America

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A Wall Rises in Bethlehem

Austen Ivereigh

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Of Many Things

MARINAS WITH SAILBOATS under a blue sky over the Hudson River—that peaceful view from the train stood in marked contrast to my destination, Newburgh, N.Y., a city long suffering from economic downturns. A year had passed since my first visit there to a school for girls from low-income families, based on the NativityMiguel model that includes small class sizes and an extended day. Now my destination was a similar school for boys, the new San Miguel Academy.

The Rev. Mark Connell, the academy's president who met me at the station, spoke of Newburgh as one of the four poorest urban centers in the nation. In the midst of such a scene, I was soon to learn, was a haven in which boys from 11 to 14 could have a learning experience aimed at developing gifts that might otherwise remain buried.

Minutes after I entered the school, housed in space rented from a Methodist church, a Latino student stepped forward with a firm handshake and, introducing himself, said, "Welcome to the San Miguel Academy." His poise was one benefit of an education that includes instilling a self-confidence that many lack when they begin their first year.

The student body is roughly two-thirds Latino and one-third African-American. Although the school is named after a 19th-century Ecuadoran saint-educator, Miguel Febres Cordero—a de la Salle Christian brother—both Father Connell and the principal, Lois Dee, O.P., try to dispel the mistaken perception of the academy as a "Spanish school." Outreach efforts to the African-American community make it clear that the school is open to all so long as their incomes are low enough to meet federal guidelines for free or reduced price lunches.

As with all NativityMiguel schools, tuition is low, and inability to pay is never an impediment to acceptance. Parents generally work in factories or in the area's apple orchards. Both Father Connell and Sister Lois were dramatically reminded of the city's poverty when nearby Mount St. Mary College offered a gift of beds in mint condition. Father Connell, who is the chaplain and campus minister as well as a faculty member, rounded up students, loaded a truck with the beds and drove through streets near the school. "We ran the beds up two and three flights of stairs," he said, recalling one apartment in particular. "A little girl looked up and said, 'Is that a bed for me?' I realized she'd never slept in a bed, but on some blankets on the floor in the corner." At times the academy helps with rent payments. Initially, Father Connell and Sister Lois said, they thought they were educating children. But soon, they realized "we were taking on the whole family."

Even with only two grades in place at the time of my visit (there will eventually be four in all, grades five through eight), in just two years test scores have risen by almost two grade levels. Sister Lois spread the score reports out on the table where we sat together in the assembly room by the kitchen. "When I'm feeling tired at the end of a long day," Sister Lois said, "I look at these scores and think, 'It's all worth it.'"

As in other schools around the country that follow the NativityMiguel model, the extended day is long indeed, to ensure maximum possibilities for learning in its widest sense. It begins at 8 a.m. with breakfast and continues till 5 p.m., with lunch and a healthy snack along the way.

Two LaSallian volunteers, and a de la Salle brother who is a master teacher, along with other staff members, create not only a fertile learning environment, but also one through which, as Sister Lois put it, the close relationships make clear to all in the building that "we are a family." The school year actually begins with a five-week summer school, in part to prepare incoming fifth graders for their new experience.

What pays for the special features that distinguish NativityMiguel schools? Funding is a constant challenge, since the per-student cost is $10,000 a year. In addition to grants from foundations, the lay board of trustees plays a major role in fundraising, Father Connell said. Other schools based on this model may lie in the future for the mid-Hudson Valley. Both he and Sister Lois envisage the possibility of two more, in the nearby cities of Poughkeepsie and Kingston, forming "a triangle" of NativityMiguel schools. Fulfillment of that dream may lie far in the future, but at least one corner of the triangle is off to a promising start.

George M. Anderson, S.J.

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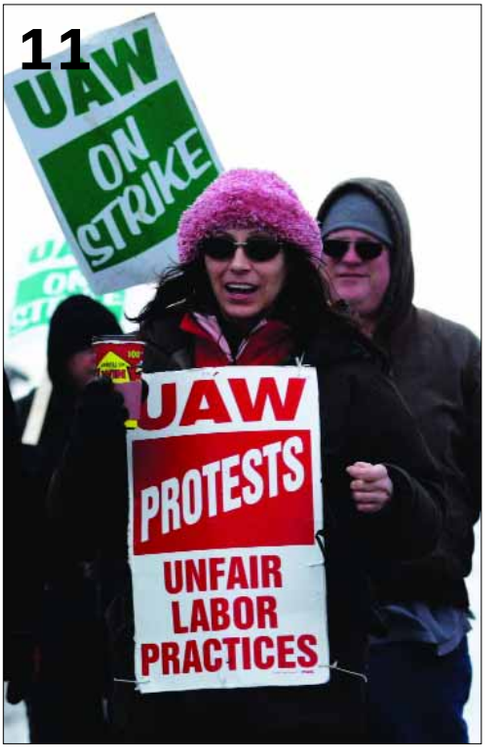
Cover photo A Palestinian woman carries a baby as she walks beside Israel's controversial security barrier near the West Bank town of Bethlehem. Reuters/Yannis Behrakis.



Articles

Current Comment

Who Lost Russia?

Did the Russian invasion of Georgia succeed because the American president was preoccupied with the Beijing Olympics? So suggested a Wall Street Journal editorial that elicited a sharp response from the White House, which in turn was the subject of a Washington Post story about divisions among neoconservatives.

But the Bush administration, like its predecessors, has long been tone deaf to Russian trends. The Russian attack was as predictable as the Georgian move against the Ossetian separatists was injudicious. In the face of Russian opposition, the administration recognized the independence of Kosovo—a bad precedent for unilateral recognition of breakaway states; and within days of Georgia's attack on South Ossetia and Russia's intervention, the administration signed a controversial antimissile treaty with Poland.

The Bush I, Clinton and Bush II administrations all failed to deal wisely with the emergence of a post-communist Russia. They failed to heed Churchill's maxim: "In war, resolution; In defeat, defiance; In victory, magnanimity; In peace, good will." Each administration confused Russia's interests with American dominance. Russian feelings of loss and shame following the failure of communism, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the ensuing economic crises were never seriously assuaged. If effective policies had been found to ease Russia's liberalization and more discretion demonstrated to alleviate the fears of Russia's neighbors, the lure of autocratic imperialism might not have been so great for Russia and American leverage so weak in the ongoing Georgian crisis. The question is not who lost Georgia to a newly assertive Russia, but rather who, in the critical post-Soviet years, failed to win the hearts and minds of the Russian people and so facilitate the transformation of their institutions.

One Last Question

Voters who have closely followed the presidential race had a bit of déjà vu during the recent candidates' forum hosted by Pastor Rick Warren at his Saddleback Church in Southern California. Though Pastor Warren asked both Senator McCain and Senator Obama to give original answers rather than tidbits from their stump speeches, most of the candidates' responses were typical and reflected their very different but by now familiar styles. In response to Pastor Warren's questions, Mr. McCain told stories; Mr. Obama responded like a professor. Many in the audience seemed to like Mr. McCain's simple yes or no decisiveness. Others, perhaps believing that the world is colored in shades of gray, liked Mr. Obama's appreciation for nuance and complexity.

For the most part, Pastor Warren did a better job than most television interviewers, asking clear and direct questions about a range of policy issues. He also asked both men a number of questions about their theological views and personal faith. Such questions are not new in the 2008 campaign. Both Democrats and Republicans have been asked similar questions on everything from the inerrancy of Scripture to the power of prayer. Yet it is not obvious that such questions are relevant or even appropriate. The public clearly has a right to know the views of the presidential candidates on all matters of public policy, many of which also involve profoundly moral questions. But do we need to know, as Pastor Warren asked, what their greatest personal moral failings are or how they view the salvific character of Jesus Christ?

Harbinger Penguins

Some of God's creatures are so endowed that they easily capture the human imagination. Dogs, cats and horses come immediately to mind. So too do bears. Smokey Bear, the fire-prevention icon, is a revered national symbol. Knut, an abandoned polar bear cub, made for a successful season at the Berlin Zoo.

Among the birds, surely the penguin, with its preposterous gait and formal attire, elicits human affection as easily as it slides through cold Antarctic waters. It now may be serving as yet another harbinger of the environmental chaos we could be facing.

The Magellanic penguins of Antarctica breed in colonies in the extreme south of Argentina and Chile and then head out to sea, northward, to find fish. Overfishing has depleted their food supply. This year's changes in ocean currents and increased cyclonic activity due to global warming have driven them off course, and even further north. Many of them were victims of petroleum pollution off Uruguay and in the offshore Campos oil field of Brazil. In a weakened condition due to exhaustion, hypothermia and immunity depleted by exposure to pollution, they were washed ashore in northern Brazil. While some penguins have always gotten lost, and been found as far north as San Salvador de Bahia. Only 20 did so in 2001. This year the number is 25 times higher, and 10 percent of those were washed ashore dead.

Brazil will airlift the survivors back to Antarctica and Patagonia, as it does every year. This year, though, it is as if the penguins came with a warning to the whole world that we, as stewards of God's creation, must do more to head off an impending environmental catastrophe.

Editorial

2008 Voting Challenges

ABOUT A DOZEN NUNS in their 80s and 90s from the convent of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary in South Bend, Ind., arrived at their polling place in May only to be told that they could not cast ballots in that state's primary election. Why? They did not have acceptable photo identification. Indiana now has the strictest of all voter identification laws, a matter of concern to civil rights advocates who believe that laws like Indiana's are excluding otherwise eligible voters from exercising one of the most basic rights of U.S. citizens.

Laws of this kind primarily affect low-income people, the elderly, people with disabilities and racial minorities. Under the Indiana statute, voters must present at the polls a government-issued document with a photo, like a driver license or passport—documents that many of the people in these categories can obtain only with difficulty or not at all. Although Indiana's Department of Motor Vehicles provides a free photo I.D. card for nondrivers, one needs an original birth certificate to obtain it, and this is in itself a significant hurdle for some.

The stated purpose of the Indiana statute is to prevent people from casting a ballot in another's name or under an assumed name. But there has been virtually no evidence of this type of fraud in Indiana in recent decades. Nevertheless, in the case Crawford v. Marion County Election Board, the U.S. Supreme Court in late April upheld the Indiana law's requirement of a government-issued photo I.D. as a condition for voting. That decision opens the way for other states to adopt equally restrictive laws. Over a dozen are considering similar measures that, if not calling for a photo I.D., would require proof of citizenship. Missouri was on the verge of passing an amendment to its state constitution to this effect, but the bill failed to pass in mid-May.

Such requirements are clearly aimed at illegal immigrants. These people, however, are among those least likely to attempt to vote. With current anti-immigrant sentiment stronger than ever, and as states and localities pass ever more stringent laws affecting employers and landlords who rent out rooms and apartments, those without papers prefer to remain in the shadows rather than risk arrest, incarceration and deportation by attempting to vote.

Not all the Supreme Court justices agreed with the decision upholding the Indiana law. As Justice David Souter put it in his dissenting opinion, which Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg also signed, "The interest in combating voter fraud has too often served as a cover for unnecessarily restrictive electoral rules." The executive director of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University, Michael Waldman, has said that laws like Indiana's "invariably are crafted to impact the poor, minorities, the elderly and others who simply lack the required photo I.D."

Also disturbing are efforts to restrict voter registration drives. On behalf of the League of Women Voters in Florida, the Brennan Center filed a federal lawsuit over Florida's restrictions on voter registration groups.

Even more troubling is a directive by the U.S. secretary of veterans affairs, James B. Peake, on May 5 banning nonpartisan voter registration drives at federally financed nursing homes, rehabilitation centers and shelters for homeless veterans. The department contends that such drives are disruptive to patient care, and also argues that the drives violate the Hatch Act, which prohibits federal workers from taking part in partisan political activities. But as Connecticut's secretary of state, Susan Bysiewicz, pointed out, registering people to vote is not a partisan activity. Congress is considering bills that would require the V.A. to repeal the ban, but they must be signed into law before Oct. 1 if they are to have any effect on the 2008 election.

AT THE VERY LEAST, restrictive voting and registration laws are sure to cause confusion at the polls and deter many from even attempting to cast a ballot. Yet surely one goal of any election regulation in the United States should be to encourage as many eligible voters as possible to go to their local polling stations in one of the nation's most important participatory processes.

Electronic voting poses another problem, because it is susceptible to malfunctioning and fraudulent activity. In early July, the elections supervisor of Palm Beach County in Florida apologized because machines there failed to count 14 percent of the votes in a city commission election. Electronic voting also makes possible vote-stealing. The danger of voter fraud could be reduced by paper trails for electronic voting, backed by audits to uncover errors.

After two presidential elections that were tainted with allegations of voter fraud, the upcoming November presidential election has special significance. Given the pre-eminence of the United States in global affairs, not only U.S. citizens, but people around the world are waiting to see how fairly the 2008 presidential election will be conducted.

Web Seminar Focuses on Disabled Catholics

The 30th anniversary of the U.S. bishops' pastoral statement on people with disabilities offers an opportunity to acquaint a new generation of bishops and young people with the document's message, according to speakers at an Aug. 13 "Webinar." The hour-long Web-based seminar sponsored by the National Catholic Partnership on Disability brought together catechists, parish advocates, directors of disability ministry and others.

"I'm not suggesting you take on a whole new line of work," said Peg Kolm, director of the Office for Ministry to Persons With Disabilities in the Archdiocese of Washington. "But you need to take this work to the next generation in a partnership year." Janice Benton, executive director of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability, said many in the disabilities community viewed the November 1978 pastoral statement as "our Declaration of Independence." The document said there "can be no separate church for people with disabilities" but only "one flock that follows a single shepherd."

A university student counselor talks with a participant in a Catholic summer camp for people with disabilities at Camp Sharing Meadows in Rolling Prairie, Ind., in a 2007 file photo.

Tough Economy Calls for Renewed Solidarity

Invoking the spirit of the late labor priest Msgr. George Higgins, the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development said Americans must "move beyond hand-wringing and negative assessments" of tough economic times to a renewed commitment to Catholic principles of subsidiarity and global solidarity. In a message for Labor Day, Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, N.Y., praised Monsignor Higgins for his "extraordinary ability to measure the large economic issues by their impact on the average working man and woman." Monsignor Higgins, who died in 2002, wrote the annual Labor Day statement on behalf of the U.S. bishops for many decades. "Monsignor would have been harsh in his judgment about the greed and irresponsibility that led to the mortgage foreclosure crisis," Bishop Murphy wrote. "He would have had some caustic comments on the price of gas for the working person and its impact on family life." But ultimately Monsignor Higgins would have reasserted "his faith in a nation and a people whose creative energies and productive capacities should and would move us to a healthier economic situation," the bishop said.

Democrats Change Wording on Abortion Plank

A draft of the section on abortion in the Democratic Party platform that adds language about supporting alternatives such as adoption and reducing the number of unintended pregnancies was hailed as an important improvement by some and derided by others as "adding a good thing to an evil position." In an Aug. 12 teleconference hosted by the evangelical organization Sojourners, Catholic and Protestant religious leaders called the changes to the platform "a real step forward" and "an excellent example of the possible," which moves the party toward a position they said abortion opponents can support. They also said they still object to the party's unequivocal endorsement of legal abortion and the platform section's suggestion that anyone would ever "need" an abortion. But the platform committee's consultation with abortion opponents and the effort to represent at least some of their views was described as "a historic and courageous step," by the Rev. Joel Hunter, senior pastor of Northland Church in Orlando, Fla., and former president of the Christian Coalition. Others who did not participate in the teleconference or the drafting process, however, disagreed. They said while they appreciate the additions dealing with support for pregnant women and parents, the rewording actually made the section worse, because it eliminated phrasing from the 2004 version of the platform that said abortion should be "rare."

U.S. Bishops Seek Clarity on Jewish Covenant

The U.S. bishops have voted to ask the Vatican to approve a small change in the *U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults* to clarify church teaching on God's covenant with the Jewish people. The proposed change—which would replace one sentence in the catechism—was discussed by the bishops in executive session at their June meeting in Orlando, Fla., but did not receive at that time the needed two-thirds majority of all members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. After mail balloting, the final vote of 231 to 14, with one abstention, was announced Aug. 5 in a letter to bishops from Msgr. David Malloy, U.S.C.C.B. general secretary. The change, which must be confirmed by the Vatican Congregation for Clergy, would remove from the catechism a sentence that reads: "Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them."

Replacing it would be this sentence: "To the Jewish people, whom God first chose to hear his word, 'belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ'" (Rom 9:4-5; see Code of Canon Law, No. 839).

Chicago Pays $12.6 M to Sexual Abuse Survivors

The Archdiocese of Chicago has agreed to pay 16 victims of sexual abuse by members of the Catholic clergy more than $12.6 million in a settlement announced Aug. 12. In addition to financial payments, the archdiocese agreed to make public additional information and files related to the cases, including a deposition of Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago. "My hope is that these settlements will help the survivors and their families begin to heal and move forward," Cardinal George said in statement. "I apologize again today to the survivors and their families and to the whole Catholic community. We must continue to do everything in our power to ensure the safety of the children in our care." Attorney Jeffrey Anderson, who partnered with lawyer Marc Pearlman of the Chicago law firm of Kerns, Frost & Pearlman in representing the victims, called the settlement "a giant step" toward accountability and transparency on the part of the church. The settlement covers 14 cases of abuse involving 10 priests between 1962 and 1994. The two others relate to the Rev. Daniel McCormack, who pleaded guilty in 2007 to charges related to the abuse of five children. He is serving a five-year prison sentence. The settlement followed two years of mediation between the archdiocese and attorneys for the victims.

Latin Patriarch's Message for New U.S. President

If Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal of Jerusalem had a chance to send a message to the next U.S. president, he would urge him to follow his conscience. "I wish him to be a president, to be a free president, to move according to his faith and his conscience, according to justice," the patriarch told Catholic News Service in a Washington interview in mid-August. However, he said, "we know that politics is politics. I will pray for him for sure." Patriarch Twal, installed as head of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in June, said he knew how much responsibility he had as head of a church jurisdiction that includes Latin-rite Catholics in Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan and Cyprus, so he could only imagine the responsibilities of being president of the United States. However, he said that amid it all "the new president...and any president must not forget his family." The patriarch was in Washington to be hon-

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Building Bridges Among Cultures

Msgr. Robert Stern, right, walks with Abune Timotheos, rector of Holy Trinity Ethiopian Orthodox Theological College, and Christian Brother Vincent Pelletier in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2006.

Growing up in a family where "difference was normative" proved to be excellent preparation for Monsignor Robert Stern's priestly career of building bridges between and among different cultural groups. Monsignor Stern, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, is the secretary-general of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association and the president of the Pontifical Mission for Palestine. He celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination in May. Monsignor Stern's Irish Catholic mother and his German Jewish father were married in a rectory in the Bronx, a borough of New York City. He was raised Catholic and attended public and private schools in and near New York. He got his first whiff of anti-Catholic bias when he went to Amherst College in Amherst, Mass., to major in nuclear physics. He said, "There was a condescension about the church and Catholicism, and a class thing, too." Monsignor Stern responded by "digging in more. It made me look more and more at my faith and my religion." And while he had never considered a vocation to the priesthood, several college experiences pointed him in that direction. "I wasn't particularly attracted to being a priest, but there was the idea of being available for the work of God."

ored at a luncheon sponsored by the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation, an organization founded to assist Arab Christians in the Holy Land.

Humanitarian Corridors Needed in Georgia

Pope Benedict XVI urged the international community to establish humanitarian corridors in Georgia so that the dead can be buried, the wounded can receive medical help and refugees can return home. The pope, speaking at a noontime blessing Aug. 17, said he was continuing to follow "with attention and worry" the events in Georgia, where a cease-fire agreement was reached the day before. The pope said the situation of the refugees, in particular women and children who lack basic necessities, requires a generous response by the international community. The pope said it was important that ethnic minorities in the region be protected and their fundamental rights respected. A Georgian attack on the breakaway province of South Ossetia Aug. 7 followed by a Russian invasion of Georgia left an unknown number of dead, including civilians, and prompted an estimated 60,000 people to flee their homes.

Pope Now Less Strict on Sacraments

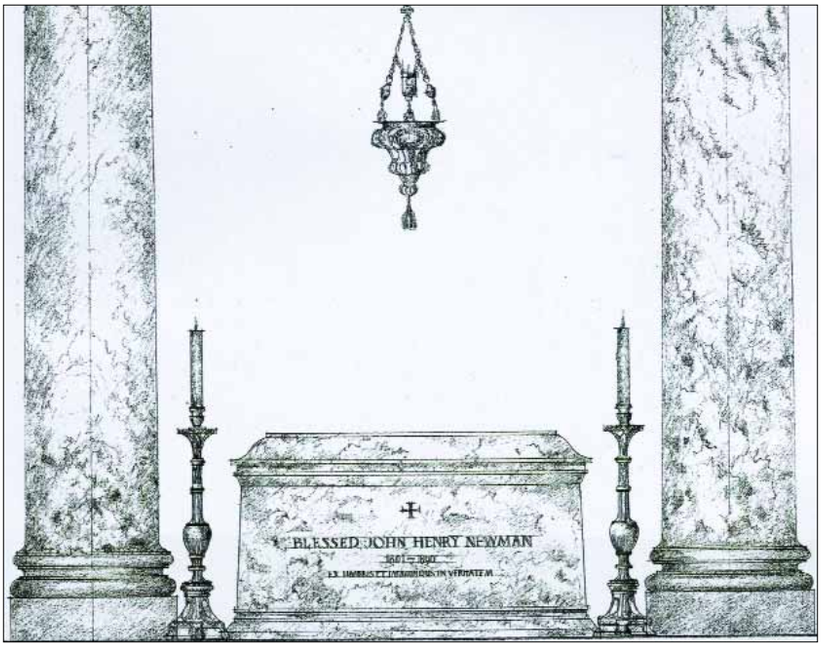
Pope Benedict XVI said the church should be generous when it comes to administering the sacraments to young people, recognizing that Jesus would have done the same.

The pope spoke about the need to take a broad approach to the administration of sacraments, reflecting the merciful attitude shown by Christ. Federico Lombardi, S.J., the Vatican spokesman reported, "The pope said, 'I used to be more strict about this, but the example of Christ led me to become more welcoming in cases in which, perhaps, there is not a mature and solid faith, but there is a glimmer, a desire of communion with the church.'" The pope made the remarks in a closed-door meeting Aug. 6 with about 400 priests and religious in the northern Italian city of Bressanone, where the 81-year-old pontiff was vacationing. Although reporters were not allowed inside the city's cathedral for the one-hour encounter Father Lombardi described some of the give and take in an interview with Vatican Radio. One of six questions posed by priests touched on the pastoral care of children, Father Lombardi said.

Benedict Discusses Heaven on Feast

Heaven is not an abstract idea or an imaginary place, but heaven is God, Pope Benedict XVI said. Celebrating an early morning Mass Aug. 15, the pope said the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary "urges us to raise our gaze toward heaven, not a heaven of abstract ideas nor an imaginary heaven created in art, but the true reality of heaven which is God himself. God is heaven." During the Mass in the small parish Church of St. Thomas, located on the main square in Castel Gandolfo, the pope said that while Mary's assumption is "totally unique and extraordinary"; it also assures believers that their destiny, like hers, is to be with God forever. God is "our goal, he is the dwelling place from which we came and toward which we are called," the pope told about 200 people who had crowded into the church, while hundreds of others watched on a large screen erected in the square.

Newman's Body to Be Moved to London



The British government has agreed to allow the exhumation of the body of Cardinal John Henry Newman, whose cause for sainthood is widely expected to progress soon to beatification. The Ministry of Justice granted a license to allow undertakers to transfer the body of the 19th-century cardinal from a grave in a small cemetery in the suburbs of Birmingham, England, to a marble sarcophagus in a church in the city, where it can be venerated by pilgrims. The license was expected to arrive Aug. 11, the 118th anniversary of the cardinal's death in 1890.

Approval had been delayed by several months because of a 19th-century law that forbids the transfer of bodies from graves to church tombs. But Sir Suma Chakrabarti, permanent secretary to the Ministry of Justice, finally decided to make a special exception to allow the exhumation to go ahead.

Born in London in 1801, Cardinal Newman was an Anglican priest who led the Oxford movement in the 1830s to draw Anglicans to their Catholic roots. He converted to the Roman Catholic Church at the age of 44 after a succession of clashes with Anglican bishops made him a virtual outcast from the Church of England.

The Best-Laid Plans...

'We can let faith open us up to God's inexhaustible surprises.'

THERE HAS BEEN a great deal of commotion outside my window these past few weeks. The builders have finally got round to laying the road surface in this new development, so we no longer have to negotiate the "raised ironworks," as the warning notices euphemistically describe these tire-killers. Today we got the finishing touches: white lines and new street name signs. Now if I forget where I am (which happens not infrequently in my nomadic existence) I can see my street name from my study window.

But what does a street sign really tell us about the personalities and life stories of the people who live here? About as much as a travel ticket reveals about the journey it makes possible. A few months ago I sat here at the computer, booking the arrangements for journeys that were easily described in terms of dates and destinations. In just an hour or two, and with a few clicks of the mouse, I organized flights, accommodation and rail trips. My printer disgorged invoices and itineraries and, eventually, even boarding passes. I thought I had got it all together. No more surprises. But the reality of living my plans has been a different matter entirely.

One click brings me to Canada. Seven minutes on the computer, seven hours in the sky, and I am immersed in another world: a Toronto street party, a barbecue in Kingston with friends I haven't seen in years, a delighted discovery of the Thousand Islands (plus a few) that nature has sprinkled in the St. Lawrence Seaway. But that same "click for Canada" also opens up into the unwelcome discovery that I am not unbreakable, as I fall headlong and fracture my elbow and enter unceremoniously into the inside workings of North American hospitals, where a Canadian orthopedist puts me in plaster and his counterpart in Washington, D.C., relieves me of it two weeks later, leaving me to reflect on how it might feel to be more completely, and more permanently dependent on the personal care of others and how grateful I am to those who were there for me when I needed them.

Another click and life zooms in on the Chicago skyline, and more of the kindness of strangers. People I hardly know open their homes to me. Within hours, strangers become friends, and conversations happen that change perspectives and challenge preconceptions. When I was 11, my geography teacher once asked me where Chicago was located. I answered confidently: "At the bottom of Lake Michigan," to which she caustically replied: "A very damp location." Now I know a bit more about Chicago, because I have wandered her streets, and tasted her taste. I have dodged her downpours and been bitten by her mosquitoes. I have breakfasted in her coffee bars, lunched on her lakeside, and dined in her pubs, always in the stimulating company of some of her sons and daughters. What would I say now if I were asked to describe Chicago? It would take a lifetime to describe what takes a lifetime to experience.

The click that books the campsite likewise does not give any indication of what awaits us in Shenandoah National Park. It does not prepare us for the misty vistas of the Blue Ridge Mountains or warn us about the thunderstorms that arrive punctually every evening just as we have got the fire going to cook our supper. It does not tell us about the black bear who emerges without warning from the roadside or helps himself to breakfast sausages straight from a fellow camper's frying pan. It does not mention that the five miles we hike to the waterfall, which nearly kill us and lead us into a swarm of angry bees, are only a quarter of 1 percent of the Appalachian Trail. But neither will it betray this unimportant detail to our friends back home when we boast about "walking the Trail." Nor does it hint at the gales of mirth from our neighbor on the next site who catches me in celebratory mood trying to negotiate a graceful entry into the tent with, as he so engagingly expresses it, "your busted arm, and your glass of wine and your British accent."

No, when you scan the travel itinerary, thinking you know what you are getting into, you can only wonder at your own innocence. For every click sets free a thousand stories. But the best story of them all unfolds from the final click that books my return flight and brings me winging home with days to spare before my daughter goes into premature labor and delivers a tiny but perfect and beautiful first granddaughter.

Our life with God is like that. We can confine it to a once-a-week click on the mouse that pays lip service to our faith, or we can let that faith take us over and open us up to God's inexhaustible surprises along our everyday paths. Those surprises will take us where we never intended to go and down paths we cannot control. They will bring us face to face with our profound limitations, fears and self-deceptions. But if we are willing to risk this unpredictable journey that we like to think we have so well arranged, God will also bring us to moments of breathless wonder at this amazing world we live in, and its amazing people, who are so very much more than they seem when we simply file them neatly under "name and address."

It is the difference between the idea and the experience of God, between thinking about our faith from a safe vantage point and living it in a risky, chaotic and wonderful world. When you click on God.com, expect the unexpected. And you may even get to hear peals of heavenly laughter along the way, because, as you know, nothing makes God laugh so much as people who make plans.

Margaret Silf

MARGARET SILF lives in Staffordshire, England. Her latest books are *Companions of Christ: Ignatian Spirituality for Everyday Living* and *The Gift of Prayer.*

PHOTO: REUTERS/REBECCA COOK

Members of the United Auto Workers union picket outside the American Axle plant in Hamtramck, Mich., March 7, 2008.

Why unions still matter

Organizing Principles

– BY AMATA MILLER –

IN HIS NEW BOOK, *The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker*, Steven Greenhouse documents the current plight of our nation's working people, especially those at the bottom. He cites their low and stagnant wages at a time when executive compensation soars, their decreasing health care insurance and pensions, their increasing job insecurity and their experience of weak public support for their rights as workers. Specifically, Greenhouse describes the

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struggles of security guards, janitors, hospital and hotel workers—those who perform service jobs that are poorly paid but essential and who experience broad opposition when they try to join a union. What's wrong?

Although the classic case for capitalism assumes a free marketplace, equal bargaining power on both the supply and the demand sides and freedom from an outcome-controlling power on either side, its assumptions do not neatly fit reality, especially for workers with little education and few well-compensated skills. In labor markets without unions, each worker is left to face, alone, an employer who has significant control over his or her employment, compensation package and working conditions.

In an employees' market, where the supply of jobs is greater than the number of workers, an employee could quit one job to look for another, better job. That is how free market competition is supposed to work, with the various employers considered to be equals. Or one could find oneself in an employers' market, where jobs are few and the number of workers is large. Unions, with their emergency funds, demands for standards and experts in collective bargaining, work on behalf of laborers in all types of markets.

The economist John Kenneth Galbraith developed a theory that explains in part how labor unions help to equalize the marketplace. While studying the tendency of an economy dominated by large corporations to suppress competition, he realized that the largest would dominate unless there were some "countervailing power," as he called it, to restrain them. (Galbraith reasserted this thesis, first articulated in 1952 in *American Capitalism: The Theory of Countervailing Power*, in his introduction to a 1993 edition of the book.) By then Galbraith recognized that globalization has diminished the role of exploitative market power in much the same way that supermarkets restrain the power of huge food companies. They can do this because the supermarket chains are more nearly equals in bargaining with the food suppliers. Likewise workers are helpless unless they affiliate with larger unions. Galbraith wrote, "The trade union remains an equalizing force in the labor markets." The union's raison d'être is to serve as a "countervailing power."

For more than a century the Catholic Church also has recognized a positive role for labor unions. The basic principles of Catholic social teaching (respect for human dignity, the right of individuals to participate in decisions that affect them, solidarity in human community, co-responsibility for the common good, subsidiarity and the dignity of all workers) form a moral basis for the right of workers to organize, which is rooted in the social nature of human beings and their responsibility to participate in shaping the common good. The church regards unions as an indispensable element of social life today (see sidebars). Still, many Catholic institutions, like hospitals, struggle to balance the needs of their workers with the institution's service to the poor. Labor advocates are baffled whenever workers seeking unionization within Catholic institutions are actively discouraged or penalized by their employers.

The Church and Labor 1891-1934

• Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) upheld workers' rights, including the right to organize into associations of their choice. Leo endorsed increasing associations of workers or of workers and employers together and thereby assisted the worker-directed labor movement in the United States.

• Forty years later Pope Pius XI, in *Quadragesimo Anno*, envisioned a corporatist social order and stressed the importance of effective intermediary associations on behalf of individuals and society. He articulated the concepts of social justice, the common good and subsidiarity. He also recognized the structural foundations of social injustices, highlighted necessary reforms and upheld the struggle for a living wage and for distributive justice.

• Since their 1919 *Program of Social Reconstruction*, the U.S. Catholic bishops have upheld the worker's right to organize and to negotiate through chosen representatives. In 1934, during Congressional hearings preceding the Wagner Act, the bishops described the right to form labor unions and bargain collectively as an inherent human right, parallel to voting rights. They urged safeguarding workers' free choice of representatives in order to equalize power in the wage contract and argued that undue interference with this choice is unjust to worker and public alike.

Perceptions and Obstacles

If unions are vital to healthy capitalism and if Catholic teaching supports them, why are unions held in such low regard by the public? The Economic Policy Institute, in its publication *The State of Working America: 2006/2007*, notes a decline in the bargaining power of unions as their membership levels have fallen. The institute links the erosion of union influence to difficult trade pressures, a national shift from manufacturing to service industries, ongoing technological change, employer militancy and

changes in the way labor law is being implemented currently in the United States.

Yet their data also show measurable benefits for workers in unions, especially for those at the bottom of the wage scale. For example, the 2005 differential between union and nonunion wages for comparable workers was 14.7 percent overall—8.4 percent for men and 10.5 percent for women. For African-Americans the gain was 20.3 percent, for Hispanics 21.9 percent and for whites 13.1 percent, indicating that unions help close wage gaps. Minority women in unions have roughly twice the gains of their white counterparts. Union workers are also more likely to have health insurance benefits and to have better coverage than nonunion workers. The percentage of union workers with pensions is almost twice that of nonunion workers, and those in unions report more time off.

Nonunion employees profit indirectly from the work of unions when employers, for example, improve the compensation and benefits they offer in order to avoid unionization. Also, unions have pioneered standards and practices that have become industry-wide norms, and unions continue to be innovative in the areas of childcare, work-time flexibility and sick leave.

The Church and Labor 1948-1986

• In 1948, the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights set a standard for all cultures and nations; it recognized the primary dignity of the human person, which undergirds the right of association. In 1963 Pope John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris* spelled out the human rights of all and emphasized the importance to society of organized labor.

• In 1982 Pope John Paul II specifically addressed labor unions in *Laborem Exercens*. He wrote that labor unions are an "indispensable element of social life." (On this point, the 2004 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* also calls them "indispensable" and notes that labor unions "defend the vital interests of workers" and "are a positive influence for social order and solidarity.") John Paul called unions "a mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice, for the just rights of working people," and added that the struggle is "for" the just good, but not "against" others, since working together should build community among managers, owners and workers. Unions are responsible for fostering the common good; they can also foster solidarity with all workers.

• In their 1986 pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, the U.S. Catholic bishops supported a worker's right to organize to secure just wages and working conditions, opposed organized efforts to break unions and prevent workers from organizing and urged legal reform to further worker rights and remedy unfair labor practices. Workers have both rights and duties (to their employers); collective power ought to advance the common good. Labor negotiations require some measure of equality of sacrifice by unions, managers and shareholders.

The reverse is also true. When labor's public influence is weakened, the ill effects can be felt throughout society in the form of economic hardship, job insecurity, the fraying of the social safety net and the destruction of the American dream for thousands of workers. And as the income gap grows between society's most highly paid workers and the vast majority of workers, some leaders are calling attention to the skewed power balance such inequality brings to the workplace.

Tilted Against Unions

In *What Workers Want* (1999), Richard B. Freeman, a labor economist, and Joel Rogers, a political scientist and lawyer, studied a national sample of 3,048 adults working in U.S. private companies or nonprofit corporations of more than 25 employees. Their data indicated that 44 percent of private-sector American workers wanted to be represented by a union, while only 14 percent of the sample were union members. The workers who wanted a union but had not joined one were disproportionately black, reported poor labor-management relations, and had attitudes toward independence of workplace organizations like those of union members. One can conclude that workers do want a voice and representation, and that both employers and society would benefit from helping them get it.

How does the workplace become tilted against unionization today? It may begin with an employer, but current law also contributes. So-called "employer militancy" is one cause of the decline of union bargaining power, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Freeman and Rogers write: "The law de facto reduces the chances of successful worker organization." In *From Blackjacks to Briefcases* (2003), Robert M. Smith documents the 150-year-old struggle for labor rights in the United States. Describing the rise of business power over labor after a period of cooperation during World War II, Smith notes that new union-busting agencies with labor relations specialists have affected both national labor law and the climate for workers considering unionization. Such agencies

operated within a legal framework set up by the Wagner Act, proliferated and have effectively served employers who seek to avoid unionization.

The past excesses of some unions also played a role. During the late 1950s Congress found not only unscrupulous tactics by some labor unions but also criminal infiltration of prominent unions. By the late 1970s, the public mood had soured on unions, and efforts to suppress or exclude them aroused less concern. Political and social factors, especially Ronald Reagan's breaking of the air traffic controllers' union, fueled a pro-business environment.

According to a report issued by the N.L.R.B., in 1980, the unions began to see that the unionization processes conducted under the supervison of the N.L.R.B., which had been set up by the Wagner Act to fairly regulate these processes, were leading to outcomes that were unfavorable to the unions. In 1970 organized labor had won 57 percent of representative elections; by 1980 the number had dropped to 46 percent. Organized labor won only 27 percent of de-certification elections. Because of federal appointments to the N.L.R.B. that favored business, the same skewed pattern has continued, making unions less willing to accept the process as fair. In N.L.R.B. certification processes, employers frequently seek to defeat unionization efforts by using delaying tactics and challenging whom unions can represent. Penalties for illegally pressuring employees have been minimal. And courts at various levels, even up to the U.S. Supreme Court, decided to allow replacement workers during a strike and to expand the exclusion of supervisory workers from bargaining units. Labor sees the current operating framework as unfair.

Current Alternatives

Increasingly unions have used "card-check" elections (workers simply check a card to say they do or do not want to belong to the union) combined with neutrality agreements during the decision-making period. Both labor and management agree not to harm the reputation of the opposite side. Data show that with this new strategy, unions do twice as well in organizing firms with 500 or more employees as they did in the past and are more apt to increase organizing efforts. The method demonstrates that nonadversarial unionization efforts are still possible and effective.

Labor arbitration is a common way of achieving workplace justice in nonunion situations. In their 2004 study, *Workplace Justice Without Unions*, Hoyt Wheeler and his coauthors examined the practice extensively. They concluded that from the standpoint of employees, arbitration offers the best chance for workplace justice, but that "justice is least likely to weep when there is a union."

Economic globalization requires an international voice for labor. International labor organization standards call for a social partnership, and unions are a major institution through which workers can participate in making decisions about employment. The United Steelworkers union just announced a merger with the largest labor organization in Britain and Ireland, calling the three million members of the new organization to global union activism to challenge antiworker injustices.

The vision of innovative employer-employee partnerships has been consistently supported by Catholic social teaching, which insists on co-responsibility for the common good, the dignity of work and the rights and responsibilities of social participation. Development of economic community is also essential to a sustainable future, as laid out by Herman E. Daly and John B. Cobb Jr. in *For the Common Good* (1989). The economic success of workplaces, unionized or not, that focus on employee well-being and loyalty demonstrates the value of structuring relationships in which workers and employers can use their best gifts and exhibit "power with" instead of "power over."

For the economy to further the freedom and well-being of workers, as well as of employers and shareholders, the right of workers to participate in decisions that affect their lives must be guaranteed and a social contract insuring cooperative working relationships re-established. Enabling workers, especially those in low-wage occupations, to help themselves through freely chosen unions is in accord with Catholic moral principles and with American traditions of individual economic freedom and democracy. Both an improvement in the public mood toward worker rights and a reform of labor law are overdue. Justice in the workplace is not a narrow interest, but part of the ongoing struggle for human rights and democracy. The current economic climate provides a teachable moment (as well as a challenge) for leaders of Catholic institutions who wish to promote justice for workers and better relationships in the workplace. A

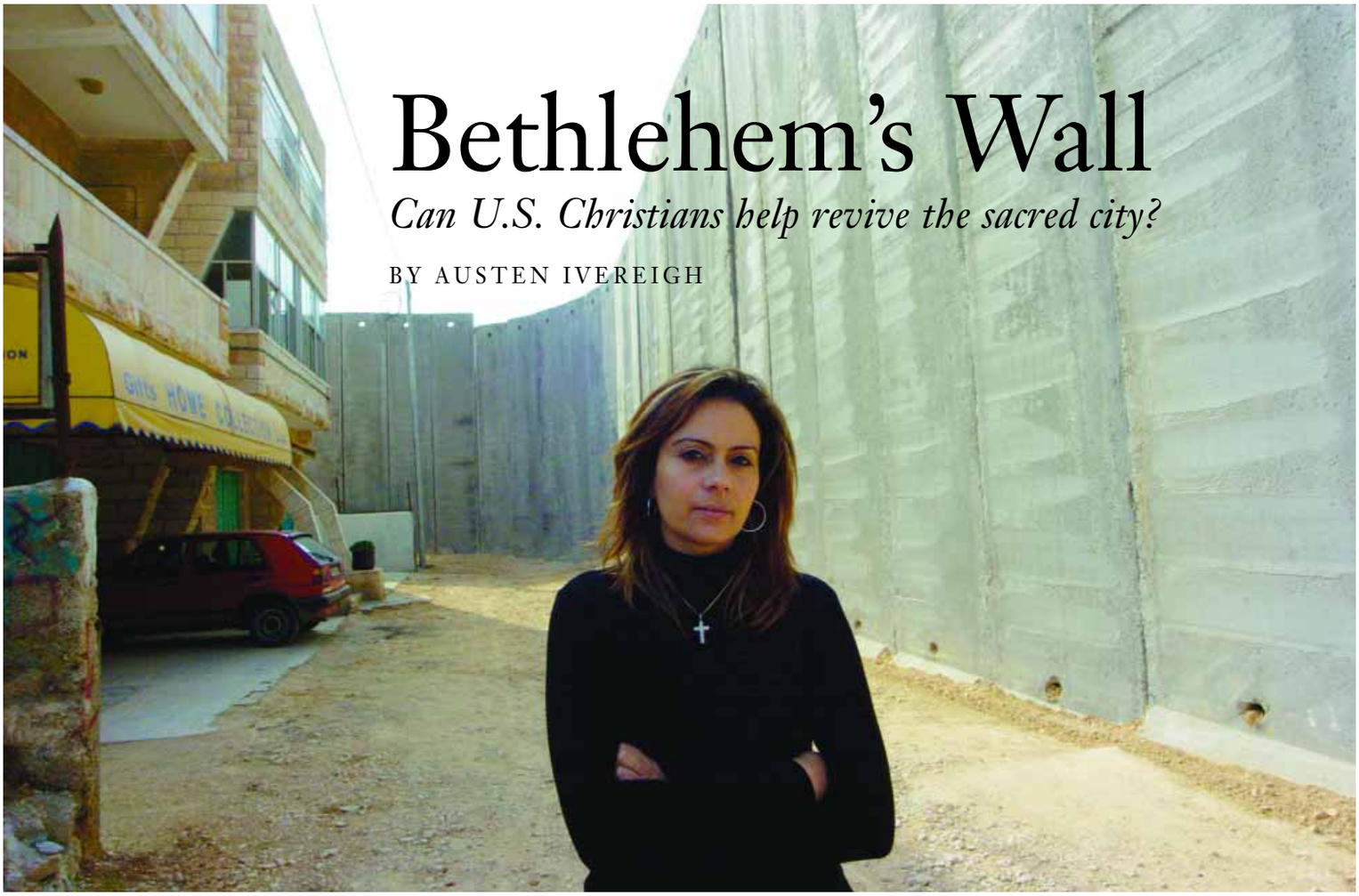
The Church and Labor Today

• The statement of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2007, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,* reiterates: "Catholic social teaching supports the right of workers to choose whether to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively, and to exercise these rights without reprisal." It urges the cooperation of workers, owners, employers and unions "to create decent jobs, build a more just economy and advance the common good."

Bethlehem's Wall

Can U.S. Christians help revive the sacred city?

BY AUSTEN IVEREIGH



Claire Anastas, a Palestinian Catholic, stands between her family's apartment and the Israeli security wall in Bethlehem, West Bank.

PHOTO: CNS/DEBBIE HILL

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS, there is some good news out of Bethlehem. The pilgrims on whom the town's Christians depend have begun to return; their number has increased by at least 50 percent from last year, which was in turn better than 2006. One can still sit in one of the chapels in the Basilica of the Nativity, the world's oldest church, without being disturbed—impossible in Jerusalem's holy sites. But now you need to wake up early to seize solitude in the little grotto of Christ's birthplace, time enough to touch the metal star embedded in marble and to ponder the divine eruption—before the Greek Orthodox priests throw a rug down the ancient steps and bark at you to get out so they can say Mass.

Behind the Wall

Yet because so few tourists spend much time in the town, it remains shuttered and depressed. The reason they stay away is the 30-foot-high concrete wall the Israelis have been building in fits and starts since 2002, which has severed Bethlehem from its sister city, Jerusalem, only a 20-minute drive away. The justification for the wall is security, to protect Jerusalem from suicide bombers. But the path it follows makes clear its real purpose: to consolidate the illegal Israeli settlements, which now flow down from Jerusalem almost to the borders of Bethlehem, on land seized from the town's Christian farmers. The wall is gray, chilling and spreads a fearful message. The Archbishop of Canterbury described it as "a symbol of all that is wrong in the human heart," when he visited at Christmas in 2006. So the pilgrims who come are disgorged from their coaches into the basilica and sent quickly around the Shepherd's Fields in nearby Beit Sahour, before they hurry back to Jerusalem—spending little, hearing little and passing up the chance to learn from one of the world's oldest Christian populations.

They miss out on the reasons why that population's future is under threat. Bethlehemites have long depended on the Jerusalem economy, yet they can no longer pass through the checkpoint without a special permit that is seldom granted. Some 345 square miles of land around Bethlehem, mostly owned by the town's Christian families,

AUSTEN IVEREIGH, a writer, journalist and former adviser to Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, has been a regular visitor to Bethlehem. He was recently awarded a symbolic "Bethlehem passport" by Open Bethlehem.

have been confiscated by the Israelis, because the territory is in the "seam zone" area under military control. Two-thirds of the governorate of Bethlehem, which includes the adjoining hill suburbs of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour, has been declared a military zone from which Palestinians are barred. Beit Jala has lost half its land, central Bethlehem a quarter and Beit Sahour a third.

Bethlehem has become a ghetto, severed from lands to the north and west by the wall, and to the south and east by settler-only roads. On land confiscated from Christian Arabs, Jewish-only settlements such as Gilo and Har Homa have been erected. Unemployment in Bethlehem is above 50 percent, and 3,000 Christians have left in the past few years. The shops lie idle, and the Christian olive-wood traders use increasingly desperate means—paying coach drivers huge commissions to snag the tour groups—to achieve sales.

The Salesian-run bakery in the old town is a barometer of Bethlehem's poverty. Early each morning before the commercial bakeries open, the town's neediest families line up outside to receive their daily bread, for which they pay only a few shekels each month. Suleiman, the chief baker, has worked with the vast ovens for 60 years, beginning as an eight-year-old boy. Every day, he says, they bake and give out 3,000 loaves—lighter and fluffier now, because the price of flour has soared—to around 600 families. Four years ago, they served 320 families.

The wonder is not that Bethlehem's Christians are emigrating abroad, but how many stay. Next door at the Salesian technical school, Father Nicola describes how only 10 years ago most of its graduates commuted daily to Jerusalem. But the wall has stopped the flow of all but a few manual laborers (recruited, in a final humiliation, to help build the Israeli settlements on the land their own families once farmed). "There is no freedom," Father Nicola says. "There is no opportunity to develop."

Christian Exodus

Since 2004, when the International Court of Justice ruled that the settlements were illegal and should be dismantled and the land's owners compensated, Israel has built 30,000 Jewish-only housing units in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, according to the Applied Research Institute-Jerusalem, an independent watchdog group supported by the European Union. Bethlehemites wake up each day to see Gilo and Har Homa, wealthy suburbs on the other side of the wall that were built on their land. Others (A.R.I.J. has counted 220 "outposts" where settlers are claiming land) are far inside the West Bank, ringed by Israeli army checkpoints and fences. This is not just a land grab, creating "facts on the ground" that will determine the borders of a future balkanized Palestinian state, but a rush to control resources, especially water. While settlers in Gilo hose down their cars and fill their swimming pools, Bethlehemites have to buy water weekly from trucks to fill the rooftop tanks that mark the town's skyline.

The Salesians who make wine at the Cremisan estate, located on the terraced hillsides to the west of Bethlehem, live in the path of the wall. They cannot stop its expansion; they have a settlement behind them, far into the West Bank, and the wall is designed to ensure that the settlements are included within the Israeli border—when that is finally agreed upon. The Vatican has added its voice to the international condemnation, but until Israel implements the 2001 Fundamental Agreement with the Holy See, the juridical status of the Catholic Church is at best fragile and its power to negotiate limited. Israel has agreed to a Vatican request not to divide church lands that lie beneath the path of the wall, so when the wall is extended later this year, Cremisan will be cut off from Bethlehem—depriving the town of one of its oldest and popular landmarks—and from the Palestinian workers on whom the winery depends. "We are negotiating to allow the workers to come each day through the wall," says Father Luciano, an elderly Italian Salesian at Cremisan. "But everything is very uncertain. It is a great weight on us."

Because of the slow but steady emigration of Christians from Bethlehem—who tend to be among the town's better-educated people, and who often go to live with relatives in the United States or Chile—this historically Christian town is fast becoming a Muslim one. Only a few years ago 90 percent of the "old core" of Bethlehem was Christian; now it is less than 50 percent. Christians now make up just one-third of the district's population. Christian families are moving abroad, while farmers forced off their land are moving into ancient quarters like Anatreh, alongside the Nativity Church. The Latin patriarchate, based in Jerusalem, is discreetly buying up the empty houses abandoned by Christians on Star Street and Manger Street, hoping for the day when their owners will return.

Yet the town retains a distinctive Arab-Christian character, bolstered by the presence of religious orders and church associations (whether Latin, Melkite, Orthodox or Protestant) and the witness of many remarkable Christian charities. Edmund Shahadeh, the director of Bethlehem's famous hospital for the disabled, says, "The best possible treatment for the poorest—this is Christianity." He is passionate about the need for Christians to remain in the town, whatever the odds. "We are the bridge," he says.

His point is regularly made by the Christians of Bethlehem. Without them the cycle of land annexation, reactive violence and further annexation will only get worse. The two eruptions of (Muslim) Palestinian violence protesting the settlements, the intifada of the late 1980s and anoth-

er beginning in 2000, have only exacerbated the situation, handing Israel a justification for more annexations under the guise of security.

Dispelling American Myths

The wall is strangling Bethlehem and its Christian population. It will come down only when Christian public opinion in the United States awakens to that fact and issues an S.O.S. for the birth town of Christianity, putting pressure on Washington to enforce international law.

But that means dispelling some deeply held myths. A 2006 Zogby opinion poll commissioned by the campaign organization Open Bethlehem found that only 15 percent of Americans know that Bethlehem is a Palestinian town with a mixed Christian-Muslim Arab population in the occupied West Bank. Bethlehemites, when asked why Christians are leaving, point to the wall and speak about the land confiscations; yet most Americans believe Christians are being pushed out by "radical Muslims." Most Americans simply do not realize that the wall is responsible for the destruction of the town's Christian population; instead, they accept Israel's argument that the wall was built to protect Israel from terrorist attacks, not to consolidate the illegal settlements and land annexations.

The poll also accounted for the difficulty in attracting tourists to Bethlehem. Two-thirds of Americans believe it is unsafe to visit. As a regular visitor these past years, I am amazed by this misconception. A sleepier, safer place is hard to imagine. Not only has there been no political violence for many years, but the last recorded incident in which a tourist was harmed took place in the early 1970s. Bethlehem has been for the most part a model of peaceful Christian-Muslim coexistence since the seventh century.

The key to Bethlehem's survival as Christianity's capital is for the world's believers in Jesus Christ to come and claim it, taking advantage of its many merits as a base for visits to the holy sites in Jerusalem as well as the Judean desert. The idea of Bethlehem-based pilgrimages has begun to catch on, encouraged by visits from church leaders and the efforts of Open Bethlehem to persuade people that the town is safe and welcoming. Christians in Bethlehem need, above all, for people to come and stay and hear their story—and to pray with them. Visitors willing to do so assist Christian livelihoods and rescue Bethlehemites from an isolation that threatens their continued existence. The beleaguered descendants of the first witnesses to the Incarnation do not want to leave. And they need our help to stay. A

From the archives, Drew Christiansen, S.J., on the uncertain future of Middle East Christians, at americamagazine.org/pages.

An American Daughter

Elizabeth Ann Seton and the birth of the U.S. church

BY REGINA BECHTLE

EARLY ON THE MORNING of June 9, 1808, a petite, 34-year-old woman in widow's weeds and her three young daughters stood on the deck of the packet boat Grand Sachem in New York harbor. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton found herself bound for Baltimore, the next step on a journey of faith that had already taken her across an ocean and into worlds she never imagined, a journey that paralleled the revolutionary growth of the Catholic Church in America.

Just two months before, on April 8, 1808, Pope Pius VII had named Baltimore an archdiocese. Within the vast territory stretching from the Atlantic westward to the Mississippi, and from the border of Canada to Spanish Florida, four new dioceses were created: Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Bardstown, Ky. Elizabeth Seton had been a Protestant for 31 years, a Catholic for just three; she was a laywoman without means, influence or official status. Yet her life of profound faith was intimately linked with each of these five centers of the young church in America, which celebrate their second centenary this year.

Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton, 1774–1821

CNS FILE PHOTO

She was born in New York in 1774, a British subject; by her second birthday, she was an American. Her grandfather was rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on Staten Island; her father was a health officer of the Port of New York, who treated shiploads of sick immigrants at the quarantine station he began, where Elizabeth learned lessons of compassion and selfless service. Her marriage to William Magee Seton, son of a prosperous business family, solidified her standing among New York's social elite. The young couple lived at fashionable New York addresses close to the homes of Alexander Hamilton and Duncan Phyfe, the famous furniture designer. A devout Episcopalian, she thrilled to the preaching of the Rev. John Henry Hobart at Manhattan's elegant Trinity Church and St. Paul's Chapel.

Catholics in New York City at the time occupied another world entirely. Until Elizabeth Seton was 10 years old, the Catholic Church in the fledgling country was outlawed, its priests subject to arrest. When the ban was lifted, Catholics built a modest wooden church, St. Peter's, on Barclay Street. The city's elite (Bayleys and Setons among them) regarded it as a "horrid place of spits and pushing," and scorned the mostly immigrant Irish and French congregation as "dirty filthy red faced…ragged." Catholic widows and children were undoubtedly among the poor to whom Elizabeth and her friends ministered in their charitable work, but for her to join a church so identified with the lower class would then have been unthinkable.

Faith Through Tragedy

Elizabeth, who loved children, had five in seven years. When her father-in-law died suddenly, Elizabeth and her husband also took on the care of his father's eight younger children. As the Seton shipping business struggled under the impact of the Napoleonic wars, William's health began to fail. Elizabeth and William, with their

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oldest child, Anna Maria, crossed the ocean hoping that the Italian sun would revive him. Instead, he languished in quarantine, died in December 1803, and was buried in Livorno, home of his business associates, Antonio and Filippo Filicchi. The Filicchis opened their home to the bereft widow until she and her daughter could secure passage back to America.

During her stay with the Filicchis, Elizabeth witnessed for the first time a vibrant Catholic faith among her intellectual and social equals. Already accustomed to a life of prayer, Scripture study and service to others, she was deeply stirred, especially by her experience of Christ's real presence in the Eucharist. "I fell on my knees without thinking when the Blessed Sacrament passed by," she wrote her sister-in-law Rebecca, "and cried in an agony to God to bless me if he was there, that my whole Soul desired only him."

Armed with St. Francis de Sales's *Introduction to the Devout Life*, apologetic treatises and a newfound devotion to Our Lady, Elizabeth returned to New York. Her family was shocked that she would even consider abandoning her religious and social roots to worship with Catholics. Father Hobart countered her experiences with learned discourses. Elizabeth, so wearied by the inner struggle that she could barely sleep, compared her soul to "a Bird struggling in a net."

Antonio Filicchi, traveling on business in America, advised her to write for guidance to Baltimore's Bishop John Carroll and Boston's Rev. John Cheverus. Both sent promises of prayer. Cheverus, edified by her "Christian courage and resignation," encouraged her to become Catholic as soon as possible. It was the push she needed.

Elizabeth made her profession of faith at St. Peter's on Barclay Street in New York on March 14, 1805, and received her first Communion 11 days later. The next year, while visiting his flock in New York, Bishop Carroll confirmed her. At their first meeting, she won his respect and admiration; she in turn increasingly came to rely on his judgment and practical advice.

Elizabeth also found a sympathetic and astute spiritual guide in Michael Hurley, an Augustinian priest. Hurley had come from Philadelphia in July 1805, on loan to St. Peter's during one of the yellow fever epidemics that beset New York. She and her sister-in-law Cecilia Seton, whom he instructed in the faith, continued to correspond with him even after he returned to St. Augustine's Church in Philadelphia.

> 'You are called to take a great place in the United States, and it is there that you should remain.'

Newfound Vocation

Elizabeth's decision to become a Catholic immediately placed her in the ranks of the poor widows whom she and her Episcopalian friends had sought to help only a few years earlier. Cut off from family support, she tried to maintain herself and her five children by tutoring and taking in boarders, but many non-Catholic parents feared that her devotion would taint their children. Already some of her Seton sisters-in-law were showing signs of following Elizabeth's spiritual path. Doors slammed shut, closing off her chances to make a living.

But as her inner life deepened and her spiritual horizons widened, other doors opened. Prominent Catholics in Boston and Baltimore became deeply interested in Seton's situation. Cheverus sent prayer books and spiritual reading. Antonio Filicchi suggested that Elizabeth apply as an assistant teacher to a convent school in Montreal, where she could live as a boarder while her two boys attended a college seminary. Bishop Carroll's offer to pay her sons' tuition for two years at Georgetown relieved her worries for a time. The "gentlemen in Boston," Cheverus and his colleague Rev. Francis Matignon, at first concurred with the "Canada scheme," but then found more merit in a proposal enthusiastically promoted by William Dubourg, a Sulpician from Baltimore.

Dubourg first met Elizabeth in New York in November 1806 while raising funds for one of his many projects, St. Mary's College for boys. He was also keenly aware of the need for Catholic education for girls in America. An expansive, persuasive man of ideas, Dubourg convinced Elizabeth that relocating to Baltimore, the center of Catholic life at the time, would provide the security she needed. He offered to help her establish a girls' school near the Sulpician seminary. Continuing on his circuit to Boston, Dubourg consulted with Cheverus and Matignon, whose judgment Elizabeth respected. Matignon spoke for the three clerics: "You are, I believe, called to take a great place in the United States, and it is there that you should remain." It took another year and

In a Cedar Tub

Nearly midnight
and traffic still goes on,
people not where
they want to be.

Up to my neck
in fire-warmed water,
my arms arc
the tub's round rim

and a school's lights
amber-stain the clouds.
We know by faith
stars burn above them.

Feet gripping the far wall,
I become a shallow cup,
an open parenthesis
in which you lie, half-

floating, half-stretching,
so our bodies declare
again a wordless fidelity.
Snow swirls around us

as we celebrate
our anniversary,
our union and reunion,
our lasting buoyancy.

Edward A. Dougherty

EDWARD A. DOUGHERTY is author of two recent books of poems and of a textbook, *Exercises for Poets: Double Bloom*, co-authored with Scott Minar, available from Prentice-Hall. This poem is one of three runners-up in the 2008 Foley Poetry Contest.

a half and many machinations, divine and otherwise, before Elizabeth bade farewell to her New York home to begin her new life in Baltimore.

She arrived on June 16, 1808, as the magnificent chapel at St. Mary's Seminary, designed by Maximilian Godefroy, was being dedicated by John Carroll, newly named archbishop. It was the feast of Corpus Christi, an auspicious sign for the woman irresistibly drawn to Catholicism by the Eucharist. The warm welcome of her Sulpician hosts and the Mass of consecration with its choir, candlelight and crimson, stood in sharp relief to the struggle and opposition she had left behind in New York. She took it as a sign of God's blessing that her Philadelphia friend Michael Hurley was there, with Samuel Cooper, a recent convert. Dubourg predicted that this phase in Elizabeth's life would prove to be "of infinite importance for Religion and humanity."

A Home in Maryland

Within the year, Cooper had donated property in Emmitsburg, about 50 miles northwest of Baltimore, as a permanent home for Elizabeth's school for both rich and poor children, and for the sisterhood that was rapidly forming around her. Young women and widows from several states, inspired by the charismatic Elizabeth, were drawn to join her. "Providence has disposed for me a plan after my own heart," she wrote, as her dream of a life of devotion and service took shape in the Maryland hills. The Sisters of Charity, begun by Elizabeth Seton in 1809 in St. Joseph's Valley, had the distinction of being the first active religious community of women founded in the United States.

Less than a year later, the community numbered 12, and there were 12 more women awaiting admission. In 1810 Benedict Flaget, the bishop-elect of Bardstown, was asked by his Sulpician confrere John Baptist David, the second director of the Sisters of Charity, to bring from Paris the rule followed by the French Daughters of Charity. Elizabeth Seton's fledgling community needed the security of a tested rule. The firm but flexible structure designed by Sts. Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac for their apostolically mobile community of women in 17th-century France seemed well suited for 19th-century American needs. On Flaget's return Elizabeth and her advisors made several significant adaptations. By the time the rule was approved by Carroll and by Seton's community, Flaget had left for his new diocese in Kentucky, taking David as his assistant. Elizabeth, whose temperament had clashed with David's from the beginning, was not sorry to see him go. To serve the needs of the frontier diocese, David soon organized another community, the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, with a rule adapted from Emmitsburg and based on the same Vincentian model.

Early in the life of her community, Elizabeth wrote, "There is every hope that it is the seed of an immensity of future good." God speedily fulfilled her hope. After opening an academy and free school in Emmitsburg, she sent Sisters of Charity to Philadel-phia in 1814 and to New York in 1817 to care for orphans in both cities. When Elizabeth died in 1821, her community was only a dozen years old, yet some 60 Sisters of Charity in three dioceses were tending orphans, visiting the sick, teaching, catechizing and serving the poor of every type.

Elizabeth Seton's journey to Baltimore in 1808 led eventually to the high altar of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. For her indomitable hope, fidelity to God's will and unswerving devotion to Christ's presence in the Eucharist and in life, she was canonized in 1975, the first native-born American to be so honored. Like the community she founded, the five original dioceses linked with her life have flourished beyond all expectation. Today, in over 190 dioceses coast to coast, the church that Elizabeth Seton cherished as her "ark" serves more than 64 million Catholics. During this bicentennial year of the Baltimore Archdiocese, one can readily imagine the diminutive convert-mother-widow-foundress contemplating the American Catholic scene, with all its scars and struggles, from the vantage point of her beloved eternity, and celebrating the "immensity of future good" that has sprouted from the seeds planted 200 years ago. A

Listen to an interview with the author at americamagazine.org/podcast.

Bad Neighbor, Good Neighbor

BY DAVID PAUL DEAVEL

THE NEIGHBORS have not mowed their lawn in two weeks, thank God. Many people do not like neighbors who are not fastidious about their house and lawn. I do. Let me explain.

The pretty red house next to us has gone through three owners in the five years we have lived on our block. I do not have even a vague memory of the people in it when we arrived. The next couple's names have escaped me, and all I can say about the last guy is that his name was Joe. Or Jeff. Or something with a "J." All of them were youngish, good-looking, professional people without any children and with lots of disposable income. They may well have been nice people. They may still be nice people. They were, however, rotten neighbors.

It's not that they mistreated their house or held wild parties. Their parties were mild affairs in the backyard or in the house with tastefully hip music. And their care of the house was such that I wished we had the disposable income to pay them to care for and manage our property. Whenever we saw them they were outside mowing, scraping, raking, building, fixing or otherwise improving the quality of their house. Jeff-or-something usually mowed his lawn twice before I got to mine once. He could have been in one of those house-and-garden magazines.

But the fact is that if we occasionally talked to them, we rarely if ever talked with them. Their parties always involved people driving in from all over the city and beyond. They never came over to say hello. They never borrowed sugar or had a beer with us. Even when Jeff-or-something mowed his lawn, he wore a surgical mask. Perhaps it is cruel to use such a fact against him. Maybe he had allergies. Yet it seemed a fitting symbol of his relationship to what he was tending: careful, antiseptic, sterile—afraid that its life would get inside him and change him. He and the others had a property, not a home. They lived in a real estate zone, not a neighborhood. It showed in the fact that as soon as they had finished fixing up their home to a higher notch, they all moved somewhere else.

ART BY DAN SALAMIDA

I have noticed this about our neighborhood. There are those who work on their properties, and there are those who live in their homes. Those who work on their properties think of them as investments, no more mystical than a 401(k) or a mutual fund. They live their lives somewhere else—at work, at the gym, at restaurants, perhaps at somebody else's home. Ultimately they are ghosts from the moment they move in, all their precious fixer-upping no more human than the clanking of chains and moving of furniture of purgatorial spirits biding time until their release into heaven.

Those who live in their homes think of

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them as their castles or, quite often, as a sort of sacred shrine or holy place. They clean and fix, paint and repair, decorate and all the rest. But they inhabit their homes not as ghosts but as flesh-and-blood creatures. They awake each morning to walls filled with the angelic scrawl of crayon. Their carpets have dark red swirls from wine spilled in fits of laughter. Their lawns and gardens may be beautiful or a mess, but they never taste of the glossy and unreal perfection of those depicted in real estate brochures.

The dwellers of homes both charm and annoy their neighbors, because living in the close quarters of a neighborhood breeds familiarity, and familiarity generally breeds contempt at some point. "Ha! That guy always parks two feet from the curb" quickly becomes, "Will that idiot ever quit parking in the middle of the street?" "Those cute kids are always running through the sprinkler" becomes, "Can't they keep those damn kids out of my tulips?" "He's really friendly" becomes, "Does he ever stop talking?"

But charm and annoyance are part of the dance of any form of common life. And that is what home dwellers have—a common life. They give small children hand-me-downs. Their snowblowers clear whole blocks of sidewalk for those who are near them. They tease each other when they stop to say hello. They stand and talk and comfort each other as if they were the best of friends when the ambulance comes for one of the others. They even enjoy gossip. Not just bad gossip but good. For they take interest in the mystery of those strange yet familiar beings near them and wish both a deeper share in that mystery and the reputation for having a deeper share. That is why they bring hot dishes and frozen lasagnas when a new baby has come home and why their sunny Sunday evenings are occasions not only for tennis at the park but visits to the hospital and sometimes the funeral home.

When a worker of properties is gone, we usually do not know for months, maybe a year, for they were never really there in the first place. Their names and their features fade from our memories like vague late-morning dreams, unfocused and unyielding to any close scrutiny. We wish them well but feel no desire that they return.

When a home dweller moves away or dies, though, a hole, palpable like a wound, opens up in the neighborhood and the quiet psalms of backyard gossip are heard alternating praise of the "old man" or the kindness of "the sweet young couple" and lament over their quirks ("That parking was the damnedest thing") and, most of all, the loss of their figure walking dogs, smoking cigars or pausing to bask in the autumn sunshine as they rake the first of the fallen leaves. Finally, petition is raised for someone worthy to take up dominion in the old place, bringing the neighborhood back to wholeness.

What we want from the house next door is not an immaculate lawn or a beautifully painted fence or lovely flower boxes—and certainly not varnished wood floors and tasteful décor. The old saying is often taken too literally. Good fences do not make good neighbors, though good neighbors may indeed make good fences. What we want beyond the fences and in those houses is the people inside. They do not have to be our best friends. They do not even have to be particularly friendly. They may even be something of a nemesis to us. But they have to be real. While every house, no matter how well cared for, eventually ends in dust, a home echoes not only in the lifelong memories of the neighbors, but into eternity. A

Reviving a 'Common Good' Partnership

Left at the Altar

How the Democrats Lost the Catholics and How the Catholics Can Save the Democrats

By Michael Sean Winters

Basic Books. 256p $26
ISBN 9780465091669

American Catholics may have an opportunity to influence this year's elections as well as to help resolve some important issues like abortion, the Iraq War and family values.

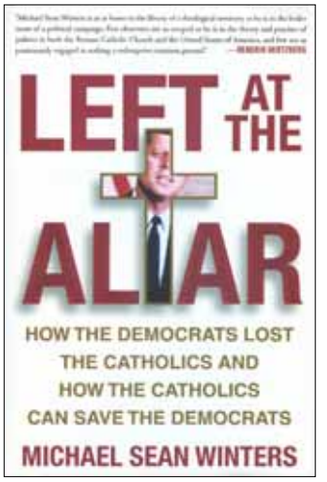
In *Left at the Altar*, Michael Sean Winters, a political journalist, speechwriter and religion scholar (and blogger for **America**), traces the history of Catholics' role in American politics since the 1930s, when they first became aligned with the Democratic Party. He also shows how and why Catholics abandoned the party.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal sought to alleviate the severe unemployment caused by the Depression by addressing workers' rights, condemning laissez-faire economics and instituting public works projects. One of Roosevelt's chief advisers on this program was Msgr. John Ryan. A theological scholar born to Irish immigrant parents, Ryan saw the Catholic Church as an "agent for social justice and an integral, progressive political force." He felt that religion could be applied to the public sphere without violating the separation of church and state.

The New Deal made sense to Catholics, especially the ethnic, working-class Catholics who lived with their extended families in urban neighborhoods. Their lives centered around the parish and school; and they had their own newspapers, entertainment, holidays and feast days. People were assimilated into American culture and democracy by understanding the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the value of public service through their participation in local politics and unions. But many non-Catholics remained prejudiced against Catholics because of their "strange" religious practices. This prejudice would affect the 1960 election, when John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, ran for president.

In order to address these concerns, Kennedy attempted to make his religion inconsequential to his qualifications during his famous Sept. 12, 1960, speech to the Houston Ministerial Association: "I am not the Catholic candidate for President. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for President who happens also to be a Catholic."

Kennedy argued for a "privacy of faith," which attempted to distinguish between his "religion problem" and the "real issues." In doing so, he misconstrued the nature of religion, says Winters, and made a critical shift away from what Monsignor Ryan had worked so hard to frame, namely, that religion addresses societal realities. During the 1930s, economic issues were religious issues because they were justice issues.



The "real issues" of the 1960s turned out to be civil rights and the Vietnam War; in the 1970s they were abortion and consumerism. Americans wanted to debate these issues on religious and moral grounds, but they gradually became disaffected by the "liberal" politics the Democrats had represented.

Kennedy and the Democrats after him responded to civil rights as a justice issue, but they missed the ball on the Vietnam War partly because a majority of Americans believed that Communism should be defeated. They also did not appreciate the tactics of war protesters like the Berrigan brothers, Catholic priests who pointed out the immorality of the war. Instead, they saw such tactics as anti-American and traitorous.

The reforms of the Second Vatican Council, which sought to modernize the church, were also perceived by many Catholics resistant to the changes to be aligned with liberals.

Also, the highly emotional abortion issue of the 1970s separated Catholics and the Democrats even more. Liberals (especially feminists) responded by being more strident in defending Roe v. Wade, especially when they used Kennedy's "privacy" doctrine to justify their position with "rights" talk.

During the 1960s and 70s, the immigrant families fled their "urban ghettos" and moved out to the suburbs, where they adopted "new secular and commercial identities" that further separated them from their church—and the Democrats.

The Democrats ignored the fact that most Americans and most Catholics were deeply religious. They rejected the "libertarian and utilitarian impulses of liberalism" and sought to "reclaim their moral voice." As a result, the Democrats appeared to be irreligious, and the Republicans began to look like the "God Party." Catholics responded politically by helping to elect Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1980. In 1994 they helped elect a Republican Congress, and by 2005 a majority of the judges occupying the Supreme Court were conservative—Catholic!

Winters's last two chapters address the second part of his book title: "How the Catholics Can Save the Democrats." To appeal to Catholic swing voters, he suggests Democrats should focus on the people's needs by rekindling Monsignor Ryan's approach of tying political issues to the core principles of Catholic social thought: concern for the common good and the dignity due every American.

Because Republicans generally embrace a brand of social Darwinism and economic efficiency, Democrats can

The Reviewers

Olga Bonfiglio is a professor at Kalamazoo College and the author of *Heroes of a Different Stripe: How One Town Responded to the War in Iraq.*

John C. Hawley is chair of the English department at Santa Clara University and former literary editor of **America**.

Thomas Murphy, S.J., is associate professor and chair of history at Seattle University, in Washington.

counter them with more humanistic and pragmatic approaches to issues like health care, abortion, stem cell research, genetic engineering, capital punishment, euthanasia and care for the elderly. And instead of concentrating on legalistic concerns (one's right to do or not to do something, for example), Democrats should direct attention to human dignity concerns, like what to do with an enfeebled Grandma.

Most Americans admit that selfishness and consumerism have taken over our culture, and they yearn for a shared sense of responsibility. Such sentiments work well when it comes to issues like the environment, education and marriage. By focusing on the common good with regard to these issues, Democrats could address economic well-being, justice, protection of basic freedoms and concern about the nation's moral and cultural fiber. Such an approach provides some hope that the conflicts over these important issues can be resolved.

Winters also suggests that applying just war theory, a 1,600-year-old Augustinian tradition, could not only end the war in Iraq but prevent other serious state-sponsored violence from starting. This is a less convincing argument, since our national purpose for nearly 100 years has been fixed on national security and our economy for the last 50 years has been buffeted by the "military-industrial complex"—with no end in sight.

Finally, Winters points out that the burgeoning Latino presence in the United States has created a significant change demographically, culturally and politically. Both Democrats and Republicans have been vying for their support. But as immigration remains the single most important issue for this population, Republicans have actually inflamed anti-immigrant feeling. Democrats could counter such policy by opposing restrictive and punitive measures, especially since there are now 11 million undocumented Latinos in the United States. Furthermore, Democrats could institute a pro-family approach to immigration reform in order to find common ground with Latinos, who are largely Catholic, but who have felt alienated from Democrats since Roe v. Wade.

Anyone who likes politics will like *Left at the Altar* for its history, analysis and explanation of how Catholicism has played a role in our politics. For Democrats it offers hope that the country can resolve some of its troubling issues. For Catholics it allows them to feel proud that their votes and their church may inspire some good. ***Olga Bonfiglio***

Point Counterpoint

Diary of a Bad Year

By J. M. Coetzee
Viking. 240p $24.95
ISBN 9780670018758

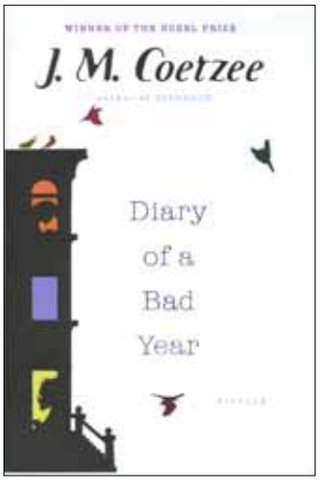
J. M. Coetzee's critics suggested some years ago that he and some others (Zakes Mda, Zoe Wicomb) needed to use their artistry more obviously in the political cause. Defenders argued that literature had to maintain and expand South Africa's literary culture for a future that otherwise would have been emaciated by the lean times of racial oppression. They were instead bearing witness to an inconsolable mourning, and clearing a space for some

hope and possible forgiveness. But now that he has won the prestigious Mann-Booker prize twice and the Nobel Prize (only once) and has moved to Australia, Coetzee seems, almost as a lark, to have let fly with a preposterously gem-encrusted political screed, a double-cream-laden macédoine of opinions on contemporary newsy diversions as various as terrorism, intelligent design, authority in fiction and pedophilia.

If that were all, the book would be interesting enough. But coming from Coetzee it is much more fun than that. After you have read *Diary of a Bad Year*, I recommend you track down some other readers and ask *how* they did it, and I mean the question literally. The pages of the book are divided in half, with the "opinions" offered in the top sector and a more typical narrative advancing on the second half of the page. Twenty-five pages in, a third section is added at the bottom of each page. Occasionally, the sentences carry over onto the next page. Every once in a while paragraphs continue on into the next chapter. The reader is left to decide whether to proceed across pages in the heady political section (ah, at last we are getting the reclusive author's real views on Bush and the literary establishment!), or stop and jump down to the two lower narratives, which—this being Coetzee—are pretty compelling stories.

Much like a combination of *Lolita* and the troubled relationship between W. B. Yeats and the actress/Irish revolutionary Maud Gonne, the story involves an aging protagonist from South Africa who hires the voluptuous Filipina lady living downstairs, half his age, to be his typist. Anya, meanwhile, has a cynical stockbroker lover, Alan, who is the polar opposite of the protagonist—much like Yeats's description of the man Maud Gonne ended up marrying. When Alan's story begins in the bottom third of the page, that new narrative sounds a lot like a Harold Pinter play, with Darwinian aggression simmering restlessly just below the surface of the taut language. So, in a short volume, Coetzee has found a structure for fascinating musings on any number of contemporary issues, a sexy-but-sublimated love story and a tantalizing story of crime and implied violence.

And there's more. The book is really about aging or—and this is again reminiscent of Yeats—about having transcendent aspirations that are housed in a dying body, situated in one little place and time. (At one point he rifles through a box of his father's junk that he has neglected to cull for 30 years, and finds written on a scrap of paper the phrase "can something be done Im [sic] dying.") To say that Coetzee has written a book about the mind/body problem is to strip his creation of all its ingenuity and beauty, since this reader, for one, was unexpectedly brought to tears at the novel's conclusion. In the protagonist's eyes, the book he is dictating (one-third of Coetzee's volume, recall) is a contest between the philosophies of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, a confection made up of "the personal anguish of a soul unable to bear the horrors of this world." But when the very different voices of Anya and the scurrilous Alan are added to the mix, we see the anguished writer from two fresh (if biased) points of view and recognize the "pessimistic anarchistic quietism" that he espouses for what it truly is: the struggle of an accomplished man in his closing decades, coming to terms with aspects of life that lesser individuals choose to evade: sincerity, integrity, belonging, dishonor, materialism, reason, fatherhood.



Early in the book the protagonist argues that those around him cannot be reasoned with by an appeal to moral principles, since their lives are full of contradictions and they are used to accommodating themselves to them. Instead, he writes, one must "attack the metaphysical, supra-empirical status of *necessità* and show that to be fraudulent." I take this to mean that he wants to demonstrate that we cannot wiggle away from the consequences of our choices. By demonstrating the distinction between Anya and Alan in the "lower" two-thirds

of the book, the higher consciousness of the protagonist is rendered in soap-opera format and made not only comprehensible but, finally, compelling. This was the sort of reading experience in which I found myself frequently turning to the author's photo on the jacket, as if asking myself about the relation between the artistry and the artist—or, as Yeats might put it, the dancer and the dance. ***John C. Hawley***

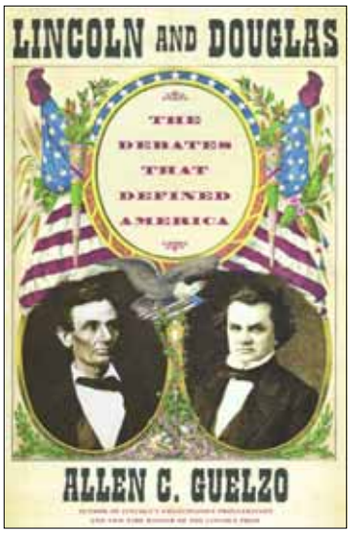
The Great Debates

Lincoln and Douglas

The Debates That Defined America

By Allen C. Guelzo
Simon & Schuster. 416p $26
ISBN 9780743273206

Those Americans who follow presidential politics know that Abraham Lincoln once debated Stephen Douglas in a series remembered as the paradigm of that form of political discourse. In the introduction to his new study of these debates, however, Allen C. Guelzo argues that the circumstances of the Lincoln-Douglas debates are poorly remembered. They did not take place during the presidential campaign of 1860, but during an Illinois race for the U.S. Senate two years earlier. The use of the debate transcripts to seek signs of the future Lincoln presidency and the Civil War ignores their immediate context, forgetting that these exchanges had in view one particular election.



Guelzo (Henry R. Luce Professor of the Civil War Era at Gettysburg College) seeks to revise understanding of the debates by focusing on that election. He gives us the political culture of economically troubled antebellum Illinois, whose poorer white voters feared competition with freed slaves for land and jobs, and the campaign strategies of each side. Thus he reconstructs a political procedure not followed since 1913: the selection of U.S. senators by state legislators rather than direct popular vote. Anyone reading this book would not wish for a return to the system used in 1858, as Guelzo demonstrates that an unfair legislative apportionment plan was largely responsible for the defeat of Lincoln, the popular-vote winner. It is sobering to reflect that the debates, for all their quality, may have had absolutely no influence on this result. Ironically, Lincoln carried the state for president over Douglas two years later with a virtually identical popular vote because Illinois' electoral votes were distributed in a different way that now favored Lincoln.

Guelzo also discusses alternative evidence that suggests the debates did influence Lincoln's defeat. Republicans were unpopular in heavily Whig central Illinois, whose moderate Unionist voters considered them too close to abolitionists. Lincoln lost this swing area in both 1858 and 1860. In fact, Guelzo reveals that Lincoln's famous "House Divided" acceptance speech to the Republican State Convention in June, 1858, was delivered against the wishes of advisors who feared it would unsettle traditional Whigs. A reluctant Lincoln, however, later had to accept the direction of the Republican State Committee that he debate Douglas, again in hopes of reassuring the Whigs. Guelzo's attentiveness to voting records shows definitively that this strategy failed in essential districts.

At this point a flaw in the book becomes troublesome. Guelzo despises Douglas, whom he regards as the prototype of the pandering politician, eager to assume that whatever was popular with the electorate was ethical, in contrast to Lincoln's stand for principle. In fact, Guelzo describes the Lincoln Memorial as a rebuke to the United States Capitol, which has been made a memorial to Douglas by the antics of our recent Congresses. This bias prevents Guelzo

from considering what was compelling to some voters about the doctrine Douglas defended in the debates—popular sovereignty.

Douglas believed that individual territories should choose for themselves whether to enter the Union as slave states or free states, while Lincoln wanted to restrict slavery to the territories in which it already existed. Their different ways of reading the Constitution resulted in contrasting positions. Douglas read the Constitution literally: it must approve of the slavery it permitted. Lincoln felt that the moral principles expressed in the Constitution were most important: it contained an underlying spirit of equality that should be taken as a sign that the document was meant to produce a gradual end of slavery. History shows the triumph of Lincoln's approach; but if Guelzo really wishes to recapture the mood of 1858, he should consider that moderate Whig voters, more concerned with saving the Union than abolishing slavery, likely found Douglas's more cautious reading of the Constitution to be a safer course.

Guelzo's dislike of Douglas may also have led him to ignore an episode in which Douglas may have indeed stood for principle. In Kansas territory, the popular sovereignty doctrine had brought about a bloody insurrection in which pro- and antislavery factions produced rival state constitutions. Late in 1857, President James Buchanan endorsed the proslavery Lecompton Constitution. Douglas disagreed, arguing that Lecompton was not the legitimate product of a majority of Kansas voters. Buchanan's response allows Guelzo to discuss another lost aspect of the American political system—the complete control of federal patronage that the president enjoyed before the civil service system was introduced in the 1880s. Buchanan set out to punish and unseat Douglas by his control of this spoils system, nearly costing the latter his Senate seat. Guelzo dismisses this episode as nothing more than an example of Douglas's love of a political gamble, but perhaps some voters took it as an admirable attempt to defend the lawful exercise of majority rule.

Admirers of Theodore H. White's *Making of the Presidents* series will recognize in Guelzo many of the same techniques. He puts us inside each campaign. He does not neglect the well-known content of the debates, but he also shows how much of what was said and done by both camps was determined by the proximate goal of winning an election rather than a desire to speak to the ages.

That the Lincoln-Douglas debates became immortal despite that is an encouraging sign for the American political system. The immortality of the debates, though, may not be due only to Lincoln's reminder that government should promote what is right, but also to Douglas's reminder that a democracy needs a legally respectable process for determining a true majority vote.

Thomas Murphy

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend and Matt Malone, S.J., discuss E.J. Dionne's *Souled Out*, at americamagazine.org/connects.

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Candidates must hold an M.A. in theology, pastoral ministry, religious studies or related field, including a certificate in youth ministry (preferred); be a practicing Roman Catholic; have sufficient years of formation experience with youth and young adult ministries; possess strong leadership, organizational and excellent communication skills; and be experienced in working with professional and volunteer staff. Experience with creating and monitoring budgets is also preferred.

Please submit a statement of interest with experience and qualifications, plus your own vision statement for youth and young adult ministries, to: Diocese of Camden, Office of Lifelong Formation, 631 Market Street, Camden, NJ 08102; fax: (856) 225-0096; e-mail: rquinn@camdendiocese.org.

HEAD OF SCHOOL. Marian High School, a vibrant and growing Catholic college preparatory secondary school for young women founded by the Servants of Mary and located in Omaha, Neb. (www.marianhighschool.net), is seeking a committed and visionary Head of School starting July 1, 2009. The successful applicant will possess strong communication and leadership skills and will be responsible for continuing strong traditions of excellence in academics, faith formation, empowerment of young women, relationship building and institutional advancement. Applicants must possess the minimum of a master's degree in educational administration or related field, the ability to obtain appropriate licensure, successful Catholic school administrative experience (secondary level preferred) and demonstrate a commitment to Catholic secondary education for young women.

Salary competitive and commensurate with experience.

Interested and qualified candidates are asked to submit electronically a letter of introduction; résumé; the names, addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of five professional references; and a statement addressing the significance and importance of Catholic secondary schools for young women to: Marian High School—Head of School Search, Catholic School Management, Inc., Attn: Lois K. Draina, at office@catholicschoolmgmt.com. Review of applications will begin Sept. 1, 2008, and continue until the position is filled. Interviews are scheduled for mid-October, 2008.

Retreats

BETHANY RETREAT HOUSE, East Chicago, Ind., offers private and individually directed silent retreats, including Ignatian 30 days, year-round in a prayerful home setting. Contact Joyce Diltz, P.H.J.C.; (219) 398-5047; bethanyrh@sbcglobal.net; www.bethanyretreathouse.org.

BETHANY SPIRITUALITY CENTER, Highland Mills, N.Y., offers the following fall retreats: "Your Story, Sacred Story," with Margaret Silf, Sept. 26-28; "Dreaming, Desiring, Despairing, Discerning, Discovering...," with Margaret Silf, Sept. 29-Oct. 3; "Open Your Heart...Transform Loss...Enjoy New Freedom in Later Life," with Ann Billard, O.L.M., Nov. 16-20. Private and directed retreats are also available. Please visit www.bethanyspiritualitycenter.org or call (845) 460-3061.

Translator

SPANISH TRANSLATOR, Luis Baudry, specialized in Catholic matters (Bible, spirituality, ministry, etc.). Books, articles and Web sites. Ph: (646) 257-4165, or luisbaudrysimon@gmail.com.

Wills

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Letters

Taking Risks

As a woman religious and former member of a formation team, I read "Religious Life in the Age of Facebook," by Richard G. Malloy, S.J. (7/7), with interest. I have had a number of experiences where hundreds of young adults of diverse backgrounds immersed themselves in a communal setting where they participated in prayer, meditation, healthy nutrition and awareness of the earth. Unfortunately, it is the secular institutes that seem to be drawing the young by offering them the opportunity of a collective transformative experience through meaningful spiritual practices.

Perhaps we would see a turnaround if all involved with recruiting new members would risk creating different spiritual practices of a multiethnic nature honoring the evolution of a diverse culture's way of prayer. There are many ways to pray. Can we risk believing in God's imagination for the future?

Also, a minor quibble. In discussing religious orders, Malloy comments on "sensitive issues concerning race and class." However, I missed the inclusion of the priesthood in his mention of the "L. L. Bean" lifestyles of men religious, and would expand this to include the high-end rectories, homes and cars of some priests. Yes, I agree, many of us are anything but countercultural. So why would a young adult "give it all up" when in some cases, one received more than one left in a previous life? If we expect the young to be attracted to our lifestyle, do we need to clean up our act regarding the sexism in the church and the lifestyles of those who profess to give up all to follow Christ?

Lillian Needham, S.S.J.
Chestnut Hill, Pa.

Outside the Hospital Doors

As a pro-life twentysomething woman, I deeply appreciated the articles by Jennifer Fulwiler ("A Sexual Revolution," 7/7) and Shannon Crounse ("Cheering for Change," 7/7). Through my professional career as a service provider for homeless people and my parish involvement as a Gabriel Project volunteer, I have had the opportunity to work with women experiencing all manner of crises. In doing so, I have learned that being truly pro-life encompasses more than opposition to abortion. We must also give voice to working single mothers, mothers who are incarcerated and families who make choices you or I consider less than ideal.

It is my sincere hope that the future of the pro-life movement includes support for more pro-family public policies that, long after a child's birth, continually reaffirm a woman's (or couple's) decision to parent. We cannot achieve and maintain a culture of life if we fail to prioritize support for families once the baby is born. Comprehensive pro-life public policy should follow families out the hospital doors, through graduation and beyond.

Erin Grip Brown
Austin, Tex.

Hold the Applause

In "Parsing Race and Gender" (7/21), Terry Golway suggests there may be some validity to the suggestion that Catholics voted for Hillary Clinton in the primaries because of their familiarity with women holding positions of leadership within the Catholic Church in the United States. But it can just as easily be stated that women have not been given leadership opportunities in the church, as the ordination of women and the role of lay women remain unresolved, contentious issues.

Perhaps Catholics voted for Clinton not because they are accustomed to seeing women in positions of power, but because they are unaccustomed to seeing persons of color in positions of power. Historically, the Catholic Church has maintained a fairly homogenous mix of followers, with exceptions and advances made within the past 10 years because of an influx of immigrants. But its leadership base continues to reflect its history, with white males primarily holding positions of power. Instead of heralding the church for creating "familiarity" with women in power, we should be asking why it has failed to establish total gender and racial equality in positions of leadership in the church.

Clare Greene
Catonsville, Md.

Letters

Golden Age

Congratulations to James T. Keane, S.J., for his review of Ron Hansen's extraordinary novel *Exiles* (7/7). With *Mariette in Ecstasy* and *Atticus*, Hansen revealed that he is a gifted creator of that much-discussed entity, "the Catholic novel." Reflecting on Hansen's work, recent novels by Alice McDermott, Mary Gordon, Peter Quinn and Anne Rice and the prodigious output of Andrew Greeley and Ralph McInerny, I wonder if we are witnessing an American Catholic renascence in literature reminiscent of that in Europe in the 1940s and 50s, as evidenced by the novels of Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, François Mauriac and Georges Bernanos.

(Rev.) Robert E. Lauder
Jamaica, N.Y.

Councils, Not Covenants

Thanks to Austen Ivereigh for his thoughtful and comprehensive article on the state of Anglicanism ("For the Sake of Unity," 8/4). These are perhaps the most crucial days in the life of this expression of the Catholic faith since the 16th century.

When Ivereigh suggests that the crisis is ecclesiological, not doctrinal, he is fundamentally correct. But when one peels the skins of the ecclesiological crises within Anglicanism, one discovers the crisis has spread to missiology and doctrine.

When one examines the process of discernment and decisions in Anglicanism, one discovers that conciliarity in the church came to an end when Henry Tudor suspended both canon law and conciliar precedent and entrusted ecclesial governance to the crown and Privy Council in consultation with the bishops of England. The church lost a crucial dimension of its heritage, and Anglicanism was set on a course for governance that has set the framework for the present global crisis of faith and authority. Without the clear connections to a canonical and conciliar tradition that is historic, the fundamental form and expression that has been promoted is one of a covenant. Sadly, a covenant does not breed unity, because it affirms autonomy over and above the primacy of a faith and order through the ministry of a formal college/synod of bishops.

It is clear from the events at Lambeth that the covenant lacks the significance and substance to unify Anglicanism. The Catholic tradition East and West has for ages called for a college of bishops in synod to embody and act as the expression of the church's unity. It is very significant, however, that whenever and wherever the federated view of "canonical subordinationism" occurs in Anglican conversations, the idea of the Catholic unity dissipates and the possibilities for conciliar resolution fade.

Ever since the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), the churches have realized the need to express and strengthen their *koinonia* by coming together to discuss matters of mutual concern and to meet contemporary challenges to the faith.

Early in the history of the church, a function of oversight of the other bishops of their regions was assigned to bishops of prominent sees. One of their duties was to keep the churches faithful to the will of Christ. This practice has continued to the present day but not in Anglicanism, as it lacks the effective structures.

This form of *episkope* is a service to the church carried out in co-responsibility with all the bishops of the region. All recognize that every bishop receives at ordination both responsibility for his local church and the obligation to maintain it in living awareness and practical service of the other churches. The church of God is found in each of them and in their *koinonia*.

As it was then, it should be now. The calling of a council is perhaps the most historic and hopeful prospect for Anglicanism.

(Rev.) Kevin Francis Donlon
Tampa, Fla.

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Forgiven and Reconciled

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (A), Sept. 7, 2008

Readings: Ez 33:7-9; Ps 95:1-2, 6-9; Rom 13:8-10; Mt 18:15-20

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone" (Mt 18:15)

ART BY TAD DUNNE

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE readings revolve around the themes of sin, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. They remind us that there is always hope, even at our most sinful moments and even for the most sinful persons we may encounter (especially those whom we may know and love).

Today's responsorial psalm (Psalm 95) alludes to ancient Israel's murmuring against God and their idolatry in the wilderness at the time of Moses. Even though God had freed them from slavery in Egypt and cared for them as they wandered in the wilderness, these people nevertheless tested God and rebelled against him. Their sin became, for many biblical writers, the archetypal sin. (See Hebrews 3–4 for an extensive early Christian application of Psalm 95.)

The reading from Ezekiel 33 concerns the prophet's duty to warn the sinners among God's people. The reason why the prophet should do so is to bring the people to their senses and make them confront their sins. The hope is that they will turn from those sins and be forgiven by God and be reconciled with God.

The passage from Matthew 18 describes the process by which a sinner might be reconciled to God and to the Christian community. There are three steps. If someone sins (not all manuscripts include "against you"), you should first confront that person and point out the fault. If that does not succeed, the second step is to take one or two others along with you so that all of you might bear witness to the sinner's fault. This sounds something like what we today might call an intervention. If that does not succeed, then you should tell the whole community. And if that does not succeed, the sinner should be cut off (in what we might regard as excommunication). But even this extreme measure seems to have been intended to shock the sinner into recognition, bring about repentance and foster reconciliation.

A similar three-step process was used by the Jewish group that gave us the Dead Sea Scrolls. We can suppose that other Jewish communities and other early Christian communities did something like what the Matthean community did. The three-step process itself is not what is especially important. What is important is the dynamic that was behind it. The dynamic is one that can move from sin to repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation.

This dynamic reminds us that sin is always a possibility (as Paul indicates in Romans 7), and that even very good persons can fall into bad habits and be overwhelmed by them. Nevertheless, a descent into evildoing need not be irreparable or fatal. Moreover, the three-step process suggests that loving our neighbor may entail at times our calling to account the neighbor or loved one who sins.

The goal of the entire process is not condemnation but restoration. To be forgiven and reconciled, however, demands that one recognize the enormity of sin and repent of it. This is where hope comes in. From a Christian perspective, there is always hope for ourselves and for even the worst sinners. Through God's grace we can repent, be forgiven and be reconciled to God and to our community.

When we recite the Lord's Prayer, we say, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." That statement suggests a causal relationship between our experience of forgiveness from God and our willingness to forgive others. In reciting this prayer we pledge ourselves to be participants in the dynamic of repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. If we have experienced this ourselves, we have the obligation to extend it with regard to others. It is part of loving our neighbor.

Paul's instruction in Romans 13 about love of neighbor and fulfilling the Old Testament law indicates that loving the neighbor may prompt us to confront someone close to us who is clearly doing things that are harmful or sinful.

Echoing the second part of the double love commandment taught by Jesus, Paul contends that if we really love our neighbor as set out in Lev 19:18, then we will not commit adultery, murder, steal or covet another's property. That is what Paul means when he declares that love is the fulfillment of the Law. Today's readings suggest that at times love may require an extraordinary willingness and capacity to forgive others and to help them turn from their evil ways.

Daniel J. Harrington

Praying With Scripture

- Have you ever participated in an intervention? What happened?
- What is the goal of the three-step process outlined in Matthew 18?
- Can you imagine calling a sinner to account as an act of love?

DANIEL J. HARRINGTON, S.J., is professor of New Testament at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry in Chestnut Hill, Mass.