America

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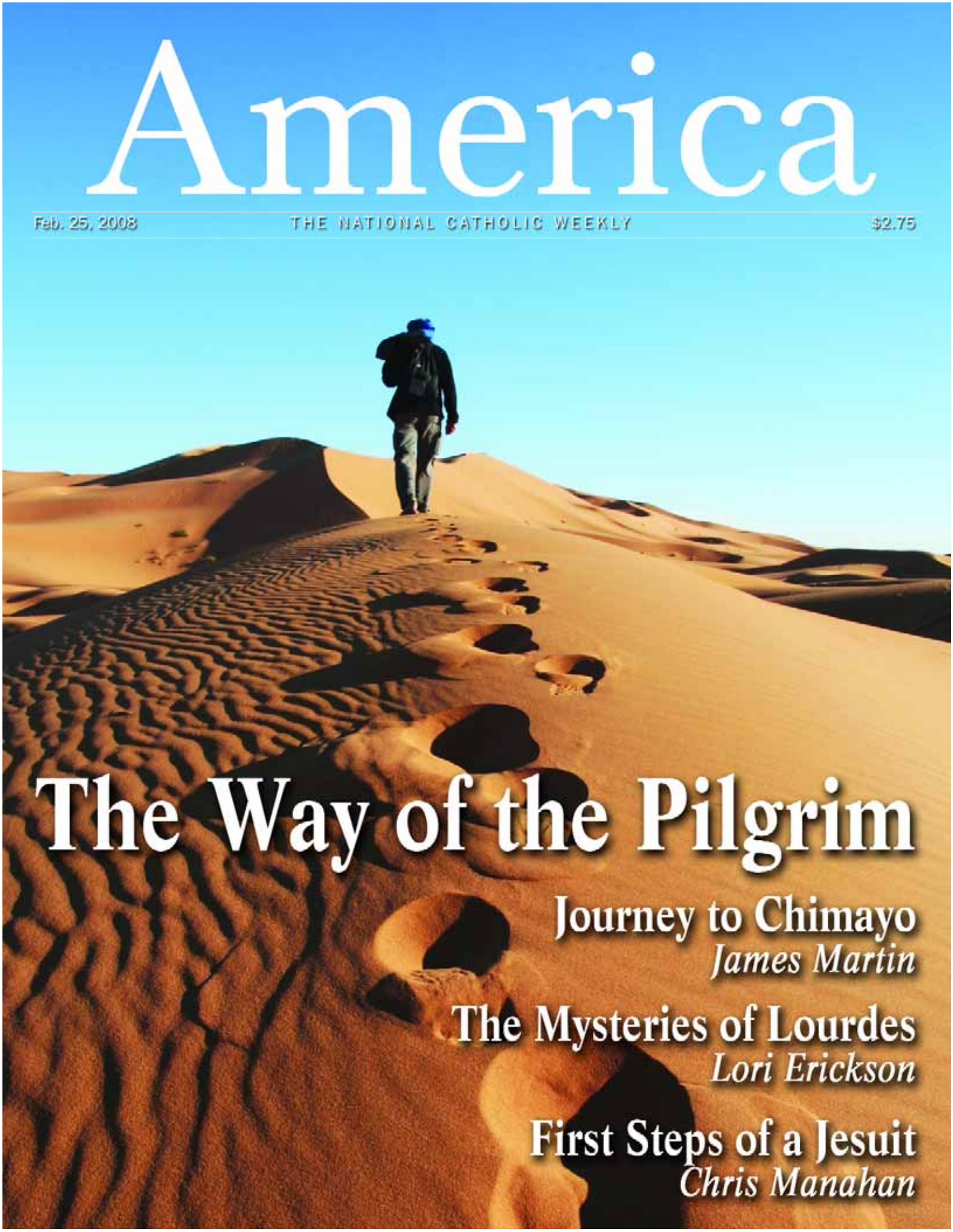

The Way of the Pilgrim

Journey to Chimayo
James Martin

The Mysteries of Lourdes
Lori Erickson

First Steps of a Jesuit
Chris Manahan

Of Many Things

FOR DECADES I have had a special interest in pilgrimages, the theme of this issue of **America**, and have studied the works of Victor Turner and others who shared my fascination. And I have myself been a pilgrim—to Rome, the Holy Land and, all too easily because I once lived nearby, to Canterbury and Lourdes.

Rome was easy enough: the first time, honestly, as a tourist; the second time, to talk my way out of a job that would have kept me there for 20 years. The Holy Land was different. I did not go as a Jesuit priest, but as a college professor. I was part of a group from an association called American Professors for Peace in the Middle East, sponsored by the Zionist Organization of America, with which my university had a connection. My companion at the time was Joseph Simmons, S.J., who said back then, referring to me, "He's the professor; I'm for peace." We had the joy of celebrating his 25th anniversary as a priest in the chapel of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem before his untimely death at an age younger than mine now.

During graduate studies at London University, I went regularly to Canterbury to see Dr. Maurice Larkin, who knew everything about French history. And during that time, family visits allowed me to go back as a tour guide and pilgrim. My sister, Regina, claims that she had there the best pizza ever. I had been there a decade before with Henry Lavin, S.J., onetime literary editor of **America** and an expert in English literature. He gave me an appreciation for Thomas à Becket, which I was later able to pass on to others.

To this day, I am guilty about my "pilgrimage" to Lourdes. **America**'s Father James Martin goes there regularly to minister to the sick with the Knights of Malta and experiences the real austerity of the pilgrimage. Three decades ago, in the throes of graduate studies and thesis writing, I asked my provincial superior if I could go to Lourdes. He had done the same degree as I in the same university, living in the same Jesuit house, so he was totally sympathetic. But he never made that pilgrimage, for two reasons. The first was practical. He could not speak French, and was equally flummoxed by other European languages. The second reason was more poignant. He was told by a wise older father in the house where we lived: "Oh, no, Father, you're too young. Wait until you're old and cynical and let the Blessed Mother give you back your faith." As it happened, Father Joseph Whelan did not live to be either old or cynical.

But I did go. I did all the things that you are supposed to do. I drank the waters, attended the processions, lit candles the size of Saturn rockets for family and neighbors with their intentions and went to the baths. "On vous donne quelque chose"—they give you something—was as much as I could get out of Père Michel Olphe-Gaillard in response to my concern about practical details. He was right. It was a case of American locker room meets French modesty, as the denim wrap shocked my system.

Not one of the above experiences matches the spiritual reality, for me, of the pilgrimage I made every day during the time of the dreaded thesis preparation. After lunch every day, I would walk the few hundred yards from our house in the Rue de Grenelle in Paris, where I lived with 100 French Jesuits and two American Jesuits, Michael Cooper and James Bernauer. My goal was the motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity in the Rue du Bac, a site more visited than the Eiffel Tower. It was then, and still is, a shrine to St. Catherine Labouré, the sister whose vision of Our Blessed Lady in that very house led to the diffusion of the Miraculous Medal devotion. Zoe Labouré, Sister Catherine, was a most extraordinary woman. Among her sisters she seemed quite ordinary, having only one assignment during her 46 years of religious life. And she told only her confessor about her visions.

For 46 years she worked in obscure silence as administrator of a retirement home to which was attached an orphanage. Her "cover" was broken only in the last year of her life. She spent her religious life among the poor and marginalized in the far reaches of Paris, and it was there that she died.

Such spots invite us to consider ordinary places closer to home that are worthy of a pilgrim's attention.

Dennis M. Linehan, S.J.

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Articles

This week @ America Connects

James Martin, S.J., narrates an audio slide show of Chimayo and talks with Bill McGarvey about this year's Oscar nominees on our podcast. Plus, Frances Parkinson Keyes on “The Lesson of Lourdes,” from 1958.

Coral Reefs Under Assault

More than two dozen conservation organizations and 17 countries have designated 2008 the Year of the Reef. Ten percent of the world's coral reefs have already been damaged beyond recovery, according to the environmental group Eco-Pros, and two-thirds are being degraded, largely by human activity. Among the destroyers are trawlers that drag huge steel chains and nets along the sea bottom scraping coral, underwater plants and animals into nets along with sought-after fish. "It takes centuries for coral reefs to develop and a few minutes to destroy them," the group notes. Global warming is also responsible for damage to fully a quarter of the world's reefs. A temperature change of even one degree can affect a reef's survival. Worldwide, the most threatened are those of Southeast Asia, with over 80 percent at risk. But U.S. reefs are also endangered, as well as most of Puerto Rico's; and nearly half the Caribbean reefs are in jeopardy. Many reefs "resemble graveyards," Eco-Pros says.

According to Lynne Hale, director of The Global Conservancy's marine team, "for more than one billion people living in coastal regions across the tropics, healthy reefs mean food and a way to earn a living." Hale has commended national leaders like President Tommy E. Remengesau Jr. of Palau and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia for expanding their commitment to coral reef conservation. Other nations should follow suit in a concerted effort to preserve them elsewhere.

Security for Religion

At Trabzon in Turkey, on the shore of the Black Sea, a memorial Mass was celebrated on Feb. 5 to mark the second anniversary of the murder of the pastor of St. Mary's church, the Rev. Andrea Santoro, who was stabbed while at prayer. His attacker was convicted and imprisoned, but an ongoing investigation suggests the involvement of an ultranationalist Turkish terrorist organization.

The mourners at the Mass were joined by a mufti representing the government who said, "Our religion explicitly condemns violence and murder...we condemn terrorism...and we welcome all to our city." Members of the close Christian communities could take heart from his words, but they were all too aware that on Dec. 16, Father Adriano Franchini was also killed as he finished Mass at Smirne. Those two incidents have been characterized as "isolated" by the civil authorities. Unfortunately, they are not, and they point to the climate of fear in which the Christians of Turkey now live.

It is plainly the responsibility of the secular government of the country to protect religious minorities. It must also take steps to afford genuine freedom to the Orthodox Church, including the freedom to educate its seminarians. Such actions make sense for the peace and security of the country. The progress of religious freedom in Turkey is a goal of the West, especially the nations of the European Union. For a decade, Europe's unease about Turkey's entry into the European Union has been expressed in largely misinformed whispers about the country being too big, too poor and too Muslim to join. Many observers see Turkey as a test case for the peaceful coexistence of Islam, democracy and human rights.

Exemplary Voters

Senator Hillary Clinton's serious bid for the White House not only makes this year's primary a historic first for the nation but also focuses a spotlight on women as voters. Neither a niche, nor a predictable voting bloc, women make up half of the subcategories in the pollsters' lexicon (young people, blacks, Hispanics) and more than half of seniors, a fact both obvious and easily overlooked.

What characterizes women as a group is their participation at the polls. Women vote. In every presidential election since 1980, across subgroups by age and race, women have outvoted men. According to the Rutgers Center for American Women and Politics, 60.1 percent of all women of voting age voted in 2004, compared with 56.3 percent of men. That year 8.8 million more women cast ballots than men. In 2000, 56.2 percent of women voted, 53.1 percent of men; 1996, 55.5 percent of women, 52.8 percent of men; 1992, 62.3 percent of women, 60.2 percent of men. Women's dependability at the polls is a national resource. Ask any candidate. If a woman's name appears on the ballot in November, turnout among women may rise even higher.

Senator Obama's ability to draw young voters, independents and blacks into the political process is a plus for our democracy. Roughly half the members of these groups are women. Senator McCain's appeal to independents and moderate Republicans and Gov. Huckabee's to evangelicals with a strong social conscience are also good for our democratic system. Democracies thrive on participation, and unifying the nation will depend on cultivating such voices. If political frontrunners can turn their fans into voters—committed, as women are, to the democratic process, not merely to a specific candidate—then democracy will benefit, no matter who wins the White House.

The Bush Legacy

IN THE WAKE OF THE SUPER TUESDAY primary elections on Feb. 5, the field of candidates for the 2008 presidential nominations has been clearly defined. The contest for the Democratic nomination has been reduced to two, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, either of whom would break with historical precedent—one as the first woman, the other as the first African-American elected to the presidency. On the Republican side, John McCain appears to be well on his way to his party's nomination, after his campaign had been declared dead in the water by our national pundits several months ago. None of the candidates for the Republican nomination identified his cause with the incumbent president, a point made embarrassingly clear when Mitt Romney declared that he would continue the legacy of George H. W. Bush, the incumbent's father.

But what will be or could be the presidential legacy of George W. Bush? It is safe to say that President Bush began his first term in January 2001 without a strong mandate. An intervention by the Supreme Court had resolved the most prolonged presidential election process in U.S. history, and the defeated candidate, former Vice President Al Gore, had actually won the popular vote. The new president's agenda was appropriately modest; he would conduct, he promised, a "more humble" foreign policy, resisting the temptation to engage in nation-building elsewhere in the world. But the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, abruptly shattered that placid projection. Declaring a "war on terror," President Bush launched retaliatory strikes on Taliban strongholds in Afghanistan that October, a campaign supported by an international community that was still expressing solidarity with the victims of the Sept. 11 attacks.

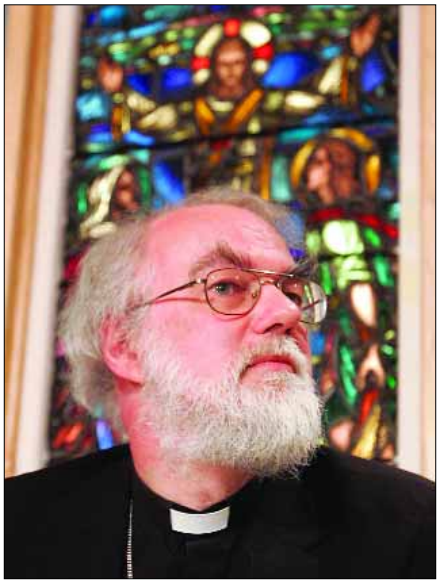
A year later, however, as the Bush administration attempted to rally support for a pre-emptive attack on Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, the response from long-time international allies was negative. With little support from the international community and over the objections of Pope John Paul II and other religious leaders, the United States invaded Iraq in March 2003, with little understanding of the challenge that postwar reconstruction would pose. It was a blunder of historic proportions. The war of choice in Iraq was not a necessary step in the campaign against terrorism but a costly distraction from that campaign. Five years later, the challenge of reducing the U.S. military presence in Iraq while discharging our responsibilities to the Iraqi people will be a painful dilemma for Mr. Bush's successor, whether Republican or Democrat.

Preoccupation with the tragedy of Iraq, however, should not prevent recognition of the positive initiatives of the George W. Bush administration. Principal among these has been the President's Plan for AIDS Relief (known as Pepfar), a multibillon-dollar investment in programs to combat the scourge of H.I.V./AIDS in Africa. The president's concern for educational reform in the United States drew widespread support, even from those who found fault with particular details of the No Child Left Behind program. But there are other initiatives that President Bush could take in the remaining months of his presidency that would enable his successor to meet more quickly and more effectively the challenges the next administration will face.

ANY LASTING SOLUTION to the challenge of overcoming sectarian divisions in Iraq and establishing a stable government in that tormented country will depend on regional cooperation. For this reason President Bush should vigorously pursue his commitment to take an active role in the search for permanent peace between Israel and its neighbors. While the president's assurance that a lasting agreement can be achieved before the end of his term in office is unrealistic, his personal involvement in the peace process will surely move the parties closer to an agreement. In broader terms, Mr. Bush could assist the diplomatic initiatives of the next administration by following the counsel of the more moderate voices in his administration and abandoning the heavy-handed unilateralism favored by Vice President Cheney and other neoconservative diehards who promoted and defended the unnecessary war in Iraq.

When future historians assess the administration of the second President Bush, they will surely recognize that the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, abruptly brought the nation and its new president into a world radically different from the one that the former governor of Texas contemplated when he was chosen as the Republican presidential candidate in the 2000 election. In his final year in office, George W. Bush could enrich his legacy to the future by learning from the mistakes of the past.

Proposal on Islamic Law Stirs Controversy



Dr. Rowan Williams (above), the archbishop of Canterbury, provoked controversy in Britain and the worldwide Anglican Communion Feb. 7 when he suggested, during an interview with the BBC prior to addressing a meeting of British jurists, that it "seems unavoidable" that certain aspects of Islamic law might be recognized in the United Kingdom, just as Roman Catholic canon law and Orthodox Jewish law are now recognized. The archbishop's comments met with a firestorm of criticism from traditionalists both inside and outside the church. In the last year, a number of prominent British figures, including Secretary of State for Justice Jack Straw, have voiced criticism of Muslims for public manifestations of their faith, especially the wearing of head and body coverings. The comments were also thought to provoke dissent among Anglican churches outside the British Isles, in countries where Muslims enforce or seek to impose Shariah law on Christian minorities. In Jordan, Israel and other former Ottoman lands, however, so-called "personal law"—affecting birth, death, marriage and inheritance—is regulated by the legal code of a person's religious affiliation.

Explaining his position to the General Synod of the Anglican Church Feb. 11, Archbishop Williams told his listeners, "I believe quite strongly that it is not inappropriate for a pastor of the Church of England to address issues around the perceived concerns of other religious communities and to try and bring them into better public focus." Referring to his critics, Archbishop Williams quoted the late Msgr. Ronald Knox: "The prevailing attitude...was one of heavy disagreement with a number of things which the [speaker] had not said."

Pope Reformulates Latin Prayer for Jews

Pope Benedict XVI has reformulated a Good Friday prayer for the Jews, removing language about the "blindness" of the Jews but preserving language that amounts to a call for their ultimate conversion. The new prayer replaces the one contained in the 1962 Roman Missal, sometimes called the Tridentine rite, which is no longer generally used by Catholics but which may be used by some church communities under recently revised norms.

The revised text, made available only in Latin, begins: "Let us pray for the Jews. May the Lord Our God enlighten their hearts so that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ, the savior of all men." It continues: "Almighty and everlasting God, you who want all men to be saved and to reach the awareness of the truth, graciously grant that, with the fullness of peoples entering into your church, all Israel may be saved."

The prayer in the post-Vatican II reformed liturgy reads: "that the people you first made your own may arrive at the fullness of redemption."

Entry Visas for Senior Church Workers Only

The Israeli Ministry of the Interior has agreed to provide multiple-entry visas to "high-ranking church personnel" who must travel in and out of Israel for their work. In a letter to Archbishop Antonio Franco, papal nuncio to Israel and the delegate to the Palestinian territories, Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit said the church would need to submit a list of such personnel, to be "checked and approved" by the ministry before the multiple-entry visas would be issued. Sheetrit said all other religious workers who need to leave Israel for work would be able to apply and receive re-entry visas to Israel before departure from the country, thus avoiding the complication of having to apply for such a visa from outside Israel. Emergency cases would be treated as such and would be dealt with "immediately and on the spot," wrote Sheetrit. Archbishop Franco, however, said that the church "was not fully pleased with the changes." He said, "Even parish priests need to move around. In the Latin patriarchate they have many meetings and pastoral duties. [The priests] do not fit into [the category] of V.I.P.s. The practicality, it is not there."

Next Step in Muslim Dialogue Set for March

Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, will host a meeting with Muslim representatives in early March to plan a meeting with Pope Benedict XVI and the next step in their dialogue. Sohail Nakhooda, editor in chief of Islamica Magazine in Jordan, said the meeting with Cardinal Tauran was scheduled for March 3-4. Nakhooda was one of the 138 Muslim scholars who wrote to Pope Benedict and other Christian leaders in October proposing new efforts at Christian-Muslim dialogue based on the shared belief in the existence of one God, in God's love for humanity and in people's obligation to love one another. Pope Benedict responded in November by inviting a group of the Muslim scholars to meet with him and to hold a broader working session with the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and with representatives of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies and the Pontifical Gregorian University. Five of the 138 scholars, including Nakhooda, will participate in the March meeting.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Grand Master of Knights of Malta Dies in Rome

The grand master of the Knights of Malta, Fra Andrew W. N. Bertie, who stressed the humanitarian work of the ancient order, died in Rome on Feb. 7 at the age of 78, officials of the organization said. Pope Benedict XVI sent a telegram of condolence, describing Bertie as a "man of culture and commitment," who used his office to help the most needy. The members of the order are expected to gather in Rome in the coming weeks to choose a new grand master, whose election must then be approved by the pope. Bertie, elected in 1988, came from a noble family and had a wide range of experience. He taught judo, grew orange trees, served as an officer in the Scots Guard, spoke five languages and once worked as a financial journalist in London. Bertie was the first Englishman to be elected to the post of grand master in the order's 900-year history.

C.R.S. Sets Requirements for Partner Agencies

Catholic Relief Services, the U.S. bishops' overseas aid and development agency, is requiring its foreign partner organizations to give "complete and accurate" information on the place of condoms in all H.I.V./AIDS programs. "C.R.S. wants to ensure that partners are not giving inaccurate, misleading or no information at all on condoms—and that the focus and priority remain on abstinence and fidelity," according to a new internal policy document sent to C.R.S. country representatives. The document warned the agency may cut funding from partners who refuse to comply. Ken Hackett, C.R.S. president, explained that the purpose of the new position paper was to ensure a unified H.I.V.-prevention approach that is consistent with church teaching. The agency's newly formulated H.I.V. policy, obtained by Our Sunday Visitor, is laid out in a six-page position paper dated December 2007, with the heading "C.R.S.' Position on the Prevention of Sexual Transmission of AIDS." It was accompanied by a one-page memorandum to C.R.S. country representatives, dated Jan. 11, from Jennifer Overton, the agency's senior technical adviser for H.I.V.

Irish Cardinal Withdraws Court Challenge

An Irish cardinal has withdrawn his request for an injunction to stop a government commission from examining documents related to allegations of the clerical sexual abuse of children. Cardinal Desmond Connell, retired archbishop of Dublin, withdrew his petition for a permanent injunction Feb. 11 after a discussion with Cardinal Sean Brady of Armagh. The move drew praise from his successor, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, who had said the cardinal's original legal action took him by surprise. "Cardinal Connell is in a nursing home, still recovering from the effects of a fall, and I have naturally visited him and spoken with him," Archbishop Martin said in a statement released Feb. 11. "He informed me of his decision not to proceed, and that decision was his own." Archbishop Martin said he wanted to assure victims of abuse, as well as priests and congregations in the archdiocese, of his "continued commitment to seeking the truth about the past. It is my hope that the common aim of all remains focused on ensuring that an accurate understanding of the truth concerning sexual abuse of children by clergy emerges," he said.

Biblical Scholar Leads Vatican Lenten Retreat

Pope Benedict XVI asked the former secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Cardinal Albert Vanhoye, to lead his 2008 Lenten retreat. During the retreat, from Feb. 10 to 16, the 84-year-old French Jesuit cardinal focused on the theme, "We Welcome Christ Our High Priest," drawing from a passage in the Letter to the Hebrews that says, "Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our profession of faith." High-ranking Vatican officials also attend the annual retreat with the pope, who clears his schedule of all audiences for the week. Cardinal Vanhoye is also a former rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome.

Joseph Nangle, O.F.M., and Art Laffin, left, stand near bags of ashes during a protest against the Iraq War in Washington Feb. 6. A group of about 30 Catholics prayed and dropped ashes in front of the White House on Ash Wednesday as they called for an end to the war and what they say is a U.S. policy of torture.

Our Last Innocents

'Fair play has always been more of an ideal than a working principle.'

THE TIMING was exquisite. A voice on the radio, trying to entice viewers to one of those "Survivor"-type reality shows, promised that the program's competition would be extremely intense. "We don't play fair," the voice intoned. "We play to win." This pledge was delivered in a manner that suggested not embarrassment, but pride. After all, isn't that the point—to win, regardless of the means?

Coincidentally or not, the reality-show commercial led directly into a summary of the day's sports news, which concerned the adventures of the pitcher Roger Clemens, accused of using performance-enhancing substances, and the football coach Bill Belichick, accused of videotaping an opponent's practice session in violation of National Football League policy. Both men vehemently deny the accusations. If they are innocent, they should, of course, pursue every avenue to prove it. But you almost have to wonder why they would bother.

There is a pretty good case to be made that fair play always has been more of an ideal than a working principle in American society. From Standard Oil to Microsoft, American companies have been accused of dispensing with fairness in their will to win greater riches. Politicians from both parties, running for offices grand and local, have been known to cross the boundaries of fairness to win an election or get a piece of legislation passed. I'm told, and I find this hard to believe, that people in the publishing business have been known to fudge circulation figures in pursuit of greater advertising revenue.

It's not about playing fair. It's about winning.

When it comes to our games, however, we dispense with Machiavelli and instead embrace our inner Jeremiah, demanding purity and calling out those who fall short of our ideals. We believe in what sports bureaucrats call the "integrity of the game," that is, the charming notion that the playing field is level and pure for all, and that the games are played within a recognized set of rules that are the same for every competitor.

What a quaint notion! It seems positively Victorian, at odds with our distinctly un-Victorian attitude toward anything that smacks of self-restraint in pursuit of indulgence. As the Outback Steakhouse commercial says, "No Rules. Just Right." I've often wondered precisely what rules Outback has dispensed with in order to lure steak-loving anarchists to its dining rooms. Surely the rule that requires payment after consumption remains in place, and one suspects that the use of knives and forks is encouraged if not actually required.

In any case, no serious athletic organization could ever get away with the Outback ethic. Rules are the essence of sports. Break them on the field, and you are penalized. Break them off the field, and you are liable to be denied employment or, in the case of athletes like Pete Rose and Joe Jackson, you are barred from the highest accolade your sport can confer, a place in the Hall of Fame.

Sports fans may be this country's last innocents. Political junkies tend to be among the most cynical of humans, for they know how the legislative and electoral sausage is made. Few consumers are surprised to learn that large corporations occasionally cut legal and moral corners to make a few extra dollars. But sports fans are eternally wide-eyed. They passionately believe in the meritocratic purity of the baseball diamond, the hockey rink, the gridiron, the boxing ring.

On second thought, skip the boxing ring. Nobody is that innocent.

That's why athletes find it so difficult to admit that they've rigged the competition, that they have not played fairly in pursuit of victory. A reality show like "Survivor" can boost its ratings by highlighting the ruthlessness of its contestants because, at the end of the day, it's just an entertainment vehicle. The shows are not about reality, no matter that they are billed as precisely that.

Sports, however, are real, at least in our culture. The men and women who perform at the highest levels are admired for what they achieve on a playing field governed by rules fairly applied to all competitors. The victor supposedly earns his or her laurels not by manipulation, but by performance. When that proves false, when rules are broken in pursuit of victory, glory is rescinded and public affection withheld.

It seems, however, that only athletes are held to these high standards. Few people condemned Bill Gates when Microsoft was fined for violating fair trade practices in Europe. Presidential candidates rarely suffer when their campaigns are found to have violated election laws—a fairly frequent occurrence. But if an athlete or coach bends a rule, he or she not only faces the public's censure, but may actually go to prison. Marion Jones, the disgraced sprinter, denied taking steroids for years, but when she finally admitted that yes, she had taken drugs to improve her performance, she was stripped of her Olympic medals and dispatched to prison for perjury. No rules, just right? Not in the world of sports.

And that, I believe, is the beauty of the games we play or, in the vast majority of cases, watch. That's why the ongoing Congressional investigations of both baseball and football are important, because millions of sports fans really do believe in the integrity of the games they watch and the teams they follow. They may no longer associate integrity with public life; they may question the ethics of Wall Street; but they expect fairness and equity on the field.

A quaint notion, for sure. But an admirable one as well.

Terry Golway

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PHOTO COURTESY OF EL SANTUARIO DE CHIMAYO

A pilgrimage to Chimayo, the Lourdes of America

Holy Dirt

– BY JAMES MARTIN –

"SO WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE in New Mexico?" asked my friend. For two days last October, I had been speaking at a meeting of Catholic foundation directors in Santa Fe. Now, for the first time in a few months, I had a free day. I would spend it with my friend Bill, a priest who works in New Mexico. Bill is stationed at a parish outside Taos, roughly 50 miles from the center of Santa Fe, where we stood.

"Well, we saw the cathedral yesterday morning," I said. "After his morning Mass, the archbishop gave us a tour." The impressive Romanesque structure was built in 1884 by the first bishop of Santa Fe, Bishop Jean-Baptiste Lamy, the redoubtable French cleric on whom Willa Cather based her novel *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

"What about St. Joseph's staircase?" asked Bill.

Much of what I knew of the famous structure, I was embarrassed to admit, came

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from a cheesy television movie called "The Staircase." As the story goes, in the late 19th century the Sisters of Loreto were searching for someone to build a staircase in their chapel. (The tricky spot had defeated the best efforts of two previous carpenters.) The sisters decided to make a novena to St. Joseph, the patron saint of carpenters. On the final day of their novena, a gray-haired man riding a burro and carrying a toolbox visited them. He was looking for work. With only a few tools the carpenter constructed a gracefully winding staircase that makes two 360-degree turns. He completed a structure that stands without nails or any visible means of support. Before the sisters could pay the carpenter, he left. The nuns concluded that none other than St. Joseph could have done such fine carpentry. (As an added mystery, the wood used is not native to New Mexico.)

A pilgrim scoops dirt from El Pocito, the pit, at Chimayo, N.M.

Bill and I made our way to the chapel of Our Lady of Light, now a museum near the center of Santa Fe. At 2:35 in the afternoon, as the sun blazed above us, we found a sign announcing that the chapel had closed at 2:30. "I've come all the way from New York," I said to the guard, who stood silently beside the sign. "Uh-huh," he said. "It's still closed."

"What about Chimayo?" said Bill. "It's on the way to Taos."

The Story

El Santuario de Chimayo, nestled in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, is often called the Lourdes of America. As with a visit to Lourdes, another town set in hill country, a pilgrimage to Chimayo makes little sense without some understanding of its history.

When Archbishop Michael Sheehan gave us a tour of the cathedral the day before, he showed us an impressive reredos (the wall behind the altar) in a side chapel. Some of the statues on the reredos, he said, were linked with the history of a still-active lay Catholic group called the Penitentes. The story of Chimayo springs from the experience of one of these 19th-century Penitentes, Don Bernardo Abeyta.

On the evening of Good Friday in 1810, as he prayed in the hills, Don Bernardo saw a strange sight: a light coming from the valley below. Though there was no moon out, the ground seemed to glow. He decided to investigate. Digging at the spot, like Bernadette Soubirous digging at Lourdes, he unearthed an elaborate wooden crucifix, five feet high. Don Bernardo and his fellow Penitentes alerted the local pastor in nearby Santa Cruz. Together the group carried the crucifix in procession back to their church.

The next day, however, they awoke to find that the crucifix had disappeared. Retracing their steps, they discovered that it had returned to the original site. Don Bernardo and his friends carried it away again, but the crucifix returned. After the third effort, they concluded that God wanted the crucifix to remain where it was, at Chimayo.

When I heard this story, I thought of what the British writer Anne Wroe had written about the tradition of relics. In the Middle Ages, she wrote in an essay in *Awake My Soul*, relics were not merely commodities, but expressed something of the "will" of the saint: "The saint expressed himself through his body, in that when [the relic] was being carried by devotees from its original place of repose, it would indicate where it wished to rest. And it usually did so by becoming impossibly heavy to carry further when it had reached its desired home."

The Penitentes and local families built a chapel on the spot where the object was discovered. In time, pilgrims began to come to rub their hands in the soil that held the crucifix. Miraculous healing properties were attributed to the shrine. It was like Lourdes, but instead of water, the faithful at Chimayo rubbed dirt from the hole on their bodies, daubed it on photographs of family members, took it away in small portions and even ate it.

Today the site attracts 300,000 visitors each year, including, according to the custodian of the chapel, 30,000 pilgrims on Good Friday, some of whom walk from as far away as Albuquerque.

The Pilgrimage

I first heard about Chimayo from a Jewish friend named Ned. He and three other Jewish friends were touring the American southwest. They met two Catholic sisters on their trip and visited the shrine with them. According to Ned, you had to duck in order to enter the room where the dirt was. "The hole miraculously fills up with dirt every night," said Ned. "Or at least that's what we heard."

The way from Santa Fe to Chimayo passed through some of the most beautiful countryside I have ever seen. In his dusty pickup truck, Bill and I rattled through a mountainous region dotted with greenish-gray sagebrush, blue cornflowers and cottonwood trees that were golden yellow against a brilliant blue sky. After an hour, we turned off onto a narrow road, passing small adobe houses. Bill said that one house always made him stop. A few minutes later he pulled

CNS PHOTO BY JAMES BACA

over next to a small pink adobe house with a rusting car parked out front.

On the side of the house was a vividly colored portrait, perhaps three feet tall, of the head of a suffering Christ, gazing skyward. A lurid crown of thorns encircled his head. "To me, that's New Mexico," Bill said. We sat for some time before the painting.

Though my friend Ned had told me that Chimayo was small, I wasn't prepared for how small. We turned onto a dusty road, passed a few shops selling santos, and there in the middle of a compact plaza was a yellow adobe structure with two small towers topped with wooden roofs. It looked as if it were about to collapse.

Inside we met a friend of Bill's, the custodian of El Santuario, Father Julio, a Spanish-born priest who is a member of the Society of the Holy Family. Father Julio told us something of the history of the chapel. Several decades after its construction the chapel fell into disrepair. John Meem, an architect who had heard of the site, was passing through New Mexico. Surprised by its deterioration, Meem, an Episcopalian, began to restore the chapel along with the help of a local preservation society. In 1929, after completing the restoration, Meem purchased the site from its original owners and turned it over to the archdiocese. So we have an Episcopalian to thank for this Catholic shrine.

In the interior, its wooden pews nicked and its walls covered with paintings of dozens of saints, were a few pilgrims. On a far wall, in the center of an impressive reredos, was the mysterious cross that Don Bernardo had found. As Father Julio mentioned, it was not of a style one would expect to find in the area. Even the wood was foreign. How had it gotten to Chimayo?

The Prayer

For the last 12 years I have suffered from carpal-tunnel syndrome, which is sometimes painful and always makes typing a challenge. Each year when I am invited to accompany the Order of Malta on their trip to Lourdes, I pray for healing. Yet each year I find that my hands have gotten no better. (On the other hand, they've gotten no worse.)

During my first visit to Lourdes I visited the baths twice. The next day a Jesuit friend with whom I was traveling said, "Are you cured?" I shook my head. "I guess Mary said no," he said. "Maybe next year!"

When it comes to places like Chimayo, I try to give the story the benefit of the doubt. (Lourdes is of a different order, however. Cures there have been authenticated by the church and by medical doctors, who have attested to 67 miraculous healings since 1858.) My faith does not depend on these traditions. On the other hand, I figure that if God can create the world out of nothing and raise his son from the dead, then moving a crucifix from one place to another is simple by comparison.

The Room of Miracles, also called El Pocito (literally, Little Well), is near the main chapel, connected by an anteroom where one finds an explosion of paintings of dozens of saints, holy cards, letters of gratitude and crutches hung on the wall in testimony to the healings received. As Ned had told me, you have to duck to enter El Pocito. Once inside you see even more prints of the saints and letters tacked to the walls. In the middle of the earthen floor is a small hole, about the right size for planting some flowers. Somewhat incongruously, into the hole were stuck three brightly colored plastic shovels, like those a child would use at the seashore.

Saying a prayer, I bent down and rubbed my hands in the dirt. Would I be healed here? Was Chimayo where God wanted me to be freed of my little ailment? The dirt was cool and silky.

On the way out, I gingerly asked Father Julio about my friend's tale of the miraculously refilling dirt. "Oh no!" he said cheerfully. "Some people believe that, but it's no secret: we refill it every morning, and during Holy Week and the summertime several times a day. We take the dirt from a nearby hillside, so it's the same earth in which the crucifix was discovered."

The Return

The next day, Bill and I woke up early and drove to San Francisco de Asís Church in Ranchos de Taos. At 6 a.m. the morning star was still visible in the inky sky. Bill's pink adobe church is best known as the subject of several moody Georgia O'Keeffe paintings, in which the church becomes a mass of shapes looming against a cloudy sky. "I can't believe I have a key to this work of art," he said as we walked in. It was the feast of St. Jude, one of my favorite saints. The Mass, celebrated in Spanish and punctuated with songs accompanied by a guitar and an accordion, was deeply moving.

After a colossal breakfast of huevos rancheros, which we shared with a few parishioners, Bill drove me to the Albuquerque airport, where the customs inspector asked me to open my bag. Inside was a small tin canister I had bought from one of the santos stores in Chimayo with an image of another local devotion, the Infant of Atocha.

"What's inside?" he asked suspiciously.

All I could think to say was, "It's holy dirt."

"*Ah sí!*" said the inspector, and I noticed for the first time his Hispanic features. "Chimayo!" he said.

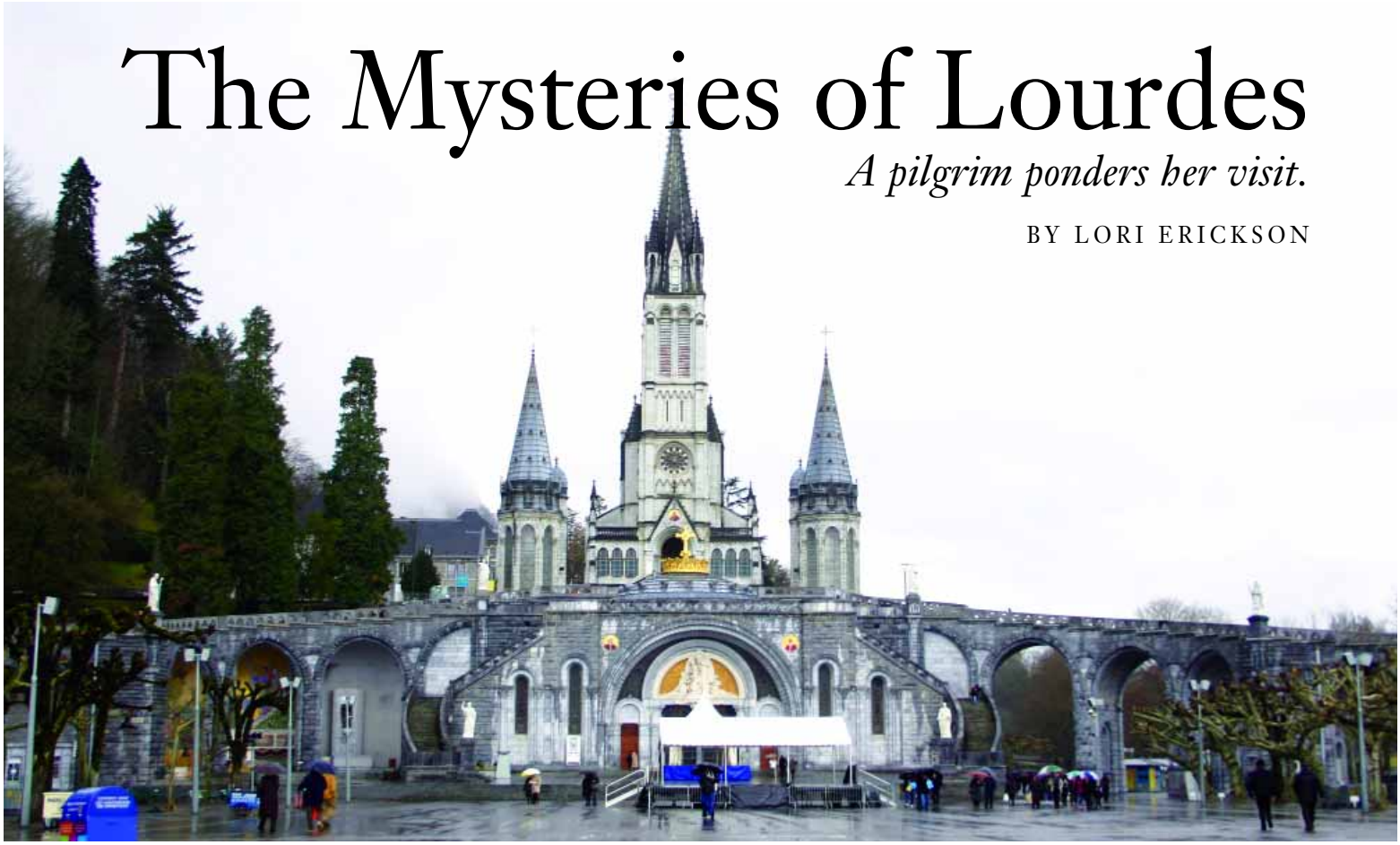
My hands have not improved much. But then again, I have been able to write this article, so I will credit the pilgrimage to El Santuario of Chimayo for a little healing. Maybe just the amount that I needed. A

James Martin, S.J., narrates an audio slide show of Chimayo, at americamagazine.org.

The Mysteries of Lourdes

A pilgrim ponders her visit.

BY LORI ERICKSON



The square in front of the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Lourdes is prepared for pilgrims.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

When I told a friend who has traveled many times to France that I was planning to visit Lourdes, her reaction was a mixture of surprise and concern. "Lourdes?" she asked. "You might find it…off-putting." She had toured Lourdes some 20 years ago, and the visit had not gone well. Her most vivid memory, she related, was of the rows of shops that sell every conceivable sort of Marian-themed merchandise.

"Are you sure you want to go there?" she asked, clearly not wanting me to be disappointed on my first visit to a country she loved.

I assured her that I did indeed want to visit Lourdes. "Well, perhaps I would view it differently today," she said. "I went to Lourdes when I was still estranged from the church."

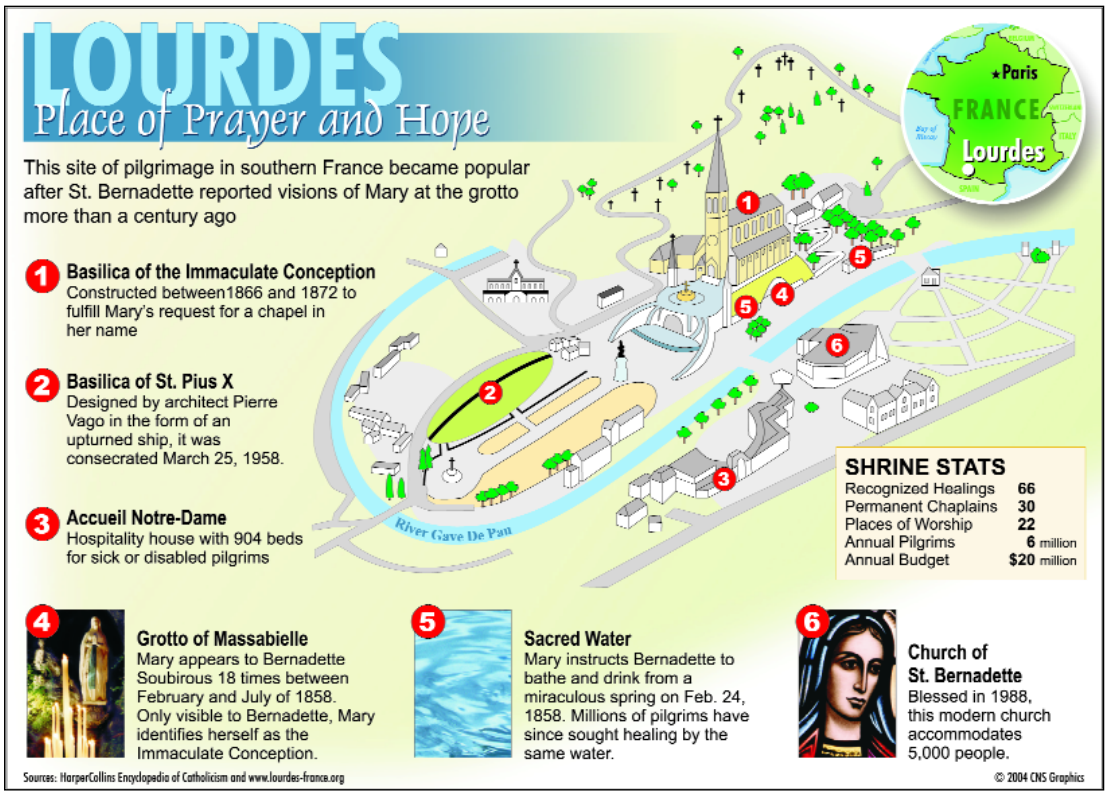
As I journeyed to Lourdes a few weeks later and thought of her words, I prepared myself to be disappointed by this holy site, the most famous healing shrine in the world. But what I found was not disappointing—rather, Lourdes to me was intriguing, at times perplexing, and always fascinating. A year later, my thoughts drift back to that small town touched by forces much larger than itself. Like many of the pilgrims who visit the shrine, I continue to ponder the mystery of Lourdes.

LORI ERICKSON is the author of *The Joy of Pilgrimage* (Resurrection Press, 2007). She lives in Iowa City, Iowa.

Learning the Story

My immediate purpose in visiting Lourdes was to research a book I was writing on pilgrimage. With the shrine's 150th anniversary coming up in 2008, I knew Lourdes would be an important destination to include. As an Episcopalian, though, my knowledge of the site was limited. I knew it was associated with a saint named Bernadette and with miracles of healing. I knew that water was somehow connected to it, for I had Catholic friends who had brought vials of holy water back from trips to Europe. And I knew this: having been raised in a Protestant denomination (no longer my own) that distrusted anything mystical or Roman Catholic, I was heading to a place that celebrated both. I took some pleasure in the thought that numerous ancestors of mine were likely spinning in their graves at the prospect.

I planned my journey so I would be there on Feb. 11, the anniversary of the first apparition to Bernadette. Before leaving home I read everything I could find about her story. On that date in 1858, a poor young girl named Bernadette Soubirous received the first of 18 visions of the Virgin Mary



at a spot on the outskirts of Lourdes. Over the course of the next five months, Lourdes became a magnet for the devout, the skeptical and the curious, particularly after Bernadette (at the urging of the Virgin Mary) uncovered a spring whose waters seemed to have miraculous properties. Church officials, who at first accused young Bernadette of lying, eventually confirmed the authenticity of her visions. Lourdes, once a quiet market town, would never be the same, and Bernadette herself would eventually be declared a saint.

International Gathering

Nestled in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains near the Spanish border, Lourdes has the same rows of gray stone houses, arranged along narrow streets, as other small towns in France. Except Lourdes is different. Though its residents number only 15,000, guest houses and hotels throughout the town accommodate more than five million visitors each year.

As I drew closer to the shrine, I could see the shops my friend had described. Statues, rosaries, plaques, medallions and other religious items filled their shelves, a testimony to the age-old desire of travelers to take home souvenirs, even from trips taken for a spiritual purpose. The smiling, kind visage of the Virgin Mary greeted me from each store, her hands often outspread in what seemed like a welcome to me, a wandering Protestant. Unlike my friend, I didn't find the shops off-putting, though I know that commercialism and piety are uneasy bedfellows. I found something heartwarming in the thought of all those trinkets being carried back to the far corners of the earth, finding their way into the hands of people in need of a reminder that miracles are possible even when the darkness seems overwhelming.

Once I reached the entrance to the sanctuary, the press of people became thicker, and I heard snatches of Italian, Spanish and German conversations. Then the full expanse of the shrine came into view: a long colonnade that ended in a complex of several large churches, one of them topped by a gilded crown. Walking down the avenue past statues of St. Bernadette and St. Thérèse of Lisieux, I was struck by how much this spot had clearly changed since that day in 1858 when Bernadette received her first vision. The apparitions had taken place at what was then little more than a garbage dump on the outskirts of the town—a far cry from the immense structures built to accommodate the pilgrims who have flocked here ever since.

Tips for Travelers

The main pilgrimage season in Lourdes runs from Easter through the end of October. Because 2008 marks the 150th anniversary of the apparitions to St. Bernadette, special events will be held throughout the year. Twelve missions are scheduled, including some for the disabled, youth and interreligious dialogue, but visitors are welcome throughout the jubilee year.

Lourdes is a five-and-a-half-hour trip from Paris by high-speed train; it is also served by an international airport with flights from throughout Europe. A wide variety of lodgings are available, including accommodations for the sick.

The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes is open 24 hours every day, and admission is free.

For more information, go to www.lourdes2008.com.

Walking to the side of the main church complex, however, I saw that at least one part of the shrine remained substantially the same as in Bernadette's day. The rugged outcropping of stone known as the Massabielle was still there. In the niche where the Virgin appeared stood a statue of Mary, her hands clasped in prayer as she gazed upward. Below the rock face bubbled the spring that had been uncovered by Bernadette. Protected by glass, it was heaped with bouquets of flowers, photographs and other tokens brought by pilgrims, each of the offerings speaking wordlessly of yearning and petition.

Nearby was a row of spigots that funneled water from the spring so that people could fill containers to take home. A woman saw me looking and motioned me forward. "Bella! Bella!" she said, gesturing toward the water with a smile.

In Search of Healing

Though I had traveled to holy sites around the world, I had never visited one so packed with pilgrims (about 20,000 were in Lourdes during my visit). Many in the crowd obviously suffered from some sort of illness or disability, but the atmosphere felt celebratory, not desperate or sad. The diversity of the worldwide church was visible in the variety of people who passed me, pilgrims from Africa, Europe, South America and the Far East.

I remember looking into their faces, wondering if any would receive a miracle while at Lourdes. Many were no doubt hoping and praying for one. I could see it in the eyes of the women with the telltale chemotherapy scarves and the parents pushing children in wheelchairs. Though I was willing to admit that physical healings are possible, I suspected that healings of the heart and soul are the more significant miracles.

On previous European trips, I visited many churches that seemed more like museums than houses of worship: beautiful, sterile and dead. Lourdes, by contrast, pulsed with energy and life. And the frequent rain did not dampen the enthusiasm of the people marching in procession behind banners bearing the names of their churches and towns. Nor did the weather deter those waiting patiently in line by the outdoor baths filled with water from the spring. Their faith was inspiring. It was most palpable during the evening processions, when thousands of pilgrims held lighted candles aloft and sang hymns to Mary. I sang along, fully swept up by the spectacle.

The Faith of Bernadette

Looking back on the trip, I remain intrigued by the story of Bernadette. I cannot explain what happened to that poor, uneducated girl on a February day near the town garbage dump. Her visions do not fit neatly into the theology I was taught as a child, nor the dominant worldview of the culture

I now inhabit. Yet something extraordinary happened to Bernadette in 1858 that the rest of the world is still trying to comprehend.

By all ordinary standards, Bernadette lived a hard life after the visions; the subject of worldwide speculation, she was forced to repeat her story endlessly. Fleeing to the shelter of a convent far from Lourdes was no doubt a relief to her, though the curious followed her even there.

"I am here to tell you what happened," she would say. "I am not here to make you believe." Such raw honesty is perhaps the best testament to the truth of her visions. She realized that she could only point the way, not lead people to the destination.

I have come to think that perhaps the best way to try to explain the mystery is this: 150 years ago, a bell was struck in Lourdes, creating a divine sound that resonates to this day. Not all who journey to Lourdes can sense it, but its echo reverberates for those who have ears to hear.

Before leaving Lourdes, I went back to the little shops that line the streets outside the shrine and took great pleasure in finding items to bring to people at home. I bought a rosary for my worried friend, and as I handed it to her, I said: "Go back. I think this time you won't be disappointed." A

From Jan. 18, 1958, Frances Parkinson Keyes on "The Lesson of Lourdes," at americamagazine.org.

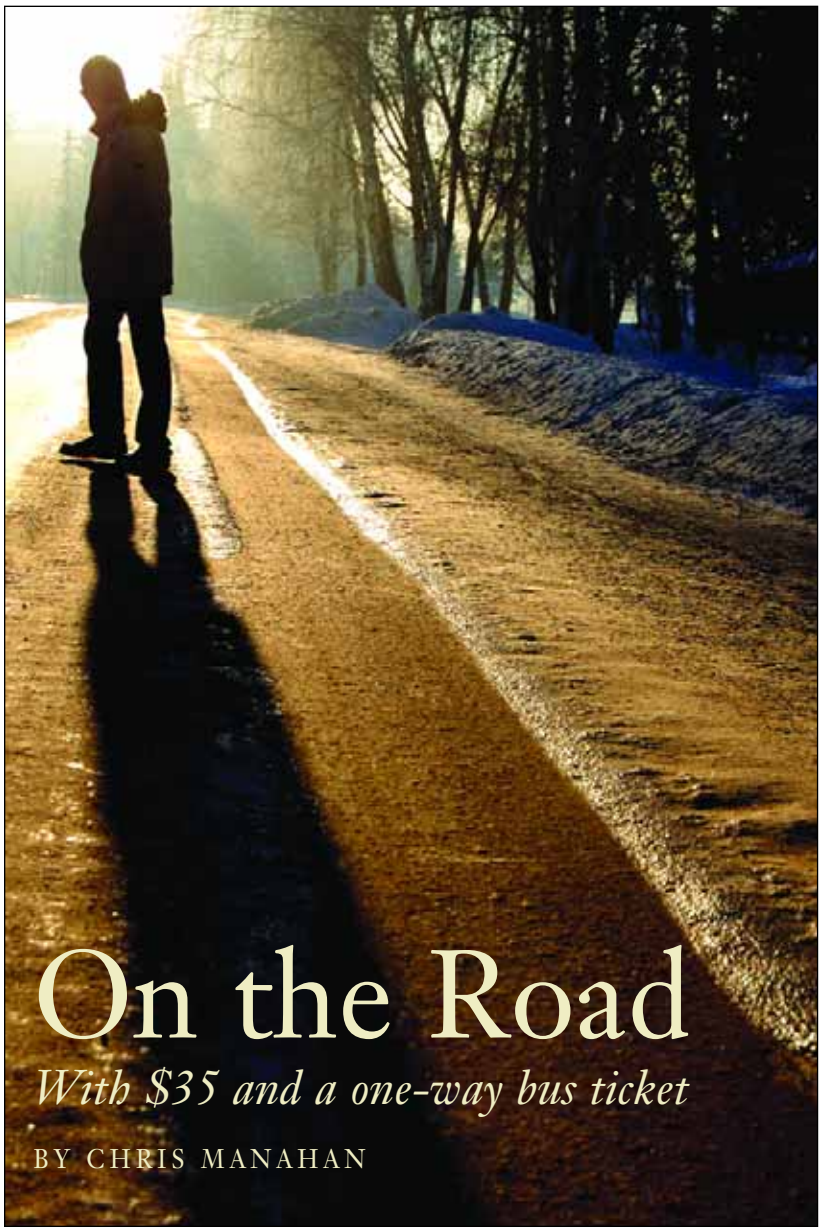


PHOTO BY KUZNETSOV DMITRIY

On the Road

With $35 and a one-way bus ticket

BY CHRIS MANAHAN

EIGHT MONTHS AFTER ENTERING the novitiate in St. Paul, Minn., each novice preparing to take vows in the Society of Jesus is sent out on pilgrimage with $35 in cash. The destination is selected by the novice and his director, and he is given a one-way bus ticket, that will get him there. Where the pilgrimage takes the novice after that is left up to God's providence and the novice's prayer. The novices are told to fend for themselves until they return a month later.

After more than a century-and-a-half of cloistered formation apart from the world, Jesuit novices today are directed to go outside the cloister and experience the world firsthand. For the novices' parents and loved ones, this adventure is often the most difficult part of the Jesuit formation program, yet for the Jesuits themselves it is often the part most relished and retold.

The monthlong pilgrimage, as practiced in some U.S. provinces since the late 1960s, revives the intent of the Society's founder, St. Ignatius Loyola, who wrote in the General Examen (No. 67), which is part of the Jesuit Constitutions:

> The third experience is to spend another month in making a pilgrimage without money, but begging from door to door at times, for the love of God our Lord, in order to grow accustomed to discomfort in food and lodging. Thus too the candidate, through abandoning all the reliance which he could have in money or other created things, may with genuine faith and intense love place his reliance entirely in his Creator and Lord.

The wisdom of Ignatius is that one's dependence on God's love and one's trust in God become especially real in a pilgrim's circumstances; what one may have talked about in a theoretical way becomes rooted in the pilgrimage. One does not easily forget prayers answered along the road or one's need for comfort amid discomfort. Unplanned encounters in which God's hand is shown keeps one's heart on fire, and the freedom one feels as one's love and trust in God deepens and replaces any fear that might otherwise immobilize a young man in such circumstances.

Each novice's experience is unique and springs from his prayerful discernment, with the help of a spiritual director, of God's call and the graces he wants to seek while on the road. Tossing aside the Fodor's or the Michelin or the Lonely Planet guidebooks, a novice is guided in his travels by prayer.

For the novices in St. Paul, the timing of the pilgrimage experience is a key factor. It comes in the wake of a 30-day period making the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in silence and immediately after a six-week "hospital experience" in which the novice gives hands-on, personal care to those who need help because of sickness, mental disability or old age. The Exercises and hospital "experiment" help foster a novice's trust in God and his deeper companionship

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with Jesus Christ wherever he goes. The pilgrimage tests a novice's trust and sense of companionship further, just as gold tested in fire becomes purer.

Voices From the Road

"While the challenge of the pilgrimage experiment—venturing into the unknown with $35 and a bus ticket—is what grabs most people's attention, the real drama of the journey is to be found in the relationship between the pilgrim and God," wrote a novice whose pilgrimage in 2007 took him to Mexico City and the nearby shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Worries and anxieties about money, logistics and the details of travel plagued him throughout, but just as constant were hospitality and generosity wherever he went. By the time he wended his way back to St. Paul, by way of El Paso, Los Angeles and Denver, he wrote: "I had no reason to worry and faced only the slightest hardships. In many ways the very gentleness of my path was a rebuke to my anxiety, for God is always watching, always leading and, perhaps, always testing. And the only sure path to true safety and comfort is to rise and follow and leave the rest to his providence."

Another novice, who slept outside several nights during his trek, recalled his first night without a place to stay: "As I was sitting disappointed on a wall at an industrial mall next door, reading and waiting for it to get dark, I saw on a wall, written in graffiti, 'Trust God.' Staring at this I received new energy. It was the reassurance I needed." He went on to spend other nights sleeping outdoors, but he also experienced the warm welcomes of many who invited him into their homes. After leaving the ramshackle farmhouse of a father and four children, whose generosity in the midst of hard times especially touched him, he recalled, "I was filled with all kinds of emotions, which I could sort out as I walked through a lot of deserted area." He recognized himself many times in very generous people, but also in those who were suspicious and less generous: "Sitting in church waiting for Mass, it was very noticeable how people would sit away from me, at a 'safe' distance. How I feel regret for the many times I have judged people by outside appearance."

Surprises Along the Way

The variety of pilgrimage destinations and the routes novices travel indicate the diverse ways God works with each of them. For one it may be a walking pilgrimage to a destination no farther than 150 miles from his starting point, for others a lengthy sojourn across

borders, to the coasts and many points between. Specific destinations and carefully laid out plans work for some, while others leave almost everything to chance. As one novice noted afterward, however, quoting the writer Anatole France, "Chance is perhaps the pseudonym God uses when he doesn't want to sign his name."

The coincidences, chances and surprises that novices encounter often are instrumental in the graces each receives. For instance, a novice who wanted greater trust in God was picked up halfway between New Orleans and Arizona by a driver who typically did not pick up hitchhikers. The novice explained, after persistent questioning, what he was doing on the road. His response left the driver dumbfounded, because this good Samaritan tooling around in his pickup truck that day (with his kayak in tow) was wrestling with his own discernment: Was he being called to become a priest?

Another novice confessed to God as he shivered through a cool night with only a towel for cover, "I don't know if I can do this another night." The following morning a passerby found him and took him to a neighboring town, where he slept that night in a four-poster bed under layers of comforters and on top of mattresses "at least two feet thick." God captured his attention.

Still another novice recalls how he experienced the grace of solitude every day while on pilgrimage. Mindful of his experience of the Spiritual Exercises a few months earlier, and how "one tends to learn a great deal about God and oneself when plucked from the busyness of everyday life," he recovered that spirit of recollection and inner tranquility while on the road. It helped answer his query early on, "Could I find the grounding of my relationship with God when I am in a constant state of change and flux?" By the end of his pilgrimage he had slept in 21 beds in 28 days, had not run into a single person who knew him, met people and left them within 24 hours, and for four weeks was separated from those who could provide intimacy in his life. Yet God was there. "God had given me everything I had asked for and even some of the things I had forgotten to ask for!" he wrote.

> Comfort in the midst of discomfort, trust in the midst of uncertainty—these become commonplace for the pilgrim novices.

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"The final grace of my pilgrimage was the recognition that God has never been outdone in generosity."

The uncertainties of the pilgrimage experience—Do I have a place to stay? Do I have food to eat? Where do I go next?—offer novices a freedom new to most. "Quite simply, most of the time, I had no idea where I was going, both on the day-to-day level and the larger scale of the pilgrimage as a whole," recalls one novice, whose pilgrimage took him to the southeastern United States. "So it became a requirement to simply trust that God would give me the grace necessary both to know where I ought to go and to actually find a way to get there." A religious brother hosted him during part of his pilgrimage and helped him gain an appreciation for what was happening. While preparing the evening meal they were about to share, the brother said to him: "You know why this pilgrimage thing is so great? It makes you more aware of the present moment. And that's where God is, so you have to be aware of it."

What early in the pilgrimage is a fearful moment—the beginning of a day without knowing what comes next—becomes a moment of great liberation as the pilgrimage continues. Many novices say that they eventually enjoy not having a plan or a schedule to keep and, instead, trusting in what God might have in store for them. The same freedom often turns what was carefully packed for the journey into a burden rather than a help. Novices often jettison superfluous items along the way. Others experience freedom when the little they brought with them becomes enough.

"I remember vividly the point when I realized that I had made [the decision to take as few things as possible] more out of pride than any real discernment. That thought brought on intense emotions of sadness and also fear: What was I going to do now that I was already launched on my pilgrimage?" wrote a novice, who had packed one set of outer clothes and two sets of "inner clothes." He asked God to help him accept that he would have enough to wear. "The regime of washing each night and dirtying each day became just another part of my daily routine—occasionally finding a machine to wash my pants or long-sleeved shirt. And by the end of the pilgrimage I had reached a level of comfort that at the beginning I never thought was possible."

Comfort in the midst of discomfort, freedom in the midst of limitations and trust in the midst of uncertainty—these become commonplace for the pilgrim novices over their monthlong sojourn. The experiences are sensational enough that they remain vivid for years, often for a lifetime, as one U.S. novice learned when he was welcomed by another Jesuit in Mexico City. "He told me stories about his own pilgrimage as a novice in Ecuador half a century ago, but he was a bit shocked that novices were still going on pilgrimage today. 'In today's world?!' he said with disbelief. 'Your novice master must be crazy.' Then he added with a smile, 'But it's a wonderful spirituality.'" A

Getting Away From the Kids

The spiritual rewards of business travel

BY STEPHEN MARTIN

ART BY DAN SALAMIDA

JUST BEFORE I LEFT North Carolina for a 10-day business trip to Southeast Asia, a well-meaning friend said to me with great sympathy, "Of course, it'll be really hard to be away from the kids."

I paused and pictured my three-year-old son howling in rage because I flushed a toilet in our house without his permission. I recalled smashing my forehead against a half-opened door and reeling backward, Three Stooges style, as I staggered through the midnight darkness to check on my fussing infant daughter.

"Yes," I said, dreaming all the while of the next flight to Hong Kong. "It'll be awful." There was a time when 15 straight hours in an airplane would not have struck me as an opportunity for spiritual renewal. But that was before I became a father.

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus chastised his disciples for trying to prevent children from approaching him. "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God," he said. It is quite possible Jesus regretted his magnanimity as the kids drew closer, sneezing in his eyes and shouting the same questions at him 10 or 15 times. He might even have asked, echoing the narrator of Donald Barthelme's classic short story "Critique de la Vie Quotidienne": "Is there to be no end to this *family life*?"

I don't often voice these feelings aloud, because they are not socially acceptable in 2008. You might even be thinking right now: "What's wrong with this guy? His kids should be the center of his universe."

Well, something is wrong. But I'm pretty sure it's not with me.

Much has been written about today's generation of "helicopter parents," who hover constantly over their children, tracking their every move, swooping in at the slightest hint of trouble. This is not good for the kids, of course, who never learn to do anything for themselves, and psychologists are having a grand time dissecting the implications. I have seen considerably less discussion, however, of the price parents themselves pay for relentlessly putting their children front and center.

I think there is, among other things, a steep spiritual cost, and we can run up a hefty tab before we know it.

At a weekend retreat my wife and I made before our wedding, our group leader proposed something fairly radical for our times: placing your children first is not necessarily the right formula for a healthy marriage. It is more important to take care of your spouse and yourself so you can be the kind of well-balanced adults your kids need you to be.

Or, to put it less elegantly, sometimes you just need to get away. For my wife, the occasional weekend getaway with her sister does the trick. In my case, business trips offer the best opportunity. For several years now, I have traveled annually to Singapore. It's a rather exhausting journey

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of about 30 hours. The 12-hour time difference between there and home is punishing, as is the daily routine of predawn e-mail checks, epic meetings and late-night business dinners. The jet lag doesn't even really set in until I have made the long trip home. And, by the way, my supremely extroverted boss is right there with me—an extreme introvert—the entire time. Still, I have come to enjoy this marathon thoroughly for a few simple reasons, mainly those precious moments when I can linger in a hot shower or read a newspaper in silence or hear a waiter ask, "How can I serve you?"

I'll confess to having wondered if I should really relish these trips quite so much, because I do love my family. Getting married and having kids are two of the best things that ever happened to me, maybe the only things that could have jolted me out of the navel-gazing of my 20s. Being a family man is a vocation, and my life changed radically for the better when I found it. But even the things you love can drive you batty. So I looked to the Gospels for guidance.

Jesus and his disciples spend a fair amount of time trying—usually fruitlessly—to escape the crowds and constant demands that follow them everywhere. Mark paints the reality of their lives this way: "For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." This sounds like a standard Wednesday evening in my house, with meatloaf consumed standing up, pureed green beans dripping down the high chair and nonstop negotiations with my son over whether he deserves a popsicle. Jesus' mission was to minister to the crowds, but he and his disciples needed solitude and deep prayer to renew themselves. His solution for the chaos: "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while."

The Gospels document many examples of Jesus retreating from the constant clamor around him, stealing away from the adoring crowds, the hateful Pharisees and his earnest, bumbling apostles. In Mark, for instance, we find him traveling to the sea, disappearing into the hills, moving from village to village and house to house in secrecy. He yearns for lonely places and finds rest there. He is searching, it seems, for the right balance between his frantically busy outward life and his intensely focused inner life. Jesus knew that his public life—the family of faith he was so painstakingly building—was an ultimate measure of his success. Still, the crowds tried his patience, the apostles baffled him, enemies exhausted him. He needed time apart from them all, time for prayer, which made him better able to serve them. It never meant he took them for granted.

Recently, I made a short trip to New York City. Before we even took off, there was trouble. LaGuardia was delaying all inbound flights, the captain explained to my groaning fellow travelers. That was about the same time the 3-year-old girl directly behind me started shrieking and whining about getting to her grandmother's house. All around me, middle-aged men clutched their heads. We sat on the runway for an hour, serenaded periodically by her screams. "That must have been painful," a colleague said to me later. But the truth is I barely heard her at all. The adjoining seat was open so I stretched out and relaxed. Why not? It wasn't my kid. And within a few hours I would be strolling down Fifth Avenue, engulfed by people but blissfully alone. City streets have a way of conjuring up my sincerest prayers, and the words on my lips would be: Lord, bring me safely back home to my family—but not yet. A

Healing the Split

Rome and Canterbury

The Elusive Search for Unity

By Mary Reath

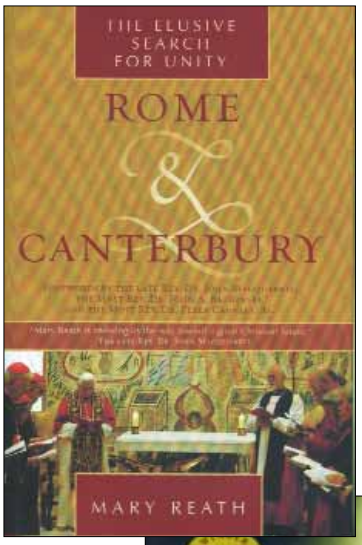
Rowman & Littlefield. 160p $19.95
ISBN 9780742552784

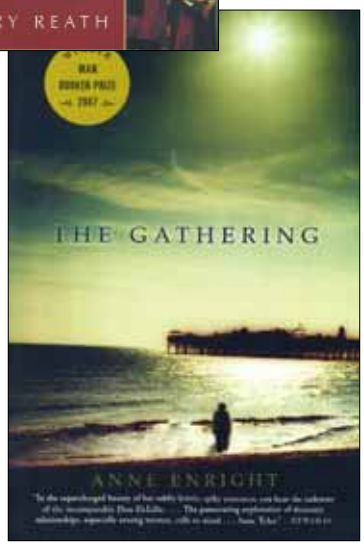
I began my reading of *Rome and Canterbury* nagged by a sense of obligation: "I said I would; I will." Questions spiraled around in my head. Could its timing be any worse? What more was there to know about the breach between Rome and the Anglicans? What could possibly come from talks between the two? I may have begun grudgingly, but Mary Reath quickly had me reading avidly.

Reath is a fine writer. She knows her subject and cares about it. Raised a Roman Catholic, she is now a governor of the Anglican Centre in Rome, where as a student in 1998 she first became enamored of the causes of the split and was "stunned to learn that the divisions in Christianity were seen not as a given, but just the opposite." Her efforts to learn more opened her to a vast quantity of scholarly works, while showing her the need for a book where lay people could discover "this search for unity from the historical, doctrinal, and practical angles."

Reath's book offers readers a brief (97 pages of text) history of the dissolution of Western Christianity and the ecumenical efforts in modern times by Rome and Canterbury to heal the breach between them. Besides 10 short chapters, there is a foreword containing enthusiastic endorsements by the late John Macquarrie (a theologian), John Bathersby (Roman Catholic archbishop of Brisbane) and Peter Carnley (retired Anglican archbishop of Australia). The book concludes with eight appendices, half of which give the texts of documents agreed upon by the Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (Arcic) that has met annually since 1970. Arcic's statements include documents on the Eucharist, ministry and ordination, salvation and the church, and the church as communion.

In addition, Appendix III ("Morals: Agreed Statements on Teachings and Practices" [1994]) treats topics like marriage and divorce, contraception, abortion and homosexuality. Since this section explores many hot-button issues, its approach deserves citing as an example of the care and thoroughness taken by the commission in its work. After noting "how penetratingly difficult the subject of morals is today," the document continues:





> In this agreed statement, the first of all of the post-Vatican II ecumenical dialogues to address morals, Arcic does three things.
> • Firstly, they give a thoughtful and developed overview of the underlying and relevant moral and spiritual theology of both churches.
> • Secondly, they explain the differences that have evolved regarding how the leadership and the laity interact as related to morals.
> • And, thirdly, they explore the actual official teachings that are specifically different, and those where ambiguity exists.

Reath acknowledges the current events in the Anglican community that are causing inner turmoil and making ecumenical dialogue difficult. In the book's preface, the author cites the election in June 2006 by the Episcopal Church in the United States of Katherine Jefferts Schori "to lead them and represent them at global meetings of the Anglican Communion." This event was followed two weeks later by the Church of England's announcement that it intended to allow female members of the clergy in England to become bishops. Reath knows that such actions (along with the continuing bitterness over the consecration of Gene Robinson—a priest who is in a long-term homosexual relationship—as bishop of New Hampshire) may well cause the dissolution of the Anglican Communion. I think, however, that Reath sees the present tumultuous time more as a spur to creative ecumenism than a deterrent. Certainly she believes that spreading knowledge about the past 40 years of honest effort to rebuild relations between Rome and Canterbury is worthy work.

Rome and Canterbury is divided into three parts covering history, authority and the future. Chapters 1 and 2 treat the complex reasons for the Reformation and the responses taken that solidified all positions for 300 years. Chapter 3 discusses both the papacy's and Anglicanism's reactions to 19th-century modernism. For example, Rome responded to disestablishment by tightening oversight (direct appointment of bishops) and Vatican I's decree on papal infallibility, while Canterbury produced the Oxford Movement—an Anglican effort at spiritual renewal—and inaugurated the Lambeth Conference (1867) to address issues of authority and governance. Chapters 4 through 6 trace the beginning of the ecumenical movement in 1910 to the present. Without losing focus on healing the rift between Rome and Canterbury, the

The Reviewers

Denise Lardner Carmody is Jesuit Community Professor of Religious Studies at Santa Clara University, in Calif.

Peter Heinegg is a professor of English at Union College in Schenectady, N.Y.

author explains the formation and work of the World Council of Churches, the opening of scholarly cooperation in biblical studies and the impact of the Second Vatican Council on ecumenism. This section closes with a chapter outlining the work of Arcic, whose birth produced a press release announcing: "After 400 years of separation between the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, official representatives from both churches have taken the first steps towards restoring full unity."

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on authority: its exercise in the early church, relevant background on infallibility, indefectibility, conciliarism and primacy, as well as a clear overview of where both churches are today concerning authority. The book's final two chapters offer thoughts on where we may be heading in our ecumenical endeavors. Reath is quite candid about the obstacles to union: the current internal tensions in the Anglican Communion, mutual ignorance among the laity about one another's traditions and lingering negative biases. But she also points to many notable achievements, such as doctrinal agreement that hints at complementarity and genuine support from the leadership of both churches. Concerning this last point, in documenting her assertions and aspirations, Reath cites a wide range of figures whose expertise and influence are impressive. She also provides an extensive bibliography that will be useful to anyone interested in pursuing this topic further.

Rome and Canterbury is a book that could—and should—be read and discussed in appropriate theology classes and parish book clubs. It is an ideal dialogue tool for Roman Catholic and Episcopalian laity. As Reath insists:

> Though sometimes mystified about how to move forward, no problem is so formidable as to preclude dialogue. Christ's prayer "May they all be one" remains. Seeking oneness is not an optional extra, but rather learning and receiving from each other is a divine imperative. Ecumenism *is* the future of Christianity.
>
> Proceed with caution. But proceed.

Denise Lardner Carmody

‘The Past Is Not a Happy Place’

The Gathering

By Anne Enright
Black Cat. 272p $14 (paperback)
ISBN 9780802170392

Over a century ago, in 1905, an unknown young writer named James Joyce was having a hard time finding a publisher for *Dubliners*, his bitter collection of tales about the home town he had already left (physically, at least) for good. Shortly before this, in a famous letter to his lover, Nora Barnacle, Joyce had written: “My mind rejects the whole present social order and Christianity—home, the recognised virtues, classes of life, and religious doctrine. How could I like the idea of home?... When I looked on [my mother’s] face as she lay in the coffin—a face grey and wasted with cancer—I understood that I was looking on the face of a victim, and I cursed the system which had made her victim.”

Anne Enright’s protagonist and narrator, Veronica Hegarty, clearly has much in common with Joyce, even if by the end of *The Gathering* she seems unable to wield the classic Joycean weapons of silence, exile and cunning—though she tries. Enright, whose novel won the 2007 Man Booker prize and £50,000 from the old colonialist oppressor, presents a vision of (mostly suburban) Dublin that is as cold, bleak and miserable as anything in Joyce. Veronica is the seventh child of the dozen born to “Mammy” and her dreadful, unnamed, now dead husband. Oh, and there were also seven miscarriages, a dead infant and a middle-aged daughter lost to pancreatic cancer. The Hegartys gather for that ultimate Irish ritual, a wake, before burying another adult sibling, Liam, a sweet, feckless alcoholic who drowned himself off Brighton, and whose body Veronica has gone to reclaim and transport back over all the bureaucratic hurdles to that inevitable place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.

Veronica has always thought of Liam (11 months older) as her twin; and both during and after her somber mission she

dives into a twisty round of memories, conjectures and fantasies about him and about Hegarty family history, which has just turned another painful corner. Veronica, 39, is a currently unemployed mother of two girls; and at least one critic has questioned whether her humdrum past as a home-furnishings journalist could ever jibe with the dark, relentless brilliance of her voice here. In any event, she spins her musings back to 1925, to Ada Merriman, her grandmother and the Hegarty matriarch, an orphan who might also have a been a rescued prostitute and whose affections may have vacillated between her husband, Charlie Spillane, and her admirer, Lambert Nugent. Nugent may also (Veronica imagines) have been a bookie and Ada's lover in midlife; but one thing she knows for sure: as an eight-year-old girl she stumbled onto Nugent sexually abusing Liam—who may or may not have been doomed forever as a result.

At all events, the blue-eyed, cold-hearted, sharp-tongued, unforgiving, irreligious (save for Ernest, the defrocked priest-brother) Hegarty clan has come together; and it is not a pretty sight. Seventy-year-old Mammy is dotty, if not demented. (What ever drove her and her husband into those lunatic 19 pregnancies? It certainly wasn't love. But then, as this sardonic observer sees it, who knows why anybody does anything? Why is Ernest still celibate? Why, for that matter, doesn't Veronica divorce her businessman husband Tom, whose aggressive "love" for her feels like pure hatred?) The other brothers and sisters, apart from the mysterious, absent Alice, hardly know what to make of one another. They have no pleasant times to recall (the elder siblings dished out beatings to the younger ones when their father no longer could). Indeed, they cannot even agree on what really happened at major moments of their common past, such as the trip to the lunatic asylum where poor Uncle Bernard spent his days. (Needless to say, the kids were not allowed to see him.) They are constantly complaining about and sniping at one another—"Christmas in Hades," Veronica calls it.

Still, the grandchildren, godless and spoiled in their little bourgeois nuclear families, appear to be doing fine; and there is even an out-of-the-blue appear-

ance at the wake of two strangers, whose story may or may not put a nearly redemptive spin on the Hegarty saga. Finally, what are we to make of Veronica's anxious, ambivalent farewell, in which she talks about "falling into my own life"? Well, that's what fiction is for, to keep you guessing.

One thing is beyond dispute: the star of this dysfunctional show is Veronica herself (whose very name destines her to wipe the bloody face of suffering, without necessarily producing a wonder-working image). Her acerbic tongue, her wit and unrelenting, probing eye cut through everyone's flesh, including her own (she calls herself "a bitch"): "Back in Belfield," runs a typical caustic riff, "my best friend Deirdre Moloney had just been thrown out by her mother for nothing at all: a very low-key sort of girl, she'd only ever had sex twice. Children were being chucked out all over Dublin. All our parents were mad, in those days. There was something about just the smell of us growing up that drove them completely insane." (A warning to American readers: Veronica's often foul-mouthed eloquence draws on all sorts of English and Anglo-Irish slang, with words like gobdaw, hames, chunters, ming, foothering, gurrier, strumpery and even an occasional phrase in Irish.) A trip to Dublin, Jonathan Swift would remind us, can be like a weird anthropological expedition.

James Joyce, for one, would understand. The persona most glaringly absent from the pages of *Dubliners*-—that of a strong, keen, intelligent woman—has taken over here. Veronica is like Joyce's hard-bitten, invisible male narrator, but without the genteel euphemisms (e.g., "a drop taken" for blind drunk) or the exploration of a character's psyche through the free indirect style. Such authorial omniscience is passé, but the utterly honest passion and grief and regret that burns in *The Gathering* is a fair substitute for it.

Few people expected Enright to win the Booker Prize. Starting in 1991, she had written four well-received novels, but nothing quite as startlingly good as this. Now, at age 45, she has definitely arrived, and without, like James Aloysius Joyce, having to wait nine years for a publisher brave enough to print her unsparing account of the tormented souls in her native city. ***Peter Heinegg***

Ad # 466
p29

Ad # 453
p30

Classifieds

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.

Journals

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Positions

COORDINATOR OF YOUTH MINISTRY to develop and direct shared high school/junior high programs for two active parishes in the Cleveland area. Applicant should be committed to the eight goals of comprehensive youth ministry, possess pastoral and organizational skills, a background in theology and catechesis, and previous youth ministry experience. $40,000 to $50,000 with benefits. Job description is available at www.divinewordkirtland.org. Résumé can be submitted by April 30, 2008, to: Rev. George Smiga, St. Noel Church, 35200 Chardon Road, Willoughby Hills, OH 44094.

DIRECTOR OF ASIAN MINISTRY. The Diocese of Richmond seeks a full-time Director for the new Office of Asian Ministry. The selected candidate will collaborate with parishes and diocesan offices in the evangelization, formation and training of Asians. The Director will also collaborate with the Office for Black Catholics and the Office of the Hispanic Apostolate in order to assess and meet the needs of the community. Additional information is available on the diocesan Web site, www.richmonddiocese.org. Closing date is March 21, 2008. Interested applicants should submit a letter of interest and diocesan application to: pbarkster@richmonddiocese.org, or mail to: P. Barkster, H.R. Administration Coordinator, Catholic Diocese of Richmond, 7800 Carousel Lane, Richmond, VA 23294-4201.

DIRECTOR OF THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM. Oblate School of Theology (San Antonio, Tex.) announces an opening for the position of Director of the Doctor of Ministry Program for August 2008. Deadline for submission of applications is March 15, 2008. Visit our Web site at www.ost.edu for a complete description of the position and application process.

MORAL THEOLOGY / CHRISTIAN ETHICS. The Catholic University of America invites applications for a position in Moral Theology/Ethics in its School of Theology and Religious Studies. Area of specialization is open. Applicants should have a familiarity with the tradition of Catholic moral theological reflection. Familiarity with other ethical perspectives is desirable. Responsibilities include teaching graduate and undergraduate students, advisement of students, doctoral dissertation guidance and service on committees. Rank and salary will be determined on the basis of academic credentials and publication record. Minorities and women are encouraged to apply. Send curriculum vitae and three letters of recommendation to: Chair of the Search Committee in Moral Theology/Ethics, School of Theology and Religious Studies, The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC 20064. Applications will be accepted until March 1, 2008. The Catholic University of America was founded in the name of the Catholic Church as a national university and center for research and scholarship. Regardless of their religious affiliation, all faculty members are expected to respect and support the University's mission. The University is an Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action Employer.

PRINCIPAL. Holy Trinity School, a coeducational Roman Catholic elementary school rooted in the Jesuit educational tradition, seeks a principal commencing in the 2008-9 school year. Holy Trinity Parish, located in historic Georgetown in Washington, D.C., and administered by the Jesuits since 1794, has a long history of service to the Washington metropolitan community. Founded in 1818, Holy Trinity School currently enrolls 330 students—from diverse ethnic, racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds—in Nursery through Grade 8. The school's faculty and staff, distinguished by their professional experience and enduring commitment to Holy Trinity, are dedicated to the spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical development of every Holy Trinity School student.

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Other qualifications: The successful candidate will be an experienced and inspirational educator committed to Catholic and Jesuit education. He or she will have the demonstrated capacity to provide successful educational, religious and administrative leadership to the entire school community and to forge effective working relationships with the parish community, neighborhood and other schools in the D.C. metropolitan area. He or she will have superb communication and interpersonal skills; substantial experience in faculty and staff hiring, evaluation and professional development; and a deep understanding of individual learning styles and curriculum theory and development for early childhood through middle school. He or she will demonstrate unquestionable personal integrity and a deep respect and appreciation for children.

If you are qualified and interested in this position, please consult the Web site of the Archdiocese of Washington (www.adw.org/employment) for the required application materials and send by March 30, 2008, the completed application and references to: Director of Professional Development Programs, Archdiocese of Washington, P.O. Box 29260, Washington, DC 20017; e-mail: whelanl@adw.org; Ph: (301) 853-4552; Fax: (301) 853-7670.

PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY. Oblate School of Theology (San Antonio, Tex.) announces an opening for a position in systematic theology for August 2008. Deadline for submission of applications is March 15, 2008. Visit our Web site at www.ost.edu for a complete description of the position and application process.

SAINT CHARLES BORROMEO SEMINARY is seeking a full-time CHURCH HISTORY PROFESSOR. Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary is a free-standing seminary with college, pre-theology and theology programs. We are currently seeking to hire a full-time church history instructor who has earned at least a licentiate from a pontifical university. For an application, interested parties should submit their C.V. to: Rev. David Diamond, Vice Rector, Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, 100 East Wynnewood Road, Wynnewood, PA 19096; e-mail: vicerectorscs@adphila.org.

SAINT CHARLES BORROMEO SEMINARY is seeking a full-time SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR. Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary is a free-standing seminary with college, pre-theology and theology programs. Over the next three years, we are seeking to hire three full-time spiritual directors, bringing the number of full-time spiritual directors to five. The Spiritual Director is to be a priest in good standing and will assist the Directors of Spiritual Formation of the College and Theology Division in all aspects of seminarians' spiritual formation, including: individual spiritual direction, availability for the sacrament of reconciliation and personal guidance. To perform this job successfully, the individual must be a priest who can perform each essential duty satisfactorily. He should have administrative and organizational abilities, as well as sufficient pastoral and teaching experience. In addition, he should have experience in the area

of spiritual direction and/or formation and also a professional degree at the master's level (M.Div. or equivalent) and a master of arts degree, preferably in the field of theology or spirituality. Extensive pastoral experience, notably in spiritual direction, may be considered an equivalent. Facility with the Spanish language is beneficial but not required. Priests interested in a more complete job description and an application should submit their C.V. to: Rev. David Diamond, Vice Rector, Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, 100 East Wynnewood Road, Wynnewood, PA 19096.

SAINT MARY'S UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, a Catholic Lasallian university, in the beautiful bluffs of Winona, Minn., is looking for a DIRECTOR and ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF CAMPUS MINISTRY. Both positions entail the promoting of spirituality and faith life on the Winona campus. If you are interested in embracing and fostering the Catholic Lasallian philosophies of St. John Baptist de La Salle at a small liberal arts university, please apply on or before March 14, 2008. For additional information on these positions, please see the Web site at www.smumn.edu and click on job opportunities.

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.

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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Letters

Structures of Sin

The Current Comment item on "Big Pharma and the Poor" (2/11) did not convey a proper understanding of the situation. The problem of access to health care for the poor seems to grow faster than we can find solutions. But blaming the pharmaceutical industry is not a solution. Pharma is no better and no worse than any other sector of the global economy.

For at least the past 70 years, control of American business (and that includes Big Pharma) has been in the hands of the managers of pension funds—*our* pension funds. The emphasis on return on investment and everything that goes with it (like the protection of intellectual property and patent rights) is there precisely because that is how we want it. We expect our pension funds to appreciate; and when one manager does not do well in that regard, we replace him. Additionally, our insatiable need to avoid risk and ensure efficacy compounds the problem by escalating the cost of pre-market drug testing as much as tenfold. As a result, it costs today on the order of $1 billion to bring a new drug to market. That makes the price of the drug high and at the same time precludes developing drugs for small markets or those with low returns.

We can consider ourselves to be as socially conscious as we like, but in the final analysis we depend upon that profitability in order to fund our own retirements.

Robert P. Heaney, M.D.
Omaha, Neb.

This Mortal Coil

Thomas A. Shannon points out correctly, in "At the End of Life" (2/18), that the use of a feeding tube for a person in a persistent vegetative state, which current medical knowledge considers irreversible, "seems to confer on physical life an almost absolute value." My hope is that when the "dying process" has clearly begun in me, and it becomes clear that my physical life is slipping away, I will be allowed to make the final journey for which I have spent my life preparing, to join Francis of Assisi in saying, "Welcome, Sister Death."

Eugene Michel, O.F.M.
St. Paul, Minn.

Moral Duty at Home

Gerard F. Powers's clarion call, in "Our Moral Duty in Iraq" (2/18), to continue our failed policy in Iraq considers what we "owe to the Iraqi people" without due consideration to the war's cost at home and to America's reputation in the international community. The costs to Americans at home go far beyond concerns about our national security interests. They include the lives of American servicemen and women, the life-changing injuries to tens of thousands of others (coupled with cuts to domestic programs that help people with disabilities find work) and fewer government resources to support the most vulnerable Americans.

It is also highly doubtful that even Powers's more modest goals in Iraq can be accomplished, given the fundamental differences between Iraqi culture and our own. It is interesting that Powers does not hazard a guess as to when we might reasonably expect to achieve those goals.

Presumably, he would have us stay until the job is done—five years, ten years, or one hundred years.

The costs of this war are too high, and the likelihood that we can pay any part of what we owe the Iraqi people through its continued prosecution is too small. We should withdraw as quickly and safely as possible, realize that tribal and religious differences will result in bloodshed that we simply have no power to prevent, and provide economic support to Iraq to help rebuild the infrastructure we have destroyed.

Chris Kuczynski
Baltimore, Md.

Money Talks

Regarding "Our Broken Parish" (2/11): I've seen many a parish community demolished and then rebuilt in a new pastor's image. It is a sad commentary on our ecclesial life when even a parish with strong, educated lay leaders can be totally changed by just one man.

I have witnessed only one parish (a fairly affluent one) that was able to succeed in forcing a change by withholding money from the weekly collection. It took nine months of putting the money in a separate account and sending the deposit slips to the bishop with a note saying that when the pastor was removed, the parish would receive the money.

Sherry Fischer
Spokane, Wash.

Easy Target

Regarding "Our Broken Parish" (2/11): The decision to become a part of a neighboring parish requires soul-searching and prayer. I have moved to different parishes in the past several years in order to continue to experience the remarkable talent of an extraordinary priest. His homiletic and musical talents and pastoral care distinguish him as one of the best; yet he is not always welcomed warmly by parishioners in a new parish. He is sometimes resented because he chooses to do some things differently from his predecessor, and he is not given credit for his creativity. To be placed under the microscope of public criticism is demoralizing for anyone, particularly one who has consented to be a pastor.

Bonnie Jachowicz
Franklin, Wis.

Thin Black Line

I could identify with the author's grief in "Our Broken Parish" (2/11) over losing a beloved pastor. It is difficult to lose a shepherd who grieves with us in our times of greatest sorrow and also celebrates with us during our happiest moments.

Our call is to recognize that each priest who serves us brings his own unique personality to the parish. I would suggest to the author in this time of

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priest shortages: Be grateful you have a priest. Nothing the author described suggested any grievous action by the priest, but rather a parish that lacked leadership and a congregation that feels threatened.

Paddy Mehlhaff
Aberdeen, S.D.

Under Pressure

Regarding "Our Broken Parish" (2/11): The church is not a democracy, but it is also not a monarchy. Both priests and parishioners have responsibilities and rights as co-workers of the church, and no one should put up with unnecessary suffering.

A clergy shortage gives no priest the right to be condescending and elitist toward parishioners. But there could be pressures from outside the parish that are influencing the priest's style of leadership.

I would contact the bishop and request a meeting. The diocese needs to know that its members are in need of help.

Vickie Figueroa
Southfield, Mich.

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The Word

Blindness and Sight

Fourth Sunday of Lent (A), March 2, 2008

Readings: 1 Sm 16:1, 6-7, 10-13; Ps 23:1-6; Eph 5:8-14; Jn 9:1-41

"I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and that those who do see might become blind" (Jn 9:39)

ART BY TAD DUNNE

THE STORY OF THE MAN born blind in John 9 is one of the seven "signs" or miracle stories in the Fourth Gospel. As a sign it points to the central mysteries of our faith—Jesus' death and resurrection. In a long, complicated process, the man who had been blind since birth comes to see on both physical and spiritual levels, while those who seemed to see perfectly well become increasingly blind. The man born blind is a good symbol for us in the middle of Lent as we try to sharpen our own spiritual sight.

The narrative begins with the disciples' question about the cause of the man's blindness. Was it caused by his own sin or that of his parents? Jesus dismisses these explanations and asserts that the "works of God" will be made visible through him. Then in a somewhat unusual (almost magical) procedure, Jesus anoints the man's eyes with mud and sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam. Healed, the man is able to see on the physical level. But that is only the beginning of his coming to see the true identity of his healer.

When his neighbors question him, the man affirms that he was indeed healed by "the man called Jesus." When the Pharisees contend that his healer could not be from God because he healed him on the Sabbath and thereby performed forbidden work, the man asserts that his healer is "a prophet." The opponents then question his parents about whether their son had really been born blind. Their response is guarded: they confirm that he was born blind and now can see, but they profess ignorance about his healer. When the opponents summon the man again and try to make him condemn Jesus as a sinner, he refuses and states that Jesus must be "from God." When he finally meets Jesus again, the man accepts Jesus' self-identification as the "Son of Man"—in John's Gospel a glorious figure. Note the man's journey in coming to see who Jesus really is: first a man, then a prophet and someone from God, and finally the glorious Son of Man.

Praying With Scripture

- How has your perception of Jesus changed in the course of your own spiritual journey?
- What have been your "blind spots"? What have been your most surprising insights?
- Where has God's grace figured in your enlightenment? How has this enlightenment affected your behavior?

The blind man's progress in spiritual sight is paralleled by the opponents' descent into spiritual blindness. While their inquiry starts quite objectively, their understanding of Jesus becomes increasingly hazy. First they insist that Jesus must be a sinner because he broke the Sabbath. Then they dismiss the man's claim that Jesus is from God. Finally, in their own encounter with Jesus, they fail to recognize their spiritual blindness and sinfulness in rejecting Jesus as the revealer and revelation of God.

Through several rounds of conversations the man born blind comes to see Jesus as he is, while the "spiritual leaders" of the people fall into even greater spiritual blindness. Many interpreters find in this story a sketch of the history of the Johannine community in its efforts to clarify their own understanding of Jesus and in their struggles within first-century Judaism. But it also presents lessons for us today as individuals and as a community of faith.

The blind man's progress in spiritual sight reminds us that we need God's grace and revelation to move toward sharper spiritual vision. This point is illustrated by the prophet Samuel's efforts (today's first reading) to identify God's anointed among the sons of Jesse and his final recognition of David as the one chosen by God. Likewise, the opponents' descent into greater spiritual blindness warns us that if we think we already know all about Jesus, we may be blinding ourselves to the many surprising features of Jesus' person and fail to see in him the glory of God.

Today's reading from the Letter to the Ephesians ends with what seems to be a quotation from an early Christian baptismal hymn: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." The exhortation that precedes it concerns living as "children of light" insofar as "light" produces goodness, righteousness and truth.

In a few weeks, at the Easter Vigil, the celebrant will intone "Light of Christ" three times as a summary of the Easter message. The hope is that we will let Christ be our light, live out of the power of Jesus' resurrection, see things more clearly and act more appropriately, having "no part in the fruitless works of darkness." A good prayer for the remaining days of Lent is to ask God to help us see Christ more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly.

Daniel J. Harrington

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