country and alienate us from most of the world's nations.

It is not surprising, then, that the themes of change and hope stir in me the dream of another way of doing things. But those very words, if you could smear them in inkblots, are little more than a political Rorschach test.

When I look at the blot of hope I imagine a world less hostile, a nation less arrogant and a politics less calcified into ideology. I hope at least for reasoned conversation based on evidence rather than name-calling and screeds. I hope for a community of nations, the majority of which do not regard my country as the major threat to peace in the world.

And change? I would like a change on the life issues. Although I think the genetic evidence dictates that human life begins at fertilization, I think we could reach consensus that, once you have a unified organism with a beating heart, you've got a human being; and that only when that organism has shut down, do you have death. This would modify all our discussions on abortion and euthanasia. I think we could find a consensus concerning human dignity: not a dictate of the state, not "legality" as an immigrant, not innocence of crime, not being an American, but the fact that one is a member of the human family. This would modify all our discussions on capital punishment, universal health care, "illegal immigration" and the sea of humans dying in poverty.

The range of my hopes for change has newly engaged me in the present presidential campaign. These days, I am tempted to hope for true change.

But where, how, who?

If I were a Democrat, I would bemoan the fact that Biden, Dodd and Richardson were eliminated so early. They probably had the most experience, but maybe that was their problem. People do not want the old way of doing things. This is Hillary Clinton's problem, the shackles of a dynasty and the rigidity of a party line anchoring her in the past. John Edwards, although a trial lawyer and former senator, at least has a populist message; but he is harsh and divisive.

That leaves Obama. He is, in some ways, as Bill Clinton's sly innuendo puts it, "a roll of the dice." But Obama does offer real change and real hope. He wants to change the habit of our relationships with each other and our relations with other nations. He ignites the hope that we might deal with our problems and differences in more civil, reasonable and virtuous ways.

If I were a Republican, Romney would appeal to me as a person grounded in his identity. His family is telling evidence of who he is, and his Mormonism is an asset. (Have you ever met a Mormon you did not respect and admire?) But he does not exhibit the moral vision I hope for.

Huckabee does. His Christian humanism, his take on the penal system (despite his support for capital punishment), his concern for illegal immigrants and the plight of the poor draw me as much to him as they repel some conservatives like Rush Limbaugh, Fred Barnes and the editors of National Review. These issues, by the way, are the same that infuriate some conservatives in the case of John McCain.

McCain elicits my greatest trust among the Republican candidates. He is able to enter into coalition with opponents —even Ted Kennedy on the burning issue of immigration. He is willing to lose an election on principle. He listens to the people: "They want us to secure the borders before we give access to guest worker programs and citizenship." And he is willing to take a stand. Disagreeing with him on the Iraq war, I am with him on torture. So where am I?

The election might easily be overtaken by events. Disaster in Iraq or mad terrorist acts could swing the vote to McCain or Giuliani. An economic collapse might promote Edwards or Romney.

But right now, if I were left to choose between Obama and McCain, I could vote for either of th1em. Could you? If you are a Democrat, is there any Republican you could vote for? If you are a Republican, is there any Democrat?

John F. Kavanaugh

JOHN F. KAVANAUGH, S.J., is a professor of philosophy at St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.

PHOTO: ADAM GRYKO

Campaign financing and the race for the presidency

Running With the Money

– BY COSTAS PANAGOPOULOS–

RALPH WALDO EMERSON once asked, "Can anyone remember when times were not hard and money not scarce?" The answer to the latter might turn out to be the 2008 presidential election, which may prove to be the most expensive political campaign in U.S. history. After only nine months of fund-raising in 2007 (the last period for which complete figures are available at press time), candidates had raised over $420 million—more than half of the $674 million raised in the complete 2004 election cycle and more than the $352 million total raised in 2000. Before the votes are counted this November, the money chase could bring in more than $1 billion.

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Who Got What?

To a great extent, the fund-raising dynamics of an election cycle are a function of the larger political dynamics. With wide-open contests for both parties' nominations, no incumbents at the top of the ballot, a slew of animated and high-profile candidates and an evenly divided electorate, voter enthusiasm is high on both sides of the aisle. But Democrats may have more reason to be excited. A shaky economy, record-low and declining approval ratings for the Republican President Bush, an unpopular war in Iraq and a seemingly imminent recession may make 2008 an especially difficult year for Republicans. Political scientists have shown that dollars raised are related to prospects for victory, which helps to explain why Democrats running for president across the board have been raking in the dough and helping to dismantle the fund-raising advantage Republicans have historically enjoyed. At the end of the third quarter of 2007, Democratic presidential contenders had raised more funds than Republicans by a 1.5-to-1 margin ($244 million to $175 million respectively).

The Democrats

Presidential Candidate Fundraising (through third quarter 2007)

Candidate	Total Raised	Total Spent
Clinton, Hillary	$90,935,788	$40,472,775
Obama, Barack	$80,256,427	$44,169,236
Edwards, John	$30,329,152	$17,932,103
Richardson, Bill	$18,699,937	$12,878,349
Dodd, Chris	$13,598,152	$9,723,278
Biden, Joe	$8,215,739	$6,329,324
Kucinich, Dennis	$2,130,200	$1,803,576
Gravel, Mike	$238,745	$207,604

Source: Center for Responsive Politics

The two leading Democrats, New York Senator Hillary Clinton—the first candidate ever to announce she would eschew public funds for both the primary and general election campaigns—and Illinois Senator Barack Obama, have raised unprecedented sums. Clinton had collected nearly $91 million at the end of the third quarter, while Obama brought in over $80 million. The other Democrats also raised impressive amounts. Despite the uphill battle Republicans may be facing in 2008, Republican contenders also attracted considerable sums from donors (see tables).

Where Does the Money Come From?

Donors contribute to political campaigns for many reasons. Some contributions are purposefully aimed to advance or support a policy agenda, while other donors enjoy the social benefits associated with giving: networking, name recognition and more.

Material motives—quid pro quo expectations to get something in return—induce at least some donors to give, but campaign finance laws are designed to prevent such impropriety. This is one reason why the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 outlawed so-called soft money. While the Watergate-era Federal Election Campaign Act placed strict limits and disclosure requirements on individual contributions (the maximum was $1,000 for the primary election and $1,000 for the general), a loophole in the law allowed the political parties, rather than the candidates, to raise soft money in virtually unlimited amounts for certain "party-building" activities, which frequently indirectly helped individual candidates. During several previous presidential campaigns, the amount of soft money skyrocketed. In 2000, for example, the Democratic National Committee raised $136.6 million in soft money contributions; the Republican National Committee raised $166.2 million in soft money in the same cycle. The B.C.R.A. was supposed to end the era of soft money, double individual contribution limits and index them to inflation.

Before long, however, new loopholes were found and exploited. The 2004 election included intense spending and activities by so-called 527 organizations (named after the applicable section of the I.R.S. tax code). These are groups created primarily to influence the nomination, election, appointment or defeat of candidates for public office. In the 2004 election, 527s raised and spent over $600 million. Typically, these groups spend most heavily during the general election campaign; and it is expected that barring any legislative or regulatory intervention, 527s will be active again in 2008.

Besides organized interest groups, individuals are finding ways within the constraints of the law to remain valuable to their candidates of choice. One of the more contentious issues surrounding the 2008 fund-raising cycle is the practice called bundling. The Wall Street Journal reported in 2007 that bundling, by which a single fund-raiser gathers up contributions for a candidate from employees, clients and acquaintances, has become the latest way for campaigns to raise big money. Ample evidence points to a bundling boom. Based on data through September 2007, a Wall Street Journal analysis concludes that there are nearly twice as many bundlers in the current election as there were in the 2004 cycle, a nearly tenfold increase since 2000. Bundled donations in 2007 accounted for 28.3 percent of total candidate intake,

compared with 18.2 percent in 2004 and 7.7 percent in 2000. Nearly every major 2008 candidate has a bundling program.

Candidates are also relying much more on professional fund-raisers to fill their campaign coffers. An analysis by the Center for Responsive Politics reveals considerable growth in the outsourcing of campaign fund-raising. Campaign organizations hired about 800 fund-raising consultants to bring in $31 million in the first three quarters of 2007, up from about 260 such firms (and $12.3 million) for the same period in 2003. Republicans have out-outsourced Democrats by a wide margin, with Mitt Romney, the biggest outsourcer, tapping fund-raising consultants to bring in $3.1 million in the first three quarters of 2007. By contrast, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton have outsourced $600,000 and $500,000 respectively in the same period.

The Republicans

Presidential Candidate Fundraising (through third quarter 2007)

Candidate	Total Raised	Total Spent
Romney, Mitt	$62,829,069	$53,612,552
Giuliani, Rudy	$47,253,521	$30,603,695
McCain, John	$32,124,785	$28,636,157
Thompson, Fred	$12,828,111	$5,706,367
Paul, Ron	$8,268,453	$2,824,786
Brownback, Sam	$4,235,333	$4,140,660
Tancredo, Tom	$3,538,244	$3,458,130
Huckabee, Mike	$2,345,798	$1,694,497
Hunter, Duncan	$1,890,873	$1,758,132

Source: Center for Responsive Politics

Increased reliance on bundlers and outsourcing fund-raising may be legal, but they are not without risk, because donors are further removed from the campaigns and may not be properly vetted. Hillary Clinton, for example, was forced to return over $850,000 in cash to Norman Hsu, one of her major bundlers, when it became known that Hsu, a New York apparel giant, may have been involved in an illegal investment scheme.

On the plus side, B.C.R.A. changes as well as technological developments seem to be bringing more small donors (those who give less than $200) into the fray. The Campaign Finance Institute estimates that 21 percent of all contributions through the third quarter in 2007 came from small donors—many of them making their contributions online—up from 18 percent over the corresponding period in 2003. Small donors accounted for one-quarter or more of total intake (through the third quarter of 2007) for Obama, Edwards, Thompson, Paul, Huckabee, Tancredo, Kucinich, Hunter and Gravel. Over the complete period of the 2004 cycle, 31 percent of total Bush contributions came from small donors, 32 percent of Kerry's contributions and 61 percent of Dean's.

Has the System Changed?

Though the number of small donors has risen, presidential candidates continue to draw the lion's share (two-thirds) of their individual contributions from donors of large amounts (over $1,000). And for the most part, campaign organizations appear to be finding ways to overcome the soft money ban. B.C.R.A. has actually done little to improve the system of presidential campaign finance.

The B.C.R.A. did not address the system of public financing for presidential campaigns that has been in place since 1976—a system that is essentially defunct and may even be on the verge of collapse. Federal law enables eligible presidential candidates to accept public funding for their campaigns provided they adhere to strict state-by-state spending limits. Given the inordinate importance of low-population, early-contest states like Iowa and New Hampshire, candidates are reluctant to restrict their spending in these states, especially if their opponents are not doing so. In the 2000 election, George W. Bush announced he would forgo public funding in order to be exempted from state spending caps. By 2004, three main candidates—Bush, Kerry and Dean—rejected public financing for the same reasons, and in this election most candidates have also rejected public funds. In a historic and unprecedented announcement, Hillary Clinton declared she would even reject public financing in the general election campaign in order to be free of spending constraints.

Michael Malbin, director of the nonpartisan Campaign Finance Institute, has argued forcefully that this system is obsolete and is desperately in need of reform. An institute task force has proposed a number of reforms to preserve the public financing system, including raising the spending limit in nomination cycles, creating an "escape hatch" for public financing candidates who run against opponents who reject public money, changing the matching fund formula and raising the voluntary income tax checkoff to finance some of these changes. In its current form, the public financing system, originally intended to level the playing field in presidential elections, is not achieving this purpose. This fuels fears that the nominations, and even the election, will go to the highest bidder.

The Good News

Yet there is always a silver lining. Regarding the impact of contributions on governing, political scientists have found

little evidence of a true quid pro quo in which politicians deliver in return for donations. Elected representatives are constrained by vigorous ethics laws, and other factors (like constituency preferences, partisanship and ideology) are likely to be far more influential in a leader's decision-making caculations. Money may buy access to a politician, but it rarely guarantees outcomes.

There are also limits on how much success money can buy a candidate on the campaign trail. Consider the victory of Huckabee in Iowa despite the fact that his campaign was run on a shoestring budget. Experience from the 2004 cycle also suggests caution. Dean failed to capture the nomination despite being the year-end money leader.

As the eminent political scientist V. O. Key noted decades ago, voters are not fools. They realize that money is necessary to sustain a national dialogue about ideas and policy proposals. The one thing money buys for sure is a national conversation, a debate over candidates and policies, that is essential to the democratic process. The big bucks filling the 2008 presidential campaign coffers show that at least we have that. A

The author reviews presidential fundraising statistics for the fourth quarter of 2007, at americamagazine.org.

‘An Ordinary Mystic’

The faith and art of Alfonse Borysewicz

BY MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY

PHOTO: ANNE REIDY

Alfonse Borysewicz standing in front of “Cor Unum” in the private chapel of the Oratory Church of St. Boniface, Brooklyn, N.Y.

THE RELATIONSHIP between the art world and the Catholic Church in recent years has been, to say the least, strained. To pick two prominent examples, Andres Serrano’s photograph “Piss Christ” was condemned by Catholic leaders when it was first shown in 1989, as was Chris Ofili’s elephant-dung-covered Madonna, “The Holy Virgin Mary,” when it was unveiled at the Brooklyn Museum 10 years later. While these works have their Catholic defenders, the controversies that erupted around them are a sign of a wide gap that has opened up between art—specifically the visual arts—and religion. Once the foremost patron of the arts, the church is now more circumspect about contemporary painting. The art world, meanwhile, seems glad to be rid of the church’s influence, exercising its own kind of censorship on material it deems tainted by sentimental piety.

Trying to bridge the gap between these two spheres is not for the faint of heart, and one is hard-pressed to find many artists who have the courage to try. One painter who is both a committed Catholic and a serious artist is Alfonse Borysewicz (pronounced Bor-uh-CHEV-itz), a Brooklyn-based former seminarian whose work has been shown both in Chelsea and in a Catholic church in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Gregory Wolfe, an editor at Image, a quarterly review

MAURICE TIMOTHY REIDY is the online editor of **America**.

of arts and religion, calls Borysewicz one of the most important religious artists since the French Catholic Georges Rouault. When first encountering Borysewicz's work, Wolfe felt "he was in the presence of something sacred." He sensed that the art was "almost being offered up, instead of saying 'Look at me.'"

Yet despite his strong desire to exhibit his work in "sacred spaces," Borysewicz has received little attention from the church. His work is currently on display at the Oratory Church of St. Boniface in Brooklyn and has appeared in a few liturgical art magazines, but he has failed to break through to the next level. His difficulties as a Catholic trying to make it in the art world—and an artist trying to make in the Catholic world—say much about the state of religion and art in our era.


"Your Own Soul," 1998

'Separated' From New York

Borysewicz is an avid reader of theology. He likes to sprinkle his conversation with quotes from Karl Rahner ("Every act has eternal consequences") or René Girard (a historian who has written on violence and religion), and recently he has been working his way through the writings of Bernard Lonergan. While he does not claim to understand it all, Borysewicz hopes that certain parts seep into his consciousness and find their way into his paintings. In the past he has found inspiration in homilies. In one, his pastor compared the outstretched arms of Jesus to an open embrace. That idea is reflected in his three-panel painting "Cross I & II and Blessing," which shows the two outstretched arms of Jesus, as well as a hand held in a gesture of blessing (see p. 17).

Borysewicz lives in Bay Ridge, a traditionally Italian section of Brooklyn, with his wife and two children, ages 20 and 14. A tall man approaching 50 who still favors the clothes of a Brooklyn hipster, Borysewicz paints in a walk-up studio apartment in the shadow of the Brooklyn Bridge, in a neighborhood known as Dumbo. Down the street is the storied River Café, and in the distance the skyline of Lower Manhattan. When he was young, Borysewicz enjoyed success across the river, where his work was exhibited in galleries in Chelsea.

Borysewicz now considers himself "separated" from the New York art scene. He sees theology and art as "one continuum," but as of late, he says, he has been forced to choose between the two. Asked to pinpoint the moment when his fortunes changed, he recalls a show in the late 1990s. (It is a sign of Borysewicz's liturgical-mindedness that the show was meant to mark the last Advent of the millennium.) The centerpiece of the exhibit was "Your Own Soul," a small chapel he constructed from paintings and collages. The title, taken from Simeon's words to Mary in Luke's Gospel ("a sword will pierce your own soul") was suggested by Michael Paul Gallagher, S.J., a professor at the Gregorian University in Rome, who first met Borysewicz in 1993.

"It took the form of a four-sided small chapel," Gallagher recalled in an e-mail interview, "with symbols of tears on the outside, and one had to enter the interior on one's knees. Inside you first saw a large, dark figure suggesting a dead body, and as the eyes became used to the dim light, one discovered smaller gold hints of resurrection."

As a Catholic, Borysewicz had always been interested in religious themes, but in early paintings, like "River Rouge and Grace" (1993-96) or in his "Strata" series (1992), the imagery was more abstract. In such works as "Your Own Soul," his art became more representational, which, he says, was "the beginning of my undoing." Curators and collectors were "comfortable with [his faith] in the abstract, but not in the flesh." That may seem like a broad indictment, but Wolfe thinks it is particularly difficult for a religious painter to make his way in the contemporary art world. "Of all the different art forms, the one that is the most hostile, the most hermetically sealed against religion in any kind of dimension…is the visual arts," he says.

In 1995 at least one critic recognized the spiritual dimension of Borysewicz's painting. "One look around the gallery tells you that Alfonse Borysewicz is a person of tremendous spiritual intensity," Pepe Karmel wrote in a

1995 review in The New York Times. "The problem is getting this intensity onto canvas in a convincing way." Borysewicz, not surprisingly, disagrees with Karmel's implied criticism—where else could the critic sense the intensity except from the canvas?—but tries to take a detached approach to criticism. What is most important to him now, he says, is "not so much how I changed painting but how painting changed me." His goal is no longer to mount a show in New York, but to present his art in churches and to help younger artists to do so as well.

"Sacred spaces have to inspire again," he told me during an interview at his studio. "So many churches rest on what they've been given. There's a younger generation out there who want to authentically give their voice to it."

Finding a Vocation and a Home

Borysewicz was raised in a working-class neighborhood in Detroit when the city was undergoing tumultuous change. As a boy, he learned about the importance of faith from his parents, who were still mourning the loss of his older sister, who had died two years before he was born. Every week the family would go to the graveyard, and his parents often spoke about her. That experience gave him a sense that "you were always breaking bread with your past, that the past was present…and the vehicle for that was faith," he says.

Borysewicz attended college for two years before entering the seminary, where he met Bishop Kenneth Untener of Saginaw, Mich., who encouraged him to paint. In 1981, he left the seminary and moved to Boston, where he taught in a Catholic high school while taking art classes at night.

He describes his work from that period as "Otto Dix meets Marc Chagall." In a few years he was showing his paintings in New York and Boston. The twin tragedies of his father's death in 1983 and the outbreak of the AIDS pandemic, which took the lives of many friends and colleagues, gave him a sense that suffering and death were very much a part of life.

In his essay in Image (No. 32), Borysewicz wrote that he was also struggling with "guilt over my choice of vocation." He wrote:

> Given my family's working-class ethic, what I was doing seemed strange. At times it was construed as lazy, arrogant or sissy, but the charge that hurt me the most, and still does, was that what I was doing was indulging in artifice. People make that accusation because they don't see art as part of the real world, which they see as made up of bread-and-butter issues like building a solid career; they do not see how the struggle of faith and its representations connects with all of our lives.

Borysewicz has found an artistic home at the Oratory Church of St. Boniface. He was encouraged to paint for the church when the parish moved from its former home a few miles away to its current site in downtown Brooklyn. The Rev. Mark Lane, the pastor, coordinated the redesign of the old church of St. Boniface with the goal of bringing together "the old and the new." He recruited Borysewicz, a parishioner, to contribute to the project.

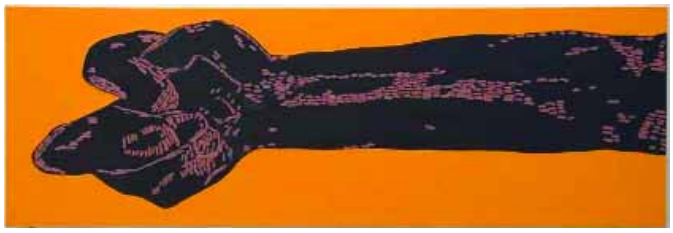
Two of Borysewicz's paintings are displayed behind statues in the church's vestibule. Borysewicz would prefer the art to stand on its own, rather than behind more traditional works of art, but Lane gave serious thought to the decision. He believes the older statues—like one of St. Philip Neri—will help lead the worshipers to the more modern, challenging work.

"We've never had any negative comments from anyone," says Lane. "Although sometimes you hear, 'I don't understand what it means'—the sort of standard response to contemporary modern art."

The most challenging piece of art at St. Boniface is not in the sanctuary, but in the priests' private chapel. Known as "Cor Unum," Borysewicz's four-paneled canvas covers an entire wall of the room. The center panel depicts a bee hive of activity; the right panel shows Jesus peering from behind a honeycomb. The images are scattered about, some difficult to discern. It is difficult to imagine "Cor Unum" displayed on the wall of your local parish, but unlike many pieces of conventional liturgical art, it provokes contemplation. When showing off the piece, Lane pointed to the honeycomb motif, which he interprets as a symbol of how, in John's Gospel, the early church viewed life through the lens of the community.

"It's actually quite accurate, theologically," Lane says.

Borysewicz finds it frustrating that he can-



IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

"Cross I & II and Blessing," 2006

not place his art in more churches. Too many churches are unimaginative, he says, adding that while parishes have experimented with modern music, architecture, even dance, they seem less willing to embrace modern visual art.

Why? "A cautious piety seems safer," says Father Gallagher. "I suppose there is a fear that people will find [modern art] too strange, difficult or different. Caravaggio got something of the same reaction in his day. One of Alfonse's favorite theologians, Bernard Lonergan, once quipped that the church always arrives on the scene a little breathless and a little late."

A Difficult Choice

Making the choice to be a painter has been a difficult one for Borysewicz. He has struggled financially and has done teaching on the side to provide for his family. "I feel like I've taken a vow with painting," he says. At a conference for young evangelicals in New York in March, Borysewicz told the crowd that he is often approached by people who say they intend to devote their lives to painting when they retire. "No you won't," he tells them. "This life is not a dress rehearsal."

"Alfonse is very down to earth," says Gallagher, "often surprising audiences with his emphasis on art as hard work [and] daily waiting." He tells them it is "not as romantic as people imagine."

Gregory Wolfe, a fan and friend, suggested that Borysewicz has suffered some "emotional fallout" as a result of separating himself from the contemporary art scene. In our conversations, Borysewicz also suggested that he was emerging from a dark time. When pressed, he noted enigmatically, "I've taken hostages on this journey—my kids and my wife."

After meeting with Borysewicz several times, I was struck by the ways he describes himself. He often identifies himself as an "ordinary mystic"—an allusion to Rahner's comment that all modern believers are in some ways mystics. In professional circles he has taken to calling himself an "icon painter," although more traditional icon painters might take exception to that description. It is obvious that he sees himself as part of an artistic religious tradition that stretches back centuries.

Identifying himself so clearly as a religious painter has had its consequences, but Borysewicz does not seem to regret his choice. He likes to say that the purpose of the religious image is twofold: to "tell us what happened and to remind us what was promised." Finding new ways to present the Gospel story may be a rare artistic endeavor today, but Borysewicz's work is a reminder that it is still fertile soil for those willing to till it. A

Alfonse Borysewicz narrates an audio slide show of his art work, at americamagazine.org.

Pilgrimages for Peace

Bob Maat on postwar Cambodia

BOB MAAT, *a former Jesuit brother, spent the past 27 years in Cambodia working as a physician's assistant in refugee camps and then as a co-founder of the Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation. He came to the United States in 2007 for a year to visit peace communities throughout the country and returned to Cambodia last October. The interviewer,* **GEORGE M. ANDERSON, S.J.,** *is an associate editor of* ***America****.*

HOW DID YOU HAPPEN TO GO TO CAMBODIA?

I left the United States in 1979 to work as a physician's assistant with Jesuit Refugee Services in camps on the Thailand-Cambodia border; it was the time of the Khmer Rouge slaughter of Cambodians, the so-called killing fields. Initially I was to stay only three to six months, but I ended up staying in the camps for nine years.

I took a year off (in 1988-89) to work as an ordinary rice farmer, living with my adoptive Cambodian family. Soon after, I helped found the Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation, a group of like-minded people focusing on issues of peace and war, which is still functioning. One of our first undertakings was to attend the peace talks in Jakarta, in Indonesia, where we met the Cambodian Buddhist monk Maha Ghosananda. He asked, "Why do you help just one group of my people, refugees, when all Cambodians want peace?"

After the peace accords were signed, we accompanied Ghosananda on foot with 100 refugees from the Thai border's camps to Phnom Penh. That was in 1992, the first of many peace walks he began. The walk, or pilgrimage, is called the *Dhammayietra* in Cambodian; it goes back to Buddha himself, who walked with his monks and nuns into areas of conflict over 2,500 years ago to witness for peace. Maha used a peace prayer every day: "The suffering of Cambodia has been deep; from this suffering comes great compassion; great compassion makes a peaceful heart; a peaceful heart makes a peaceful person." The prayer continues with words like family, community, nation and world.

Has your spirituality changed through your close contact with Maha Ghosananda?

My spirituality arises from the pilgrimages. There have been 17 walks now. You almost automatically enter into prayer and meditation as you walk. In a small country like Cambodia, I walk almost everywhere. If somebody offers me a ride, I take it, but otherwise I just walk. I look at life as a long walk, somewhat in the same way that Dorothy Day saw life as a long loneliness, the title of her autobiography.

PHOTO: REUTERS/CHOR SOKUNTHEA

Buddhist monks, participating in a human rights march, pour water to bless villagers as they arrive in Siem Reap, about 186 miles (300 km) northwest of Phnom Penh, March 14, 2007.

Sometimes the walk is easy; but sometimes, in the cold and the heat, it's hard.

Mostly I just see myself as a person who tries to listen inwardly. I get up at 3 or 4 a.m. to sit in silence, often writing as I sit, as a form of meditation. In addition to Maha, who died in March 2007, Gandhi has also been a big influence in my life.

Maha used to say that we must leave the safety of our temples and churches and enter the temple of human experience, filled with human suffering. If we really listen to the Buddha, Christ or Gandhi, we can do nothing else but be in refugee camps, prisons, ghettos and battlefields, Maha would say. These have to be our temples. He speaks of this in his book, *Step by Step*.

A Cambodian student once said to me, 'You Americans make great fish ponds.' He meant the craters left by U.S. bombs, which then filled with water.

What did you do when the war in Cambodia ended?

Many people were suffering and dying from AIDS, so we began a program in Cambodia's northwest to help them. We also worked in the prisons. The justice system in Cambodia is itself a source of suffering. No one with money is in prison, because you can pay your way out. Although some Cambodians are behind bars because of violent crimes, most are in prison because of what might be called crimes arising from poverty, like stealing. The longest sentence is 15 years; Cambodia has no death penalty.

The basic unmet needs of prisoners are for clean water, adequate food and exercise and family visits. One prison we worked in was built on land without an adequate clean water source. Plus, the sewage system didn't function properly. As for food, only 25 cents a day was allotted for that. The guards' pay is minimal, so when visitors come, often after a long journey, they have to give the guards money or be turned away.

That low-pay situation prevails across the board for government workers. A teacher might deliberately teach very fast and say to a student who couldn't follow, come back at 5 p.m., and I will give you that same lesson for 500 riel (12 cents). Doctors, too, might put in an hour at the public hospital and then go off to their private practice. Everyone has to find a way to survive. They're often driven to take advantage of one another.

AIDS is an especially difficult situation in prisons because without money to pay the medic, it is not easy to be tested. As a result, prisoners don't know they are infected until symptoms appear. In prison, once you're found to be infected, by law you should get free care. But because the prison medics are paid so little, you have to pay them to receive care. Ultimately, the really sick ones are taken to the hospital, where they're finally given the proper anti-retroviral medications.

My prison work began when I was a translator for the International Committee of the Red Cross. We also started a peacemakers program as part of the Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation: some of the local youth would go into the prisons as volunteers to teach basic literacy skills. You'd have these young people, with all the usual prejudices against prisoners, going into a huge cell with 120 men, about a third of whom couldn't read or write. In Cambodia, you respect your teachers. So the prisoners who wanted to study would take their student teachers to a corner and the whole cell would stay quiet. The prisoners realized that the young people were volunteers, not paid and not part of a nongovernmental group, which made their respect for them go even higher.

Are landmines still a serious problem there?

A big problem. It is estimated that as many as 10 million were laid during the war years. But mines don't know when a war is over, so people are still being injured and killed. The mine removal process has helped, but two years ago there was a big jump in the number of injuries and deaths. We found that because China had raised the price of metal, poor farmers would look for unexploded ordnance to get the metal parts they could sell. It was a matter of poor people just trying to survive, but blowing themselves up in the process.

Part of the problem has to do with the land. Increasingly, wealthy people are pushing poor people off their land, so poor people have to move farther out to areas not yet cleared of mines. The growing gap between rich and poor is one of the seeds for a possible future war. You get a sense of the gap when you hear about tourists going to Angkor Wat, Cambodia's most famous temple. They can fly in from cities around the world, stay at a five-star hotel nearby, then be driven out to the temple complex on new roads. They never realize that on bumpy country roads within a few miles of the temple, people barely have enough to survive.

Are there still signs of the war in Cambodia?

A student there once said to me, "You Americans make great fish ponds." He meant the craters left by U.S. bombs, which then filled with water. He was too young to know

those days himself, but he heard about them from his parents, who remembered the time when the United States bombed the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia in an effort to end the Vietnam War. The Cambodian peace accords were signed in the early 1990s, but peace didn't take hold for another decade. Cambodians my age, in their 50s, carry the suffering of the Khmer Rouge period. An organizer of the peace walks once pointed to a man selling bananas in the market and said, "He killed about 20 people in my village in 1977." We bought fruit from him and joked about the price. People carry the war within them.

When Cambodians realize you've been there a long time, they just start talking about the war years and the suffering they endured. Once a young man stopped me and said: "Do you remember me? You fed me ice cream when I was a baby in 1979. I know because my mother saw you walking by, and she told me about the refugee camp where you were working." I initially worked in an intensive feeding ward, when starving people were escaping from Cambodia into Thailand in 1979. Still another time, a man on a motorcycle stopped me and offered me a ride. Same question: "Remember me? You gave me soap when I was a prisoner in 1994." "Was it four bars of Lux?" "Yes," he said. That was when I was working as a translator for the International Committee of the Red Cross—distributing supplies like soap was part of the job.

Before I came back to the United States last fall for a year of visiting peace communities and discerning whether to go back to Cambodia, three young people from our peacemakers program wanted to go back to the site of the refugee camp where they had been born. On Christmas Day 1984, that camp was attacked. One of the young women visiting her birthplace in the camp remembered being picked up as a five-year-old by the back of the neck and flung onto the back of a motorcycle when shelling began. My own memory of that time as a physician's assistant was of seeing people around me dying. That same Christmas Day, in the midst of the bombing, I delivered a baby.

What will you do if you decide to remain in the United States?

I would hope to use the many years of war experience in Thailand and Cambodia to emphasize what war does to people. That is part of my past experience, and it's part of me now. I sometimes wonder whether there will be war again in Cambodia. At times, there seem to be more seeds of war being sown than seeds of peace. Maha Ghosananda used to speak of what he called landmines of the heart: greed, hatred and ignorance. These have to be "de-mined" if there is to be lasting peace. A

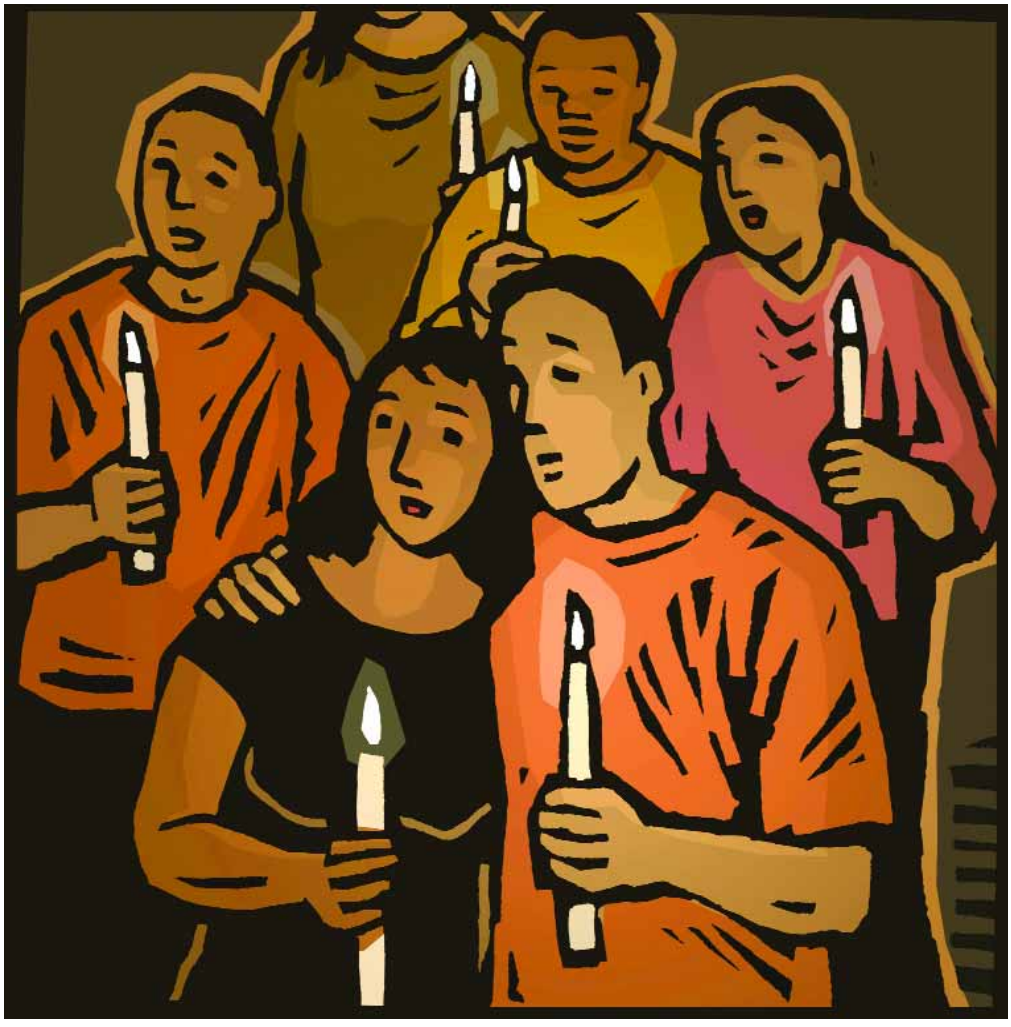
The Witness of Courage and Forgiveness

BY CAMILLE D'ARIENZO

PREPARATIONS FOR THE 10TH Annual Service for Families and Friends of Murder Victims last October turned out to be both fatiguing and exhilarating. Members of the Cherish Life Circle, which sponsored the service, know what it is like for mourners to come, some year after year and others for the first time. They bring hearts broken but also grateful to a gathering that provides understanding and comfort. Many first learn of the gatherings through Safe Horizon, a private, nonprofit organization that offers a broad scope of services to crime victims in New York City.

The naked suffering of the survivors produces weariness in those who plan the event, extend the welcome and provide the service. Gratitude comes from owning the privilege of comforting these profoundly afflicted victims of violence.

The procedures are pretty well in place now, although three years ago we almost forgot the candles for the candlelight service. After each year's gathering, we evaluate the service in the hope of improving it the next year. We have learned to insist that attendees preregister with Safe Horizon; we have recognized the value of speakers who have themselves lost a loved one through murder; we have decided to use a Spanish interpreter and to set out juice cups for the children. Over time we have moved from parish churches to a 150-year-old convent of the Sisters of Mercy, where it is easier to control the environment.



ART BY JULIE LONNEMAN

The First Service

The original incentive for the annual service came from a news segment shown on CBS's "Sunday Morning" a dozen years ago, when the late Charles Kuralt was the program's host. The Rev. Michael Doyle, pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Camden, N.J., was a featured speaker. Situated in a devastated section of Camden, the parish is a center of strong pastoral leadership that reaches out to the area's abandoned poor. Father Doyle described an Advent Mass that included some two dozen participants who were mourning murdered loved ones. Over their hearts they wore the names of the dead, whose memory he invoked from the altar. Amid candles and hymns, a deep sense of reverence for the dead filled the church.

The Cherish Life Circle adopted some of Father Doyle's symbols and procedures, but decided not to celebrate Mass, since most of our attendees are not Catholic. We held our first service on March 16, 1997, in Brooklyn's majestic Queen of All Saints Church.

If Father Doyle had provided our original inspiration, a 10-year-old boy in brown shoes who attended that first service sealed our commitment. He

CAMILLE D'ARIENZO, R.S.M., is the founder of the Cherish Life Circle.

raced up the steps just minutes before the service started, dressed in suit and tie, and without the sneakers kids usually wear.

"Son, what are you doing here?" I asked.

"My mama sent me."

"Do you know what this is?" I pressed.

"Uh-huh. My mama couldn't come, so she sent me."

"Was someone in your family murdered?"

"Uh-huh. My brother. He was 15."

I added his brother's name to the list, made out a name card for the child to wear and put him in a pew with mothers. When his brother's name was called, he rose, stepped into the aisle and squared his shoulders, which then crumpled as he broke down sobbing. Mothers quickly rose from the pews, embraced him and led him to the others in the sanctuary.

When the service ended, I searched for the child, but he was nowhere to be found—not in the gathering space, not on the sidewalk. I had no address and knew only that he had taken two subway trains to reach this unfamiliar place of worship. The boy in the brown shoes lives on as a kind of guardian angel of the group. He had come upon a peaceful place of compassionate welcome and prayer, an important experience for a child wounded by violence.

How Real Is the Need

A few years later a stunning, well-dressed white woman arrived with her 24-year-old son for a service in Our Lady of Refuge Church. Within minutes, she showed me a photo of her older son, handsome in a tuxedo; he had been murdered six months earlier. She was distraught. Eventually she and her son took their seats, and I turned to greet an equally stunning African-American woman, who showed me a photo of her 20-something son, handsome in his tuxedo. He, too, had been murdered a few months earlier. "Please come with me," I said; "there's someone who knows what you're going through."

Another year, we met a gentleman who stood stoically during the social gathering that precedes the annual service. His wife sat expressionless with a pre-adolescent boy beside her. "The man who killed my son killed my whole family," the man said. The older of his sons had been shot to death on a Brooklyn street five years earlier. Determined to track down the killer, he scoured the neighborhood night after night. As weeks went by, his younger son set out on his own to find the culprit. One night he didn't come home. He remains missing.

One day a woman with a young boy appeared at the man's door. Not knowing any better, she asked for the murdered son. She had come from the South with the child the dead man had secretly fathered. Instead of welcoming the woman and his newly discovered grandson, the grief-stricken man sent them both away. A few months later, though, the child returned with a stranger; the boy's mother had been murdered on a Brooklyn street. It was this young boy who now sat behind his grandmother, the man's wife.

"The man who killed my son killed my whole family," he repeated. "We don't celebrate anything—not Christmas, not birthdays, nothing."

"What about this young boy?" the greeter asked.

The speaker that day described Jesus' instruction to roll away the stone entombing Lazarus. She spoke of the importance of removing from our hearts stones that impede the flow of love to the living. Later, the man, who thought he had lost his whole family, said he'd understood those words and was ready for help. We introduced him to a Safe Horizon counselor.

In September 2007 the Office of Prison Ministry in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, N.Y., invited representatives of the Cherish Life Circle to help them start a similar service on Long Island. So did the Prisoner and Victim Empowerment Committee of St. Gabriel's Parish in the Bronx. Both groups share the Cherish Life Circle's concern for incarcerated people. All agree on the need for outreach to relatives and friends of murder victims.

Our experience has persuaded us that victims of violence have a need, sometimes not recognized, for the blessing of peace that such services can bring. In return, their gift to us has been the witness of their courage and forgiveness. Asked what should be done to her daughter's killer, a woman replied, "He should be punished, but not killed. I would never want another mother to undergo the sorrow I have known." A

Our Broken Parish

When respect for the laity is lost

BY A PARISHIONER

Do not fret because of the wicked;
do not be envious of wrongdoers....
Trust in the Lord, and do good.
—Psalm 37:1, 3

WHILE WE CATHOLICS profess universality, the fact is that Catholic parishes can differ radically. I do not just mean culturally, in the way that a parish on the island of Guam is different from a parish in the city of Stuttgart, but in the way a parish in one part of Los Angeles, say, can be quite different from one in another part of that city. Or in Boston. Or Atlanta. Or Chicago. Parishes vary in music, in ministry, in outreach, in liturgy, in attitude, in teaching style.

In big cities Catholics can parish-shop, looking for a Catholic community that is a good fit for them. Living in a small town, however, can be a difficult proposition for a Catholic. In our town, newcomers can church-shop among the Christian houses of worship, of which there are many. But Catholics have only one choice: our parish.

When my husband and I moved here over 20 years ago, that fact made us a bit nervous. We had come from a metropolitan area, where there was a Catholic church every few miles and where we parish-shopped. When we really liked the homilies of a priest who worked at the parish in the next suburb over, we got permission to switch our affiliation to that parish, which was a 10-minute drive rather than a two-minute drive from our house. In our new small-town life, the next closest Catholic parish was 50 miles away. So we were relieved when our local pastor turned out to be an intelligent, affable older priest with an open mind and an interest in establishing new ministries and services within the parish. He was a delight, and we felt accepted and challenged at our new parish—a healthy combination. We felt lucky. We felt blessed.

Eventually that priest retired and then passed away. He had baptized our two youngest children and had made us feel like an integral part of our faith community. Now, two decades and a couple of pastors later, we are still here. Our Catholic roots are deeply, emphatically here. This is the church where all of our children have come of spiritual age, receiving their first Communion and the sacrament of confirmation, and where friends have been married and buried. But like never before, we are now contemplating making that 50-mile-each-way weekly commute to another parish.

Why? Our parish has become for us a place of anger and artifice, of division and dysfunction. A 50-mile trip does not seem too great a sacrifice to make, if by staying where we are we become resentful, non-practicing Catholics. But the 50 miles does present burdens. At that distance, how can my husband and I both be involved socially and in ministry beyond Sunday Mass, the way we want to be? How does our teenager feel about attending a youth group full of strangers? We are reluctant to commit ourselves to a parish so far from home.

A New Pastor

The origin of our crisis may be obvious by now: we have a new pastor. The new pastor has brought new priorities with which

THE AUTHOR is not identified here to protect both the staff and pastor of the parish described.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK / M. JONES

we do not agree. He also believes that the parishioners are the sheep and he is the shepherd, which translates to: My way or the highway. He enjoys all the power, without the intuition or skill of leadership.

Since his arrival, the parish staff has experienced a 100 percent turnover (including this writer), and three deacons have requested assignments elsewhere. That's right: at parishes 50 miles away. The parish office, as well as the finance council, is currently staffed by good Catholics who believe that enduring the ego and wrath of their boss is simply an opportunity to turn some exquisite suffering over to God. For the greater glory of God and the Catholic Church, these suffering servants put up with impossible working conditions. For those of us who used to work there, the conditions were affecting our health, our families, our ministries—indeed, our faith—in unacceptable ways. One by one, through various combinations of prayer, counseling and sleepless nights, we came to the painful conclusion that the only sane option, the only way to relieve our cognitive dissonance, was to give notice.

It is hard to describe the parish situation without appearing to cast stones. Every priest is unique in his gifts and his shortcomings, and living in and contributing to an authentic faith community is never simple or easy. Of course there will be differences of opinion, and differing commitments and callings, among parishioners. But the Gospel is the Gospel. To be a dwelling place for the Gospel, a healthy parish requires cooperation, compassion, listening, honesty, respect, trust and shared goals, just for starters. But when all of those things go missing, the community has no foundation on which to rest as it weathers storms. The storms take over. The structure is lost.

Broken, Isolated, Adrift

We are, I believe, a broken parish. We do not really know what to do, other than pray. The priest shortage is partly to blame, as is our own surrender to frustration. Our pastor has accused some of us of a conspiracy to bring him down, but really, we are just broken in our own little ways, isolated and adrift. Some of us who can afford the gas commute to other parishes. Some of us skip Mass. Some of us have begun to give our offerings to other charities, where our dollars will be put to responsible and life-affirming use. We realize, when we are berated for the dwindling collection plate, that we have perhaps hit upon the only vote that counts: our money. This makes us even sadder.

We are Catholics in search of a parish, wanting to practice the corporal works of mercy, but wanting also to be treated as adult persons of faith. We understand the shepherd imagery, but we are not actually sheep. We are thoughtful, functional, searching, caring grownups of good will. We require honesty, a well-formed conscience and a bit of humility in a pastor, because, like it or not, the pastor makes or breaks a parish. I have lately wondered how many other Catholics, in other parts of the world, have decided to sit out parish life because of a heedless hierarchy addicted to trappings and power. How many laypeople find that their gifts and talents go unused, that their leaders are not interested in what they have to say or to offer, that although they are believers, they just do not need the grief of parish life? And if, besides, no one seems to miss them?

If Jesus himself, disguised as a layperson, visited some of our parishes, if he sat somewhere in the middle and did not sing very loudly and forgot his envelope, would he feel welcomed, loved and necessary?

I may be disillusioned and discouraged, but I am also stubborn. Much as I mourn our current state of affairs, I tell myself that I refuse to leave. Not only am I a Catholic, I tell myself; I am also a local Catholic. Our parish may be broken, but our faith is not dead, not as long as we find ways to see Christ in others and as long as we try to be the face and hands of Christ for others. We are called to live as Christ's followers, a call we must honor and answer, even when we are tired and tapped out, and even when our parish gets in the way.

All the same, each week, I edge a little closer to that long commute. I know that through the centuries the church has survived and grown despite bad pastors, misguided bishops and inept popes. But probably not without some serious parish-shopping on the part of the laity. A

What Might Have Been

Few films disappoint on such a high level.

BY RICHARD A. BLAKE

Keira Knightley stars in a scene from the movie "Atonement."

CNS PHOTO/FOCUS FEATURES

NOVELISTS ARE LIARS. So are filmmakers. In their search for the truth artists find mundane reality quite unsuited to their purposes. The only solution lies in creating an alternative universe, where events and personalities lead to desired conclusions. In "Burnt Norton" T. S. Eliot observed, "Human kind cannot bear very much reality." Artists don't have to. They make their own reality. Artists conflate, in Eliot's words, "what might have been and what has been."

Until the final pages of Ian McEwan's stunning novel *Atonement* (2002), and until the final monologue in the film, the narrative presents a plausible sequence of events that demonstrates the theme that our misdeeds spiral outward with unstoppable force, working their destructive consequences on others. Apologies won't undo the damage, and words of forgiveness never come. No act of expiation can ease the pain. As the story draws to its terrifying climax, however, McEwan admits that all that has come before, the fiction within the fiction, is mere empty artifice, a fabrication. The burden of atonement actually lies with the artist who uses imagination and language to create worlds that never existed. His creation invariably leads to consequences he cannot control. He may take satisfaction in the pleasure and illumination he has given his readers, but at the same time he must atone for deceiving them.

The artist at the center of the story, embodying all artists and perhaps especially McEwan himself, is 12-year-old Briony Tallis, played by Saoirse Ronan. Surely the allusion to the early English composer Thomas Tallis (1505-85) suggests that Briony's role is considerably more than that of a precocious child, growing up in a life of privilege in the years leading up to the Second World War. In the opening scene she labors over her first play, "The Trials of Arabella," complete with a prelude in rhyming couplets. The clacking of her typewriter sets the cadence for introduction of the ponderous, intrusive score of Dario Marianelli. Literature and music fuse in the soundtrack.

Although she is a gifted child and will become a successful novelist, her vision is quite flawed. After all, she is only a child and cannot be expected to understand events beyond her experience. When she fails to put the pieces together, like any artist, she allows her imagination to supply the connections. Looking through a window, which both separates her from the action and distorts her vision, Briony watches her older sister Cecilia (Keira Knightley) and her handsome companion Robbie (James McAvoy) lounging on the rim of a fountain in the garden. For no apparent reason, Cecilia suddenly slips out of her blouse and skirt and jumps into the water. She emerges with her wet underclothes clinging to her body, dresses without embarrassment in front of Robbie, and walks quickly back to the house.

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The next scene of this nonlinear script by Christopher Hampton repeats the scene from the point of view of Cecilia and Robbie. Cecilia had come to the fountain to fill a vase. In an awkward attempt to help her, Robbie broke a piece off the lip, and in a rage at his nonchalance about the accident, Cecilia impulsively dove in to retrieve the missing piece. The event was innocent but mysterious, and Briony's imagination supplied an explanation.

Robbie himself takes to his typewriter, not to write a novel or a play, but a note of apology for the misunderstanding of the afternoon. He is the son of domestics on the estate, but Mr. Tallis recognized his talent and paid his way through Oxford. Robbie may be educated, but he is working class and owes everything to the largesse of the Tallises. He also knows that every condescending gesture of acceptance by the family is pure pretense. A letter must be very carefully drafted. He tries over and over, his typewriter also setting the cadence for the soundtrack. In desperation, and perhaps in an attempt to diffuse his frustration, he crafts a lewd proposal as a private joke, and in one of those series of mad accidents typical of McEwan's fiction, this version finds its way to Cecilia, and Briony. The younger Tallis is shocked at the crude language; the elder feigns outrage, but its bluntness rouses passion as well. Robbie has become Mellors to her Lady Chatterly. They meet, they embrace passionately, and at that moment, Briony enters the room. Not understanding the ways of adult relationships, Briony once more links these events in her imagination. When an actual sexual attack does take place on the estate, Briony leads the police to the man she knows must be responsible.

Five years later, Robbie has been released from prison to serve with the army now retreating around Dunkirk. Cecilia has become a nurse serving the war wounded in London. When she reaches the proper age, Briony (now played by Romola Garai) also tends the wounded, but she and Cecilia have not spoken since the night of the attack. While Cecilia sees her role as joining the war effort until Robbie returns from the front, Briony attends the maimed and mutilated as though her compassion can atone for the lie that led to the destruction of two young lives. Fiction demands more lies, leading to a resolution, either a happy ending or a tragedy. McEwan obliges, until that final scene, when Briony (Vanessa Redgrave), now a renowned author in the final phases of her life, uses a television interview to sort out the truth from the lies she has concocted in her autobiographical novel. Her art and her life have become one. The monologue, shot with her face filling the screen and allowing no visual distraction, is certainly the most powerful confession I can ever recall seeing on the screen.

With all its virtues, I wanted to like **Atonement** much more than I actually did, but great novels generally prove difficult to transform into great films. McEwan wrestles with subtle, complex ideas and challenges his readers to stop and reflect. Film allows no such luxury. It rolls on nonstop at 24 frames per second. The viewer gets distracted by the narrative, as though nothing more were at stake than a girl's comeuppance for shattering the lives of those around her. Vanessa Redgrave's final scene, brilliant as it is, takes us too much by surprise, as though it were part of another film.

Without being able to provide time to grasp the significance of the action, the director, Joe Wright, falls back on standard film technique to underline the importance of the message. I had the sense of the film's crying out: "Look, Mummy! See how clever I am." The soundtrack is not the only offender.

When Robbie and his surviving companions finally link up with the army awaiting evacuation, the scene suggests a Hieronymus Bosch rendering of Disneyland. The long tracking shot, enhanced with computer imaging, shows the army jammed into a ruined amusement park, with a Ferris wheel turning majestically in the background. The defeated soldiers, perhaps on the edge of madness because of their ordeal, squeal in delight on the rides they have managed to salvage. At both Dunkirk and the hospital, I felt the heavy shadow of the famous crane shots of Atlanta in "Gone With the Wind." Robbie may be losing his sanity. He comes through a clearing where the bodies of perhaps 20 young girls lie dead, each with a bullet in her forehead. Is this Robbie's hallucination? Or is it an overly obvious image of war's indiscriminate brutality?

In the opening sequences Seamus McGarvey's lush cinematography captures the beauty of the English countryside, but perhaps the style has grown too familiar through countless episodes of "Masterpiece Theater." (The same could be said of the elegant sons and daughters of the rich, who dress for dinner, clueless of the horror soon to come.) The battle scenes feature the washed-out color that Clint Eastwood used in "Letters From Iwo Jima." On the positive side, the cast is uniformly superb. Keira Knightley is both beautiful and obnoxious, chilling and passionate. It works. The three Brionys are improbably different, but they match perfectly the stages of the character's life: from innocent and thoughtless, to chastened and despairing, to wise and honest, brutally honest.

Atonement, the novel, surely created unrealistic expectations for me. The film is a fine, competent adaptation of a great novel, but I expected so much more, perhaps foolishly. Few films can disappoint on such a high level, and for that I am grateful. **A**

James T. Keane, S.J., reviews the Bob Dylan biopic "I'm Not There," at americamagazine.org.

A Slow, Sure Spiritual Journey

BY EMILIE GRIFFIN

"THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS," BY BRITON RIVIERE. PHOTO: HIP/ART RESOURCE

I HAVE SOMETIMES DESCRIBED Lent as a plunge into a thicket, an intentional wilderness journey in the company of Jesus Christ. Metaphors like these are rich and somewhat romantic. Yet the plain fact is that most of us must "do Lent" right where we are, smack in the middle of things. However we mark off the days by making some gift of self, through Lenten practices, attending Mass more frequently or works of mercy, Lent remains mostly an interior movement, a deliberate choosing to spend 40 days with the Lord. We want to follow him into the wilderness. We want to follow him to the cross.

For me, good reading is often the way in. I am not speaking here of *lectio divina*, as Lawrence Cunningham did in these pages so well last year. Instead, the phrase that comes to mind is *festina lente*, a wise Latin saying best rendered in English as "Make haste slowly." (Apparently Suetonius attributed it to Augustus Caesar, but really it is one of those bits of popular wisdom that needs no author at all.)

If Lent is to be transformational, even modestly so, we should turn away from the haste and noise and slow down. And we should choose books that slow us down, even when we read them in small increments. Lenten books are not to be grasped in outlines, digests or executive summaries. Even though short (in number of pages), good Lenten books are long on wisdom and depth. Here are a few I would recommend.

Joyce Rupp's book on prayer is entitled simply *Prayer* (Orbis and RCL Benziger, 2007, 128p, paperback, $10). This is the first in a projected series—Robert Morneau's *Reconciliation* is the second—entitled "Catholic Spirituality for Adults." Orbis will make the books available in bookstores and libraries, and RCL Benziger will distribute them through parish education centers. Central themes of the spiritual life will be explored, among them holiness, diversity of vocations, the primacy of charity, community, incarnation and Eucharist. Prominent Catholic authors are writing them, authors who command a large following and are already known as trusted spiritual guides.

Joyce Rupp (fondly remembered for

EMILIE GRIFFIN writes about the spiritual life. Her latest book of 47 daily meditations for Lent, the Easter triduum and Easter Sunday is *Small Surrenders: A Lenten Journey* (Paraclete Press). She lives in Alexandria, La.

her pilgrimage book, *Walk in a Relaxed Manner*) begins her exploration of prayer by noting how many good books are already published on this theme. "Why would I want to write another one?" But immediately she recognizes her own hunger for such books. "I continually read books related to spiritual growth even though I feel at home with God most of the time." Is it, she asks, because we can never fully get our arms around the experience of the holy? "The longer we pray, the more we realize prayer is bigger than we are, more expansive and deeper. When we least expect it, our prayer brings us into further clarity about who we are and how we are to be with God and the world." And prayer, she suggests, is always a project in motion. "We leave the *finished product* of prayer to the One who understands the desires of the heart." Other striking aspects of Rupp's discussion are reflected in her provocative chapter titles: "Entering Into a Relationship," "The Tidal Patterns of Prayer," "Keeping the Vigil of Mystery" and "Turning Prayer Inside Out." Her approach to prayer is creative and imaginative. She enlightens and leads us. She proves to us once again that each person's prayer is unique and refreshing and can enrich the whole community's life.

Robert Morneau's *Reconciliation* (Orbis and RCL Benziger, 2007, 141p, paperback, $10) is also a real encouragement, not only because the author invites us to the sacrament itself, but also because he deepens our appreciation of what it is to be reconciled. Robert Morneau is the auxiliary bishop and vicar general of the Diocese of Green Bay, Wis. He writes and speaks often on the spiritual life. Morneau's theology is simple and familiar: "When we name and take responsibility for those attitudes and behaviors that separate us from God and our brothers and sisters, we become disposed to the influx of God's forgiveness." And he draws illustrations from his own wide reading and love of literature as well as theology. Writing about the mystery of God's mercy, he cites St. Thérèse of Lisieux and quotes Portia from Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice": "the quality of mercy is not strained/ it droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven…." When discussing the human person, Bishop Morneau draws on sources as poetic as Gerard Manley Hopkins and as theological as Karl Rahner and Pope John Paul II. The "Questions and Answers" chapter is especially practical, and he closes with a sheaf of his own poems. I especially liked the one subtitled "On Re-Reading C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*." Better than any instruction, it shows, in a light vein, how examination of conscience should be done.

> If Lent is to be transformational, even modestly so, we should turn away from the haste and the noise and slow down.

I plan to spend time this Lent with Robert Alter's *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary* (W. W. Norton, 2007, cloth, 518p, $35). Alter is professor of Hebrew and comparative religion at the University of California, Berkeley, and the translator of several works from the Hebrew Scriptures, including *The Five Books of Moses* and *The David Story (1 and 2 Samuel)*. Alter's approach and much of his commentary is focused on how to render the psalms faithfully and attentively from ancient Hebrew into modern English. His lengthy preface reminds me of Ronald Knox's *Trials of a Translator* in that he wants to persuade us that what he is doing is rather difficult but that somehow he is doing it anyway. But my focus is on drawing closer to the psalms themselves and gaining the illusion that Alter—by his learning and literary gifts—puts me near to the prayerbook Jesus used.

What is the value—the spiritual quotient—of a new translation like Alter's? It is not so much a text for prayer, since in praying the psalms we tend to use the Bibles we already know, the texts approved by the church for the Liturgy of the Hours, or possibly a favorite psalm text we have learned "by heart." Once, years ago, I memorized Psalm 139 according to the Jerusalem Bible, and now it is embedded in my soul. But Alter's new translation startles and refreshes me. I can never fully anticipate what he will do next. Just when I think he is all 21st century, he will use a word like "foes," which calls up Shakespearean echoes. Much of what attracts me is the sheer size and daring of what he is attempting, for he wants us to hear the Hebrew through the English text. Are the psalms prayer for him? I'm not exactly sure. But in his hands the word of God is living and true and razor-sharp.

Jeremy Langford's new treatment of the ancient ways is entitled *Seeds of Faith: Practices to Grow a Healthy Spiritual Life* (Paraclete Press, 2008, 176p, paperback, $15.95). Langford, who in many ways has spoken for and to his own generation of Catholic believers, is now, in my view, speaking to all of us in this wide-ranging exploration of lived faith and spiritual formation. He raises a battery of questions: Who am I? Why believe? What do I really want? Then he thoughtfully answers with a coherent, nuanced and authoritative treatment of the spiritual life, exploring meditation, prayer, solitude, friendship, thinking, spiritual direction, discipleship and more.

I was especially taken with his chapter "Living Fully in the Moment," which proceeds from some words of Thich Nhat Hanh about mindfulness. This is not the first spiritual reflection I have read on washing dishes or laundry. This one, however, was riveting; Langford's acuity and perception took me entirely by surprise. Once again I was blindsided by the simple truth of living in the present moment with a deeper sense of the presence of God in every atom, every detail. The whole book is crammed with similar insights.

What will bring us into the wilderness

with Christ and help us walk with him right to the end? I remember C. S. Lewis's counsel on the importance of reading old books, the classics through which he felt "the clean sea breeze of the centuries." Lewis advised his readers to read two old books for every new one. Fortunately, today's publishers oblige us by making ancient wisdom easy to come by. Two devotional classics come to mind: Gabriel Bunge, O.S.B., *Earthen Vessels: The Practice of Personal Prayer According to the Patristic Tradition*, Michael J. Miller, trans., (Ignatius Press, 2002, 222p, paperback, $14.95). Gabriel Bunge is a Benedictine monk in Switzerland who has been living the eremitical life since 1980. Deeply plunged into the patristic tradition, he draws on it habitually and invites us to taste this holy wisdom as well. With this book it is truly important to slow down, because every explanation or definition may serve as a call to prayer. Even when Bunge is lamenting the random and confused use of the term "spirituality" in modern life, he is at the same time calling us back to an authentic definition drawn from Scripture and from patristic writing: "For here the word 'spiritual' refers unambiguously to the Person of the Holy Spirit." Another modern classic is *Happy Are You Poor: The Simple Life and Spiritual Freedom*, by Thomas Dubay, S.M. (Ignatius Press, 2003, 177p, paperback, $15.95). This is a thorough and effective treatment of Gospel poverty as it can be lived by those in all walks of life. In a chapter called "Emptiness and Radical Readiness," Dubay writes: "I should now like to say this in biblical terms. Detachment is one half of this readiness. Humility is the other. Poverty is related to both."

Again, this is a book to be savored, with pauses for reflection. Consider the following passage. "Sensible people do not choose emptiness for the sake of emptiness. Of itself negation has no value…. Reality is made to be and to be full. Silence has no value in itself. The value of negative things derives, must derive, from something positive, something they make possible." Dubay is conveying ancient Christian wisdom when he opens us up to the freedom of simplicity.

This Lent, may you dwell deeply in and with Christ, walking with slow, sure steps the path to eternal life. A

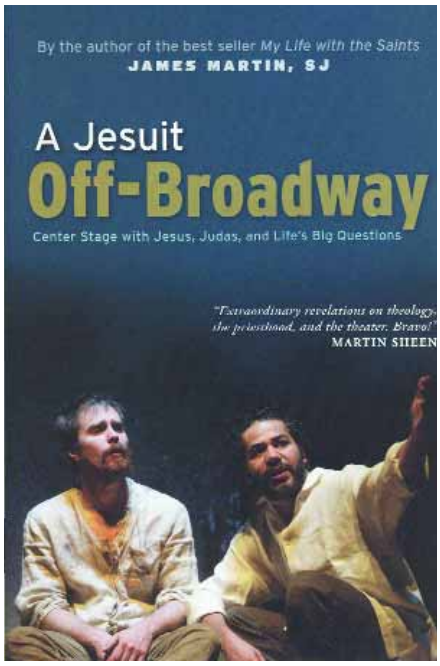
Dramatic Faith

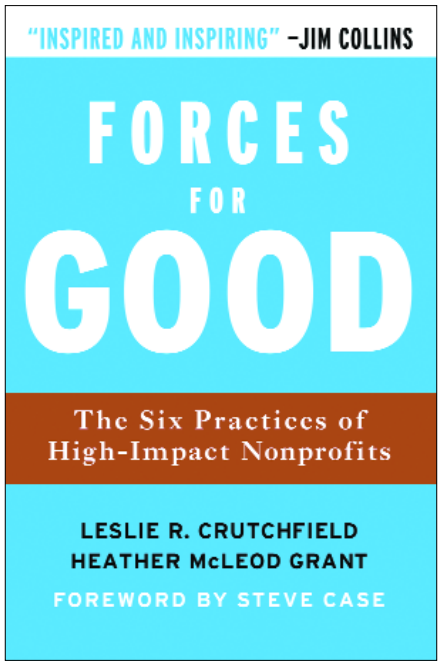
A Jesuit Off-Broadway

Center Stage With Jesus, Judas, and Life's Big Questions

By James Martin, S.J.

Loyola Press. 272p $22.95
ISBN 9780829425826





In late October 2004, James Martin, S.J., an associate editor of **America**, got a surprise phone call from the actor Sam Rockwell. Sam was developing his role as Judas for an Off-Broadway production of a new play, "The Last Days of Judas Iscariot," by Stephen Adly Guirgis. Because Sam was without religious training, he wanted a sketch of Christianity, the ministry of Jesus and anything else that would be useful for getting inside Judas's skin.

In this fascinating memoir of his six months with the play, Martin notes:

> Each answer I gave to one of Sam's questions prompted a digression that led to yet another question. We jumped from the book of Genesis to Charlton Heston's performance in "The Ten Commandments," from the origin of the phrase *doubting Thomas* to Martin Luther and the Reformation, from the rosary to Saint Peter's betrayal of Jesus, from the work of a Jesuit priest to Christian fundamentalism, from Mary Magdalene to Mel Gibson's film "The Passion of the Christ," from the Eastern Orthodox Church to the contradictory accounts of the Resurrection in the Gospels.

Soon after that Martin was contacted by Stephen Adly Guirgis himself as he was still finishing his play. Author of such works as "Our Lady of 121st Street" and "Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train," he seemed to Martin religious by nature. "Underneath many of his foul-mouthed characters were men and women, usually poor and unlucky, who had nonetheless not given up searching for meaning, for answers, and for a modicum of faith."

And so it was with many of the 15 actors for whom "Father Jim" was not just a theological adviser but, in the words of the playwright in the book's foreword, "a cheerleader, a rabbi, and a friend." "When they first contacted me," Martin writes, "I had expected a few meetings and a couple of hours flipping through some old theology books, with perhaps a handful of free tickets thrown in for my efforts." But he soon found himself caring about the LAByrinth Theater Company's production, not just because of the evangelizing good that could come from it, but because "I was having fun.... For the first time, I was seeing how satisfying teaching could be, especially when the material was already so meaningful in my own life."

The play's director was Philip Seymour Hoffman, who had just completed his starring role in the film "Capote," for which he would receive an Academy Award. Celebrated writer and monologist Eric Bogosian would play Satan, and the cast was rounded out by those co-stars and walk-ons whose faces are vaguely familiar but whose names are not. Cuban-born Yul Vázquez, for example, had been a recurring character on "Seinfeld," John Ortiz, who played Jesus, would soon land parts in "Miami Vice" and "American Gangster," and in the next year Callie Thorne would be juggling roles in "Rescue Me," "The Wire" and "ER." Each of them became friends to Martin, and he deftly interlaces his memoir with intriguing background on the cast, focusing not only on their faith in God but also their often conflicted feelings about organized religion.

Woven in, too, are smart commentaries on the Gospels, the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, the paucity of information on Judas, the benefits of celibacy, the Jesus of history, the problem of despair and other topics that the increasingly inquisitive cast and playwright brought to him.

The first joint readings of the play commenced in January 2005 at the Public Theater, and as the actors began to "get up" to play their parts, Martin felt his Christological and scriptural insights were becoming extraneous. "But as the rehearsals continued," he writes, "and the actors began to confess some of their worries and struggles, as well as their joys and excitements, I found that my role shifted from theological adviser to chaplain. That was a role I was happier to play."

"The Last Days of Judas Iscariot" opened on March 2, 2005, and the reviewers called it either "extraordinary" or "woeful." There seemed to be no middle ground. The overtly religious nature of

The Reviewers

Ron Hansen is a professor of English at Santa Clara University, Calif. His novel *Exiles* will be published in May.

Cecilio Morales covers workforce development and work support programs as executive editor of Employment and Training Reporter, of Washington, D.C.

the play, combined with its nearly four-hour length and the profanity in the script, met with some critical resistance, though not from the Catholic priests and nuns who were Martin's guests and loved it.

The four-week run ended on April 3, and with it came Martin's own misgivings over his loss of so many nights. But he concludes that he had been trying to do what Jesuits are supposed to do: encounter people in all sorts of settings, especially unusual ones. "There are a number of ways of expressing this goal: helping souls, being on the margins," he writes.

My favorite definition of our work comes from the theologian John Courtney Murray who said that Jesuits should explain the church to the world, and the world to the church. And maybe standing on an Off-Broadway stage after midnight talking about forgiveness wasn't such a bad way of aiming for that goal.

A Jesuit Off-Broadway is a charming and enthralling memoir, the ninth book in eight years by a skillful, likeable and intelligent writer whose candid portraits of his life in the Society of Jesus and the secular world may one day rival the journals of Thomas Merton.

Ron Hansen

#5: Help Your Competitors

Forces for Good

The Six Practices of High-Impact Nonprofits

By Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant

Jossey-Bass. 313p $29.95
ISBN 9780787989124

After traveling through the United States in 1831-32, Alexis de Tocqueville famously marveled at the American phenomenon that gave rise to what we now know as the social or independent nonprofit sector.

"Americans group together to hold fêtes, found seminaries, build inns, construct churches, distribute books, dispatch missionaries to the antipodes," wrote Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*. "They establish hospitals, prisons, schools by the same method. Finally, if they wish to highlight a truth or develop an opinion by the encouragement of a great example, they form an association."

The French essayist would probably not be surprised to learn that today 1.5 million nonprofit organizations account for a combined $1 trillion in annual revenue, growing faster than the U.S. economy for the last 15 years and becoming the third largest U.S. industry, behind retail and wholesale trade, but ahead of construction, banking and telecommunications. These groups have emerged from the unprecedented wealth of corporate foundations, the retrenchment of government and a heightened awareness of social problems that are often of global scale.

It is surprising, therefore, that Leslie Crutchfield and Heather McLeod Grant came to their subject by chance. When Crutchfield, managing director of the nonprofit organization Ashoka, was preparing for a meeting of the "change-makers" her group seeks to inspire, she found there was no single source in which time-tested practices to make a difference could be found.

Joining forces with Grant, a business administration specialist, she learned that success defies traditional management and accounting measures.

"Being an extraordinary nonprofit isn't about building an organization and scaling it up. It's not about perfect management or outstanding marketing or having a large budget," they concluded. "Rather, it's about finding ways to leverage other sectors to create extraordinary impact. Great nonprofits are catalysts; they transform the system around them to achieve greater good."

In *Forces for Good* the authors distill the method in the groups' madness into a specific half-dozen practices that dynamically and cumulatively have become part of an institutional "virtuous cycle."

The organizations "bridge the divide between service and advocacy," inspire word-of-mouth promoters, adapt to their external environment, work with the private sector, help their competitors and are led by power sharers. These groups' leaders, rather than potentates or politicians, are "social entrepreneurs," a group of individuals defined as "highly adaptive, innovative leaders who see new ways to solve old problems and who find points of leverage to create large-scale systemic change." The roster ranges from the $1 billion Habitat for Humanity, renowned for wrestling with poor housing and homelessness by building homes for a million people, to the $18 million Youthbuild USA, which encourages inner-city youths to develop careers through experiences in construction.

The authors also categorize the groups by the way they have adapted to change.

They dub Self-Help, a Durham, N.C.-based group focused on asset development among low-income populations and a leading force in promoting anti-predatory loan legislation, as one of the "free spirits." These are groups whose staffers are "impatient with anything that smacks of bureaucracy" and "pride themselves on being 'doers' not 'planners.'"

At the opposite end of the range lie "the MBAs," such as Teach for America, the New York City-based education reform group they describe as having made teaching in public schools "cool." T.F.A.'s management "tracks data as if their lives depended on it," note Crutchfield and Grant.

The authors make some missteps, however, in their quest to avoid easy categorization.Their choice of the Heritage Foundation, which they credit with leading a "conservative revolution in Congress in the 1990s," ignores the conservatives' seizure of the Republican Party and the White House in 1980. Heritage has remained merely one phalanx of the movement, and it sorely lacks the service component the authors tout. One might also question the authors with regard to the true transformative effects of the wonky and liberal Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

Why, also, did they choose the National Council of La Raza, admittedly the leading Hispanic think tank in Washington, but entirely omit such African-American organizations as Opportunities Industrialization Centers or the Urban League?

Nevertheless, for the high-minded reader interested in discovering methods that have helped others combine ideals with the practical toughness and organizational savvy that yield lasting change, *Forces for Good* seems to be the book to read.

Cecilio Morales

Classified

Bound Volumes

AMERICA PRESS INC. is compiling a set of bound volumes of **America** for a digital scanning project. We are currently in need of Vol. 1 and Vols. 13-71. **America** will provide a digital copy of the scanned material in return for the volumes. Contact Tim Reidy at reidy@americamagazine.org or (212) 515-0111.

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Positions

ADAM CARDINAL MAIDA CHAIR IN SACRED SCRIPTURE. Sacred Heart Major Seminary is searching for a senior scholar to fill the Adam Cardinal Maida Chair in Sacred Scripture. The chair has been established to train priests, deacons and lay ecclesial ministers in the historical and theological significance of Sacred Scripture and to pass on that knowledge in pastoral settings. The candidate must have an ecclesiastical doctorate (S.T.D.) or at least a licentiate in sacred theology (S.T.L.) with a Ph.D. from a Catholic university. The candidate must have excellent teaching skills and a significant publishing record that demonstrates a high level of competence in Sacred Scripture. The deadline for application is March 15, 2008. Send letter of application, C.V. with professional references, and copies of transcripts to: Dr. Daniel Keating, Sacred Heart Major Seminary, 2701 Chicago Blvd., Detroit, MI 48206 (keating.daniel@shms.edu). For further job description go to www.shms.edu.

CAMPUS MINISTRY, ST. EDWARDS UNIVERSITY, Austin,Tex. There are two positions open at this Catholic liberal arts university founded by the Congregation of Holy Cross: ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, whose primary responsibility is to lead Initiative with Student Affairs on Catholic Character and Holy Cross Tradition; and ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, whose primary responsibility is to coordinate multiple alternative spring breaks and international immersions. For more details go to: www.stedwards.edu/hr/jobs.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Jackson, Miss., seeks an Executive Director to lead staff of almost 200 and annual budget approaching $10 million. The Agency provides assistance in domestic violence, rape crisis, addiction recovery, adoption, children's mental health, immigration, runaway teens, refugees, family ministry and legislative advocacy. *Qualifications*: practicing Catholic grounded in Catholic social teaching, master's in social work, five years of management experience in social services, experience managing a culturally diverse staff and client population, fund raising and finance experience, outstanding communication and interpersonal skills. To apply: send résumé by March 10 to: E. Barber, Search Committee Catholic Charities, 200 N. Congress, Jackson, MS 39201; e-mail: director@catholiccharitiesjackson.org.

PRINCIPAL, St. Ignatius College Preparatory, San Francisco, Calif. The president of St. Ignatius College Prep, San Francisco, is seeking applications for the position of principal for the fall term 2008. Both religious and lay persons are encouraged to apply. St. Ignatius is a co-educational Jesuit Catholic college preparatory with an enrollment of 1,420. Founded in 1855, S.I. serves a college-bound student body with a faculty and professional staff of 115, 10 of whom are Jesuits. The principal supervises all aspects of the educational operations (academic, co-curricular and spiritual) and is responsible to the president.

St. Ignatius is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. The education program promotes the spiritual, intellectual, social, creative and physical growth of the whole person. The faith and spiritual dimensions of the

school are highly prized and have abundant resources. The school has a very talented faculty, extraordinary campus facilities, substantial endowment, a large applicant pool, extensive honors and A.P. programs, and a highly committed Board.

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St. Ignatius College Preparatory is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate against any applicant on the basis of sex, age, disability, race or national and/or ethnic origin.

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA, Catholic Student Center, Des Moines, Iowa, is seeking full-time DIRECTOR OF MUSIC AND LITURGY to serve on our campus ministry team. St. Catherine is a faith community of students and nonstudents, with a strong tradition dedicated to prayerful liturgical celebrations. Applicant should have education and experience in Catholic liturgical theology. We seek a candidate with a background in music, music ministry and choral direction with organizational skills, strong spirituality and willingness to work in a collaborative setting on campus ministry team. Requirements: Practicing Catholic, bachelor's degree in religious studies, liturgy or equivalent. Knowledge and experience with Catholic liturgy and music and good communication and organizational skills. Preferred: Master's degree in liturgy; practicing musician, either piano or guitar; experience in campus ministry. Send letter of interest, résumé and names and addresses of three references to: Search Committee, St. Catherine of Siena, 1150 28th St., Des Moines, IA 50311. Applications accepted until the position is filled.

YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY DIRECTOR sought by the Catholic Diocese of Erie. The Director's primary responsibility is to support the evangelization and catechesis of youth and young adults in the Diocese. The Director collaborates with a team of other trained professional ministers in religious education and the Catholic schools of the Diocese. The Director reports to the Vicar for Education and enjoys significant interaction with and support from the Bishop. Review of applications will begin immediately. For best consideration, interested applicants should apply before Feb. 15, 2008. For a detailed job description and application procedures, please go to www.erier-cd.org/youth.asp.

Retreats

BETHANY SPIRITUALITY CENTER, N.Y., announces the following retreats: "Aging With Grace," with Barbara Metz, S.N.D., and John Burchill, O.P., April 20-25; "Justice Through the Window of God's Word," with Mark Hallinan, S.J., June 5-8; "Forgiving Love: In the Word, in the World," with Janice Farnham, R.J.M., and Rosemary Mangan, R.J.M., June 8-14; "Twelve Steps to Inner Freedom; Humility Revisited" (J. Chittister's book), with Carolyn Gorny-Kopkowski, O.S.B., June 16-22; Directed Retreat, July 1-9, 12-20 and 23-31; Vipassana Retreat, with Kevin Culligan, O.C.D., and Mary Jo Meadows, O.C.D.S., Aug. 15-24. Please visit www.bethanyspiritualitycenter.org or call (845) 460-3061.

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War Profits

I have read numerous articles in **America** on the war in Iraq. These articles have been well written and based on fact and Catholic teachings. None supported the war. In the Dec. 24 issue, an article by John F. Kavanaugh, S.J., continued the fine journalistic tradition of the magazine. Three pages later I found a full-page ad to recruit military chaplains.

Such magazine advertisements serve as more than notices to priests. They say something about the validity of war. The issue of military chaplains is a complicated one that would be a good topic for **America** to investigate and report.

I doubt if the ad in **America** changes the opinion of any editor of the magazine, but it gives a mixed message to its readers. Accepting money from special interest groups, in this case the military, carries a message beyond the ad. I hope **America** will reconsider its policy of accepting money through advertising from any branch of the U.S. military.

Patricia McCarthy, C.N.D.
Wilton, Conn.

Mirror Image

The interview with Klaus Dietz, S.J., "Christ and Secular Sweden" (12/24), by Jim McDermott, S.J., made me check the map, thinking for sure we must be in Sweden! Youngsters leaving the church, immigrants arriving but later buying into another Gospel (here we call it the American dream)—we have it all here in the States. Individualism there, as here, must be countered one heart at a time.

(Rev.) Fred Close
Washington, D.C.

Further Questions

In "Church Teaching and My Father's Choice," (1/21), John J. Hardt invites us to ask big questions. By using his father as an example, he puts a face on the questions, but he also makes it difficult to criticize his argument without seeming heartless.

But his article seems to steer us rhetorically toward answers that bring us another step closer to what John Paul II called a culture of death. Perhaps in future articles he can ask questions that invite us to build up the culture of life. They could be questions inviting us to courage in the face of possible future failing of mind and body, encouraging answers in which unconditional love of parents takes for granted ensuring their care even in the face of personal heartache or recognizing that part of parents' responsibility to God in their twilight years is to teach their children to live such love by letting them practice it on their parents.

(Rev.) Thomas Schliessmann
Edinburgh, Ind.

Simple but Elegant

I found it somewhat unsettling that John J. Hardt's "Church Teaching and My Father's Choice" (1/21) needed to be written at all. It seems that these end-of-life issues are becoming more complex when they need not be. Do we all need to become moral theologians to make family decisions such as these?

My Catholic education took place in the 1940s and 50s, when the rather simple but elegant guide was that "extraordinary" means did not have to be used to prolong life. Ordinary people like me can understand and make these distinctions. The church need not worry, because people like me can also understand the clear difference between allowing someone to die naturally and euthanasia.

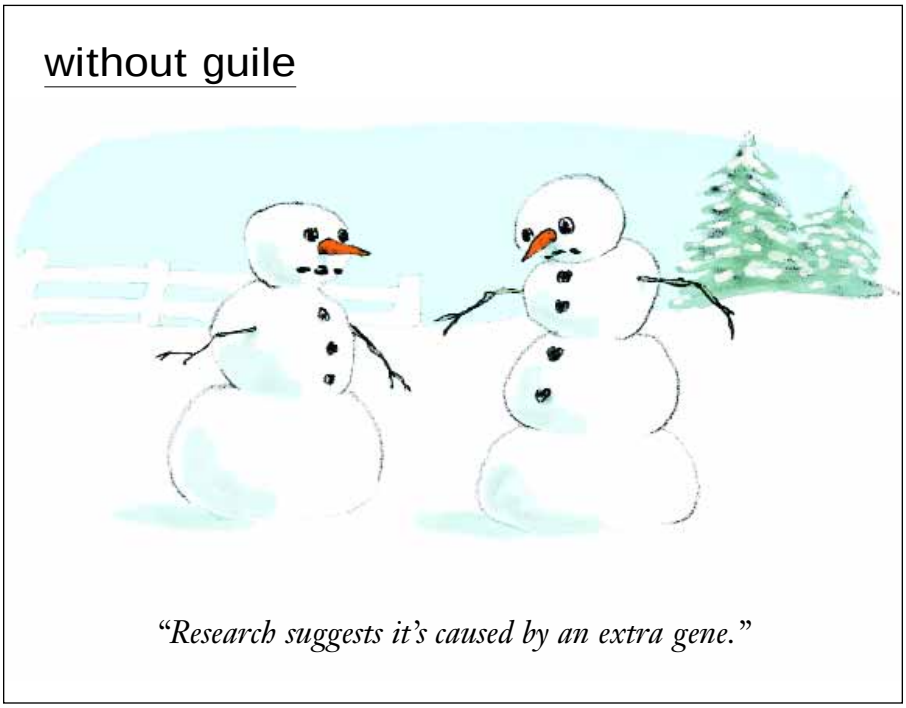
A few years ago, when my mother was in the terminal stage of Alzheimer's after a long decline, she was unconscious and could no longer be fed. My mother had much the same religious outlook John Hardt's father has. When I was asked about a feeding tube, I said no, because I thought that was an "extraordinary" means at that stage. Would that decision now be deemed inappropriate?

John Hrastar
Silver Spring, Md.

Good News, Bad News

I found "The Conversion of Tony Blair," by Austen Ivereigh, (1/7) disappointing. In general, the article did a good job describing Blair's background, interests in Catholicism and the complexities of his becoming a Catholic as the British prime minister and, now, a former one.

But the problem was the use of the word "convert" as a noun and a verb about Tony Blair and others who are received into full communion. This word carries ominous overtones of triumphalism and communicates the notion that we are the "one, true church" and those other churches are "less" than we are. The author never intended such tri-



"Research suggests it's caused by an extra gene."

CARTOON BY PAT BYRNES

umphalism, yet the word remains.

Moreover, the U.S. Bishops' National Statutes for the Catechumenate (No. 2) reads: "The term 'convert' should be reserved strictly for those converted from unbelief to Christian belief and never used of those baptized Christians who are received into the full communion of the Catholic Church."

Personally, I find the word to be an oxymoron, for I fail to grasp how Christians can "convert" to something they already constitute—the body of Christ.

While the word "convert" may seem like a minor point, it treats our brothers and sisters in Christ as at best inferior to us Catholics. At worst, it scorns their baptism. Yet I find great hope in the fact that we do not rebaptize and that we celebrate this commonality.

Jay Freel Landry
South Bend, Ind.

The Almighty Dollar

"American Catholics in the New Gilded Age," by Daniel J. Morrissey, (1/7) is a great commentary on the state of the culture in the United States these days. It shows an epidemic of lying and dishonesty in the areas of economics, banking, Wall Street and the mortgage industry to boost housing values artificially so that investors can make greater profits. Greed and materialism are being exalted to new levels. It seems there are new meanings in economic affairs to the saying that "the end justifies the means!"

Joe Trevors
Hercules, Calif.

Justices for All

Daniel J. Morrissey writes in "American Catholics in the New Gilded Age" (1/7) that the Bush administration has only these tangible achievements: "its tax reductions and deregulatory schemes." I disagree. Two tangible and significant achievements of this administration are the appointments of Justice Roberts and Justice Alito. The expectation that George W. Bush would get to appoint one or more justices to the Supreme Court was the main reason I voted for him.

Mary Moritz
Jacksonville, Fla.

A Prophetic Voice

Archbishop George Niederauer's "Flannery O'Connor's Religious Vision" (12/24) was a wonderful gift to subscribers. It was encouraging to read his reminder that even though O'Connor died during the Second Vatican Council, she already knew what the council would proclaim: that the church is the body of Christ, the people of God; that laypeople are its flesh and blood; and that the clergy and its religious orders are its servant-leaders. So many of us ordinary Catholics long to hear our spiritual leaders express the spirit and vision of the Second Vatican Council.

I also wish that Flannery O'Connor were alive today to write of Jesus' saving action among us now, as people of faith try so desperately to counter corporate greed, high-level political corruption and increasing poverty and injustice. But Flannery O'Connor left us with more than enough evidence to believe that as we make Jesus present in the world, we shall overcome.

Jim Crosson
Fair Lawn, N.J.

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Looking Backward and Forward

ART BY TAD DUNNE

Second Sunday of Lent (A), Feb. 17, 2008

Readings: Gn 12:1-4; Ps 33:4-5, 18-20, 22; 2 Tm 1:8-10; Mt 17:1-9

"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him" (Mt 17:5)

EACH YEAR on the Second Sunday of Lent, the Gospel reading concerns the transfiguration of Jesus. With the presence of Moses and Elijah, the transfiguration narrative reminds us that what we commemorate during Lent is part of the history of our salvation. The transfiguration also anticipates or previews the glory and splendor of Jesus at Easter and beyond, as well as our own hopes for holiness and eternal life. Thus it leads us to look backward and forward.

In the Bible the history of our salvation begins with the call of Abraham (Genesis 12). After Adam's sin, Cain's murder of Abel, the flood and the Tower of Babel, the call of Abraham marks a fresh start and the birth of the people of God. Speaking directly to Abraham, God promises to form him into a great nation, to make his name great and to bless him and his descendants.

The transfiguration narrative introduces two more great figures in salvation history, Moses and Elijah. Moses led his people out of slavery in Egypt, received the Torah on Mount Sinai and brought God's people to the edge of the promised land. Elijah, the great prophet in northern Israel during the ninth century B.C., performed healings and other miracles and stood up to Israel's external enemies and the wicked within Israel. Their presence in Matthew's transfiguration account emphasizes Jesus' continuity with the Law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah) in salvation history.

The word "transfiguration" refers to a change of form or shape. The Greek word for this is "metamorphosis." At the end of Matthew's account Jesus describes the event as a "vision." On a mountain somewhere in Galilee the disciples experience the transfiguration, or metamorphosis, of Jesus. His face dazzles like the sun; his clothes become radiant with light. The disciples are given a preview of the glorious figure Jesus will soon become at Easter and beyond. Their experience reaches its climax with an interpretation given by a voice from a cloud (a symbol of the divine presence): "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him." These are the same words used to identify Jesus after his baptism by John. They mark him as God's son and servant, as well as the authoritative teacher.

Reading about Jesus' transfiguration early in Lent reminds us that Lent moves inexorably toward Easter and the resurrection of Jesus. In order to observe Lent properly we need to remember that the central mysteries of Jesus' death and resurrection give Lent its meaning and direction. The transfiguration reminds us that the way of the cross leads to resurrection and eternal life, and that the purpose of Lent is to help us better to enter into those mysteries.

The significance of the transfiguration in our lives is captured very well by today's selection from 2 Timothy. The Pauline writer prefaces what was very likely an early summary of Christian faith with a call to "bear your share of hardship for the Gospel." He goes on to recall that God has "saved us and called us to a holy life…in Christ Jesus." The theological word for this is sanctification.

In the biblical context holiness is primarily an attribute or property of God; God is the holy one par excellence. Persons and things are holy by virtue of their relationship or contact with God. All holiness is a reflection and extension of God's holiness. One of the titles applied to Jesus in the New Testament is "the Holy One of God." This theme is present in the transfiguration story, which highlights the brilliance of Jesus and identifies him as God's beloved Son. As the Holy One of God, Jesus makes manifest the holiness of God the Holy One.

This way of talking about Jesus is present in the early Christian profession of faith quoted in 2 Timothy. In Christ Jesus our savior, the grace of God has been made manifest, and he is the one who has "brought life and immortality to light." We can become holy by listening to him as the voice from the cloud recommends. We listen to Jesus when we take seriously and act upon his wise teachings, when we follow his example in bringing healing and compassion to those in need and when we try to remain faithful in the face of the sufferings that may come into our lives. The transfiguration of Jesus makes us look backward over the sweep of salvation history and forward to our own resurrection and eternal life with God.

Daniel J. Harrington

Praying With Scripture

- How do Abraham, Moses and Elijah point forward to Jesus?
- Imagine yourself among the disciples at Jesus' transfiguration. What do you see? What do you hear? How do you react?
- What does the call to holiness mean for you?

DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J., is professor of New Testament at Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Mass.