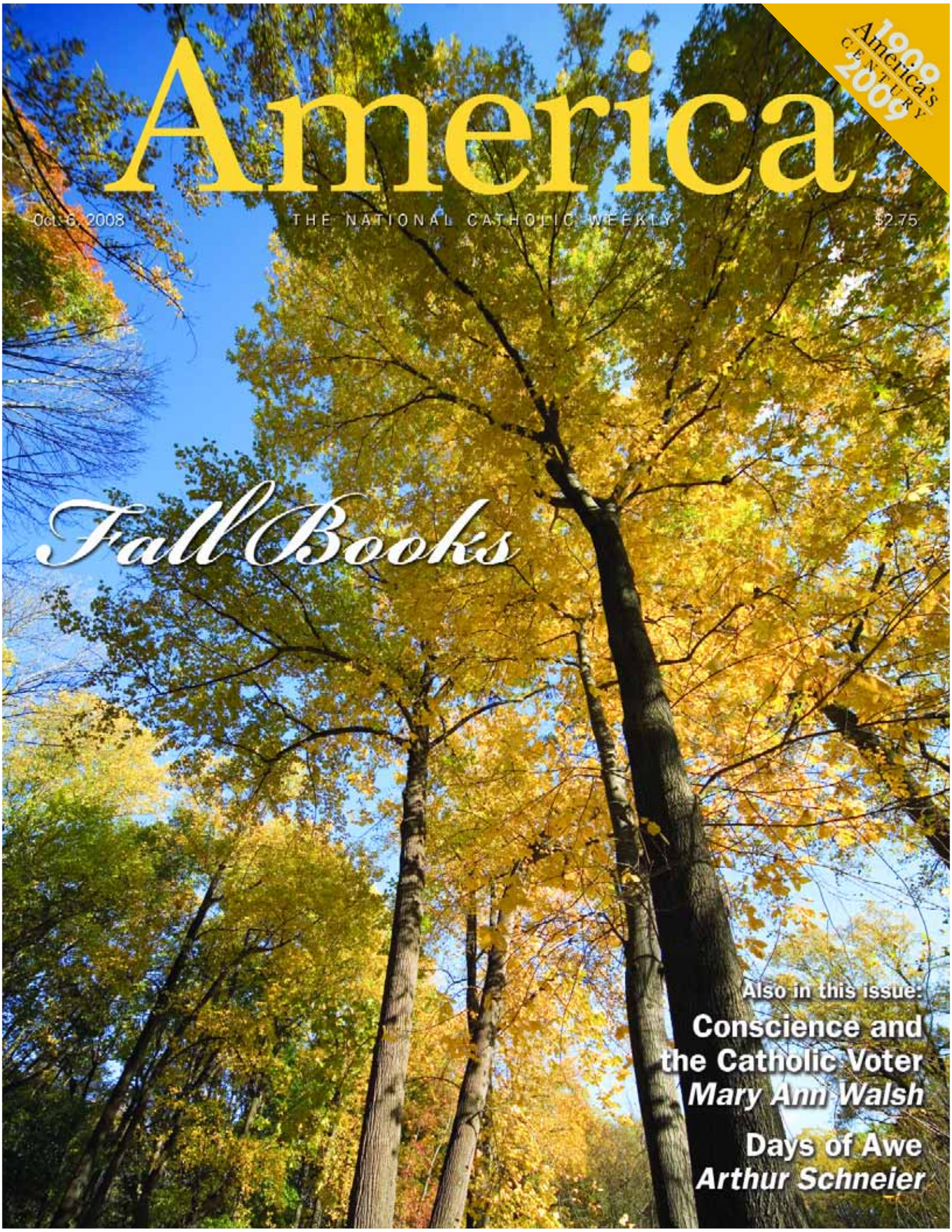
America
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Oct. 6, 2008
THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY
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Fall Books
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Mary Ann Walsh
Days of Awe
Arthur Schneier

Of Many Things

IF IT'S OCTOBER, with the feast of St. Francis near, can **America**'s literary editor be far behind?

Yes, readers, another fall publishing season is upon us; and we take this occasion—the first of two—to introduce you to some of its highlights. The books reviewed herein cover theology, memoir, history, biography and poetry. Kathleen Norris, Richard McBrien and Mary Oliver join others in the fall lineup.

To answer the many questions I am asked, the process of selecting books to be reviewed in our pages remains the same. I pore over catalogs from a multitude of publishers, some large, some small, some distinguished, some obscure. Blocks of time, and quality time at that, have to be carved out regularly to read about books that might in the end carry only a minimal chance of making the cut. Even being selected for consideration, and received here as early as the publisher can oblige, does not guarantee assignment for review.

Easiest to decide, of course, are new works by big names and/or books on timely social, religious, political and other issues of interest to our readers. But it is impossible to review every worthy book because of the large volume of solicited and unsolicited galleys and books that cross the threshold into our offices. To address this situation somewhat we have begun—and will run regularly—a new section called Books in Brief, which will alert our readers to some other titles they might want to look at. We hope this additional coverage will compensate to some extent for the recent cutbacks of book sections in newspapers.

Still, the books roll off the press in record numbers. I find it amazing that in these dire financial times, the level of print output from publishers seems not to falter. Leave out the economy, say, and consider the expenditure of natural resources involved in producing and binding the printed word. Some day I should give you a list of the actual titles of some books; reading them aloud at the office always provides some moments of hilarity. Besides titles, there are subjects that, in my view, could appeal only to an extremely limited readership (a history of salt, anyone?).

I try from time to time to mention books published by small presses, books that rarely come with an advertising or promotion budget. New City Press has just released two: *Sister Earth: Creation, Ecology & the Spirit*, by Dom Hélder Câmara, and *Pathways to Community*, by Bishop Robert F. Morneau. Each is a thin paperback containing 28 reflections, in keeping with the series of which they are a part, A Meditation a Day for a Span of Four Weeks. Câmara reflects on our role as co-creators; Morneau writes on prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.

Sundays With Jesus: Reflections for the Year of Mark, by America House's own James DiGiacomo, S.J. (Paulist Press), is a superb resource for homilists. Last week's issue of **America** on the coming Synod of Bishops focused on Scripture and mission—being "doers of the Word and not hearers only." DiGiacomo is a gifted preacher and has written widely and well on the subject. This paperback compresses a wealth of practical insight, interpretation and reflection into a relatively small package. Be ready to take it up when Advent approaches.

Have you heard about a novel called *The Shack: Where Tragedy Confronts Eternity*, by William P. Young? The book appeared late last year, but I learned about it only this past spring, by which time it had soared to the top of bestseller lists. Published by Windblown Media in paperback, it is the story of a young girl abducted from a campsite where she was spending a weekend with her father, siblings and other families. The father's worst fear is ultimately confirmed, which shatters his already tenuous faith in God. So God has no choice but to intervene in the flesh, inviting the father to spend a weekend at the shack where the girl's body had been discovered. Here the Trinitarian God comes as three of the most unlikely persons we could expect. The storyline requires attentiveness on the reader's part. Also helpful is an open mind and heart. The writing is brisk and well paced. This, in a word, is a book of wonder; it rekindles faith and makes us think about God's relationship with humanity, and about suffering and death.

This season, no matter your literary preferences, "get caught reading."

Patricia A. Kossmann

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106 West 56th Street
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Ph: 212-581-4640; Fax: 212-399-3596.
E-mail: america@americamagazine.org;
letters@americamagazine.org.
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Cover photo Tatyana Borodina

Correction: The photo credit for Of Many Things of Sept. 29 should have read: Snug Harbor Cultural Center.

Articles

This week @ America Connects

An audio interview with Kathleen Norris and, from the archives, Rev. Richard P. McBrien on "What Theology Is and Is Not." Plus, Mark Judge on love, theology and rock 'n' roll. All at americamagazine.org.

Mary's Smile

Much of the media coverage of Pope Benedict XVI's recent visit to France focused on his more overtly political talks, including his desire for a "positive laïcité" in the country. But during his visit to Lourdes to mark the 150th anniversary of the apparitions to St. Bernadette Soubirous, the pope spoke in a more devotional mode. Standing before the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, Benedict reminded the faithful that one of the first "acts" of Mary toward Bernadette was a simple, personal gesture. "Mary first taught Bernadette to know her smile, this being the most appropriate point of entry into the revelation of her mystery. In the smile of the most eminent of all creatures, looking down on us, is reflected our dignity as children of God, that dignity which never abandons the sick person."

Benedict's combination of a scholarly approach to worldly questions and his embrace of something as "otherworldly" as apparitions underlines the fine balance that a Catholic must maintain. Involvement in real-world issues does not mean that one does not believe in the possibility of things that intellectuals sometimes reject—like apparitions and miracles. At the same time, the church is not credulous. Shortly before the pope's visit to Lourdes, the Vatican announced that it was initiating steps to avoid "excesses and abuses" in the church's acceptance of apparitions, and it disciplined one of the main spiritual directors for the original visionaries at Medjugorje, a popular shrine that has been viewed with some suspicion in Rome. Benedict's words at Lourdes show once again that reason and faith are complementary.

The Coming New Majority

This fall, more Latino students will take a seat in our nation's public schools than ever before: 10 million children, one of every five enrolled in kindergarten through high school. That total has nearly doubled since 1990, according to a recent report by the Pew Hispanic Center, and it is expected to double again by 2050—to 28 million. If it does, Latinos would then make up the majority of the U.S. school-age population. Are public schools adequately prepared to teach them? Do teachers and parents understand Latino cultures, the bilingual family and the particular needs such students may have? Are those who are not Latino preparing themselves to acknowledge Latinos as the new majority, and to see themselves as members of a minority group?

Already, regions with large Latino populations are adapting to the bi- or multilingual and multicultural reality. Two years ago in California, nearly half of all public school students were Latino, and many such children attend school in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Colorado, Illinois, Florida and New York. Although more than half of all Latino students in the nation are attending schools in Texas or California this fall, Latinos, especially the foreign-born, are moving rapidly to other parts of the country, where local schools may be less prepared for them.

To be effective, educators must take into account three key dimensions of the Latino student profile: first, most live in two-parent households. The rate is 71 percent among U.S.-born students of immigrant parents, which is a little higher than that of non-Latino white students and much higher than non-Latino black students (30 percent). Second, more than a quarter of Latino children live in poverty. Third, 7 in 10 speak a language other than English at home. Taking these factors into account could help schools and local communities reach out to the next majority.

Relics Secular and Sacred

Nonbelievers are not the only ones who smile at or even ridicule Catholics for their veneration of relics. Even non-Catholic Christians criticize Catholics for this strand of our tradition. Yet when one reads about the dollars paid for a piece of Yankee Stadium, one begins to wonder. Memorabilia have become big business, with stores that sell sport, pop star and Civil War memorabilia. Might one call them relics?

Devoted fans pay $869 to carry away two seats from Shea Stadium. Bases go for $1,500. Dirt from the razed Tiger Stadium sells for $20. A urinal from Busch stadium went for $2,220. Total sales of memorabilia from that late stadium added up to $5.4 million. But New York is unusual: the sale of Yankee Stadium memorabilia is expected to amount to $50 million.

Baseball stars themselves want a piece of the action. On the last night at the House That Ruth Built, Don Larsen, Mariano Rivera and many others reached down to scoop handfuls of dirt from the pitching mound into plastic cups.

Something in the human psyche does not want to let go but to remember, to keep continuity with the best of our past. We need ways to remember the good, the true and the enjoyable—not all that different from the Catholic tradition, which for centuries has venerated the bones and clothing of its heroes in holiness. Perhaps veneration of saints' relics was simply a bit ahead of the times.

Bailout and Equity

THE AUGUST INVESTMENT FIRM of Lehman Brothers, founded in 1850, weathered the American Civil War, two World Wars and the Great Depression. Yet over a few days in September, the firm collapsed in the wake of the credit crisis that has roiled financial markets around the world. It was one of several stunning developments that included the sale of the venerable Merrill Lynch and the transformation of Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs into bank holding companies, as well as the government's near-takeover of the mortgage behemoths Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and the insurance giant American International Group. On Sept. 19 Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson Jr. asked Congress to allow the government to purchase $700 billion worth of problem mortgages to put an end to the crisis. Overall, the government bailouts could deliver a bill of $1 trillion.

Certainly there is enough blame to go around. Experienced C.E.O.'s of giant financial institutions should have known better than to risk investors' assets in complex financial instruments that few people understood. Robert Rubin, the Treasury secretary under President Bill Clinton, told "The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer" that most people who deal with these instruments "probably do not fully understand all the risks that are embedded in those instruments that can materialize under unusual circumstances." These ill-understood instruments were then bundled and sold multiple times, like hot potatoes, to other investors.

C.E.O.'s were not the only ones who profited from the "credit culture." Ordinary people grew complacent in the growing value of their single major asset, their homes, and refinancing became commonplace across the middle class. Loan officers offered mortgages to customers who were not credit-worthy. This practice preyed on the poor, but for others it fostered a credit culture in which speculating in real estate was as easy as visiting the nearest bank. Popular television shows, like A&E's "Flip This House," promoted get-rich-quick schemes for the middle and upper classes.

Since the days of the Carter administration, deregulation has been a bipartisan policy. Regulation during the Clinton and Bush administrations, however, was particularly lax. As long as the Dow kept rising, both were reluctant to place any restrictions on new financial instruments. The present administration could, for example, have empowered the Treasury Department to study more closely the reasonableness of mortgage-backed securities. Indeed, William H. Donaldson, a Republican who served as chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, resigned his post after the Bush White House resisted his pleas for greater regulatory oversight.

The debacle offers a warning to those who place their faith in a market system free of regulation. The "efficient market hypothesis"—the notion that the market optimally allocates resources—assumes that full information will enable investors to weigh risk carefully when making investment decisions. On this assumption, poorly performing C.E.O.'s and fund managers would be penalized by falling stock prices and poor financial reports. Yet when the information is so complicated that few—even those on boards of directors—can understand what is being traded, we see what economists all too coolly call "market failure." In such circumstances governments must regulate.

GIVEN THE GLOBALIZATION OF DEBT in today's financial networks, Secretary Paulson's proposal for a bailout is necessary to avert a worldwide economic meltdown. The failure of mortgage brokers, investment houses and A.I.G. makes the future prospects for ordinary people ever more precarious. The cost of the bailout will also make the government less capable of assisting the needy both at home and abroad for a very long time. Even before the present crisis, the rise in the price of foodstuffs and gasoline had precipitated food riots around the world. Saving the financial institutions will provide only a limited cushion for those always most vulnerable—the poor and the lower-middle class. Here in the United States, they will find it harder to obtain home mortgages. Globally, the millennial hope of cutting world poverty in half by 2015 will almost certainly become a faded dream.

Still, as the bailout endeavors to prevent an even more dire collapse, steps must be taken to prevent worsening impoverishment at home and abroad. Without equity, there will be no financial stability. The test of leadership will be to articulate a new design for the economy predicated on human solidarity, in which the costs will be fairly allocated and the benefits shared by all. For the burdens must be borne for generations to come. It will take rare honesty, an exceptional degree of persuasion and an unswerving sense of justice to lead the nation on a new path. It is time to pull together for the common good. Self-interest has had its day and has failed us all.

Church Officials Charge: Conspiracy Behind Violence

Consecrated hosts lie scattered on the floor next to a vandalized tabernacle at St. James Catholic Church in a suburb of Bangalore, India, Sept. 21.

Church officials and others say there is a "clear conspiracy behind the sudden upsurge in the atrocities committed against Christian targets in different parts of India." "We are really distressed to see that atrocities on Christians are being reported from different parts of the country on a daily basis," Babu Joseph, of the Society of the Divine Word, who is spokesman for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, told Catholic News Service.

Though some of the attacks look sporadic, with incidents reported from different areas, Father Joseph pointed out that "there is a clear conspiracy to terrorize the Christian community." Dozens of attacks have been reported since Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati, leader of Hindu nationalist groups in Orissa, was shot dead by Maoist rebels Aug. 23.

"I publicly say we are deeply hurt. The church in Karnataka is wounded," Archbishop Bernard Moras of Bangalore, chairman of the Karnataka Catholic Bishops' Council, told the state's chief minister, B. S. Yeddyurappa, Sept. 22. "There is surely a conspiracy to terrorize the Christians."

Israeli Rabbi to Address Bishops' Synod on Word

The Vatican invitation to participate in the upcoming World Synod of Bishops on the Bible is a "signal of hope," said Israeli Rabbi Shear-Yashuv Cohen, who will lead a one-day discussion on the Jewish interpretation of the Scriptures. Rabbi Cohen, co-chairman of the Israeli-Vatican dialogue commission and chief rabbi of Haifa, is the first non-Christian ever invited to address the Synod of Bishops. He will speak the second day of the Oct. 5-26 synod at the Vatican. The invitation "brings with it a message of love, coexistence and peace for generations," Rabbi Cohen told Catholic News Service in an interview in his Jerusalem office in late September. "We see in [the] invitation a kind of declaration that [the church] intends to continue with the policy and doctrine established by Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II, and we appreciate very deeply this declaration."

New Tensions for Vietnam Catholics

Government authorities in Vietnam have started a construction project for a park and library at the former apostolic nunciature, a building Catholics have been trying to have returned to them. Local church sources told the Asian church news agency UCA News that beginning early on the morning of Sept. 19 hundreds of local police, mobile units and plainclothes security officials erected iron barriers blocking off the street from the former nunciature. Two trucks and a crane were taken into the compound, they said, and workers toppled the iron fence in front of the building in the morning and moved some furniture out of it. State-run media reported that district government authorities announced their construction plan at the nunciature on Sept. 18, saying they would develop a flower garden on the 1,370-square-yard compound. The nunciature building will be repaired and renovated for use as a library, the report said. Authorities confiscated the building in 1959, after which the Vatican's delegate to Vietnam shifted to Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, in what was then South Vietnam.

Cardinal Urges Congress to Reject Abortion Bill

Declaring that "we can't reduce abortions by promoting abortion," the chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities has urged members of Congress to reject the proposed Freedom of Choice Act. In a Sept. 19 letter, Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia said the legislation "would counteract any and all sincere efforts by government to reduce abortions in our country," force all Americans to subsidize abortion with their tax dollars and overturn "modest restraints and regulations on the abortion industry" in all 50 states. The Freedom of Choice Act was introduced in both the House and Senate April 19, 2007, the day after the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act in Gonzales v. Carhart. Although no action has been taken in either house of Congress since then, "the Catholic bishops of the United States are gravely concerned about any possible consideration" of the legislation in the final weeks of the 110th Congress, Cardinal Rigali said.

Donations Fall for Storm Relief

Destruction from the hurricanes and tropical storms that have devastated U.S. communities and Caribbean nations in the past few months has exceeded the damage Hurricane Katrina inflicted on New Orleans in 2005, but donations for relief efforts this time are drastically less. "I believe a combination of the recent economic crisis and the media attention, or lack thereof, have presented challenges to us," said Patricia Hvidston, senior director of development for Catholic Charities USA. "We have gotten donations, and we're grateful to everyone who has made donations, but it's significantly lower than the response to Katrina." Donations to Catholic Charities in response to Katrina averaged $890 each from more than 180,000 contributors, but donations in response to the series of storms that have crippled communities along the Gulf of Mexico, Florida and elsewhere have averaged only $159 each from fewer than 1,000 supporters, Hvidston reported. Meanwhile, Catholic Relief Services has raised around $1 million for emergency aid for Cubans and Haitians affected during this hurricane season, but have fallen $1.5 million short of the agency's fundraising goal for those Caribbean nations, said Mark Melia, deputy vice president for charitable giving for the international relief agency.

Candidates to Address Al Smith Dinner

The Democratic and Republican presidential nominees both have agreed to be guest speakers at the Al Smith dinner Oct. 16 in New York, the Archdiocese of New York announced Sept. 17. The archdiocese said Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain would "share nonpartisan good humor before an audience of civic, business and social leaders." The joint appearance three weeks before the Nov. 4 election would continue a longtime tradition of presidential candidates addressing the annual fundraising dinner, a tradition that has been followed off and on in recent years. Cardinal Edward M. Egan of New York, who will preside at the dinner, called it "a splendid opportunity to recall the spirit of 'the happy warrior,' Gov. Al Smith." The annual dinner, now in its 63rd year, and the Smith Foundation have raised millions to provide support for the sick, poor and underprivileged in the New York area. In statements released by the New York Archdiocese, both Mr. McCain and Mr. Obama said they looked forward to the event.

Bishops Issue Ritual Book for Quinceañeras

Yaritza Alcazar, 15, is escorted down the aisle during her "quinceañera" at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in San Diego.

"Quinceañera," the coming-of-age celebration for girls turning 15 years old, has long been a tradition in Latino families in the United States and a number of Spanish-speaking countries as a rite of passage from childhood to adolescence. The custom expresses thanksgiving to God for the gift of life and asks for a blessing for the years ahead. On Sept. 19 the U.S. bishops published the bilingual "Order of the Blessing on the Fifteenth Birthday," designed to help U.S. communities celebrate this ritual within and outside Mass, according to a press release.

In a statement, Allan Figueroa Deck, S.J., executive director of the U.S.C.C.B.'s Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church, emphasized the importance of developing a ritual that "helps Latino Catholics celebrate their cultural heritage and build new bridges to other Catholics in their communities." The "quinceañera" ritual book may be ordered online at www.usccbpublishing.org.

Feuerherd Named Publisher of N.C.R.

Joe Feuerherd, who during the past 24 years has filled a variety of roles at The National Catholic Reporter, ranging from intern to Washington correspondent, has been appointed publisher and editor in chief of the paper. The appointment was announced Sept. 15 by Patrick Waide Jr., chairman of the N.C.R. board of directors. N.C.R. is an independent Catholic newspaper based in Kansas City, Mo. Feuerherd succeeds Rita Larivee, S.S.A., who was elected in August as general superior of her religious order, the Sisters of St. Ann. Sister Rita had been publisher for four years. Prior to that, she was associate publisher for seven years. "The board is pleased to have attracted to the publisher position an experienced journalist who is well versed in the publishing options available today via the Internet," said Mr. Waide in announcing Mr. Feuerherd's appointment. "We are also impressed with Joe's strong commitment throughout his adult life to peace and justice issues, as well as to the documents and spirit of Vatican II."

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Déjà Vu on Wall Street

'The meltdown of venerable investment houses might have been anticipated.'

AS A WRITER and teacher of history, I constantly have to grapple with the skepticism of friends, editors and, yes, students who invariably ask a dreaded two-word question: Who cares? This is a variation on the cheerful sentiments that Henry Ford expressed in the early 20th century, as his Model T's were transforming American culture. "History is bunk," Ford famously said. His view is not without adherents all these years later.

When I am asked why anybody ought to care about the past when the present has more than enough excitement, anxiety and pleasure, my answer is a variation of George Santayana's maxim that those who do not understand history are doomed to repeat it. That canned response rarely leaves me satisfied, or my inquisitors convinced.

And yet, didn't Santayana have it exactly right? The Wall Street meltdown surely proves that there is wisdom in even the most overused cliché.

If history were taken seriously in the business world, in the halls of Congress and the White House or in the editorial offices of some of the world's most important newsgathering organizations, then surely the headlines of mid-September would not have come as such a surprise. The meltdown of venerable investment houses might have been anticipated. The panicked response of government could have been foretold.

Why? Because it all happened before, in one way or another. The unfolding saga of greed gone wild is not new in U.S. history. Indeed, it is a theme in any honest survey of American history.

The problem is that every generation seems surprised to learn that it can happen again, that history has not been suspended, that the modern world has not solved the problems that have plagued capitalism and commerce over the centuries.

The world, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan once observed, is a dangerous place, but many people seem surprised to learn that this is so. He was referring more to the international scene than to domestic events, but a variation of his formula would seem appropriate now. The world is a dangerous and greedy place. And regrettably, many powerful people have chosen to believe that there is no connection between danger and greed.

Who are these naïve people? For starters, they are the members of Congress who "reformed" the financial industry eight years ago when they abolished the Glass-Steagall Act, an early New Deal initiative that established a wall separating the activities of insurance companies, investment firms and banks. The "reform" measure was sponsored by, among others, a senator from Texas named Phil Gramm. He, of course, was until recently a top economic adviser to Senator John McCain and was among the most dogmatic deregulators of the 1980s and 90s. He was hustled to the sidelines of Campaign 2008 a few weeks ago when he opined that the United States was a "nation of whiners." This expression was not considered appropriately sensitive at a time of economic distress, so Gramm was persuaded to sever his formal ties to the McCain campaign.

The Glass-Steagall Act was just one of many new laws put into place during something called the Great Depression. One would assume that most Americans have some familiarity with the troubles of the 1930s, which were caused by the irrational exuberance of the 1920s. One would assume that somewhere in the board rooms of corporate America and in the polished offices of leading politicians, somebody somewhere remembers hearing about how banks collapsed following their deregulated binge, and how it took laws like Glass-Steagall to restore the nation's confidence in its economic system.

Well, perhaps the 1930s are just, like, so yesterday. Perhaps the 21st century's hard-charging business leaders and politicians simply do not see the connection between the two eras of bank failures. Fair enough. How about the late 1980s, when after another round of deregulation the nation's savings and loan associations went belly up thanks to bad investments, imprudent choices and greedy leadership? The S&L scandal cost the taxpayers billions to clean up. But, it was said at the time, a stern lesson was learned: Dogmatic deregulation is bad for business!

The collapse of the dot-com craze of the late 1990s did not result in a catastrophe like today's. But it surely was a consequence of the belief by business leaders that they were smarter than their predecessors, that they had found a way to make the business cycle an anachronism. They were rather surprised to learn that they were not the first to delude themselves in such a way.

So we are left with the grim headlines of late summer 2008. Great financial institutions, shorn of the burdens of government oversight and set free to work their for-profit magic in the dynamic global marketplace, have collapsed under the weight of their greed, their incompetence and their imprudence. An institution they loathe, the federal government, has come to the rescue—yet again. This scenario may not sound familiar to the beneficiaries of the bailout, but for some of us it is, as the historian Yogi Berra put it, déjà vu all over again.

Meanwhile, the legacy of the subprime mortgage crisis will continue to claim innocent victims. To cite just one example, more than 70 companies, including Bank of America, have stopped underwriting loans for college students.

What a terrible irony: Thanks to one industry's ignorance, thousands of young people may never get the chance to go to college—where they might have learned a little bit about history. ***Terry Golway***

TERRY GOLWAY is the curator of the John Kean Center for American History at Kean University in Union, N.J.

PHOTO: CNS/SHANNON STAPLETON, REUTERS

A voter casts his ballot March 3 at a polling station at St. Dominic Catholic Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

Ten things to remember this fall

Conscience and the Catholic Voter

– BY MARY ANN WALSH –

THE 2008 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL and Congressional elections present a challenge for Catholics. Catholic voters may experience frustration because they agree with some of what the candidates seeking office say, but not with all that they espouse. The "life issues" are absolutely crucial as we make decisions. But what should voters do if an otherwise acceptable candidate falls short in concern for alleviating poverty or promoting just working conditions, access to health care and affordable housing?

MARY ANN WALSH, R.S.M., is the director of media relations for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C.

Catholic voters are wary when truth becomes a casualty of political warfare. Instead of seeking to bring together a polarized nation, campaigns too often exacerbate divisions. For the sake of a political victory, politicians often create enemies, and so the positions of opponents are twisted and missteps become a reason to pounce on them mercilessly. Faced with what some call "the choice between the evil of two lessers," thinking people may wonder, why vote at all.

With this in mind, here are 10 things to consider during the November election.

1. Not all issues are equal. Life issues are paramount among all issues because the right to life is fundamental. All other rights are based on it. Simply put: You can never take an innocent human life. Embryonic stem cell debates are not about scientific advancement; they are about sacrificing a life, however small, for possible scientific gain. The church bans embryonic stem cell research because tiny human beings are sacrificed for their stem cells. Instead, the church encourages adult stem cell research.

2. You have to work to become informed. A Catholic must be informed both intellectually and morally. Getting one's head around an issue means gathering information. A key source of information is the U.S. bishops' Web site (www.faithfulcitizenship.org), which includes the text of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility*, by the Catholic bishops of the United States. The statement explains the teachings of the church that can help Catholics form their consciences in order to make moral choices in public life.

Other good sources of information include the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and its companion, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. The *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* also provides updated teaching on issues such as justice and poverty. Many Catholic colleges offer programs and lectures on Catholic social thought, and church periodicals explore contemporary issues.

Principles of social justice ought to guide decision-making. Among them is the principle that people have a right to jobs that pay a living wage and a right to join a union. People have a right to affordable and accessible health care. In 1935, when the elderly were facing an economic crisis in the wake of the Depression, the government under President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized a basic right to a decent life, which led to the creation of the Social Security system. There is a comparable need today for access to health care.

Opposition to unjust discrimination is another principle of social justice. Racial, ethnic and religious discrimination, both overt and subtle, have no place in society. Catholics are called to defend against discrimination, whatever its roots. All are children of God, and all fellow citizens are our brothers and sisters. A society that discriminates unjustly diminishes not only the victims of discrimination but the society itself. Such discrimination seems to rise up whenever people feel economic or other pressures in society.

Our current immigration system violates those principles related to opposing discrimination, respecting the dignity of every person, defending the family and protecting the dignity and rights of workers. We need to replace a dysfunctional system with a system of immigration laws that work and can be enforced.

Being informed requires keeping up-to-date with developments in church teachings, such as what constitutes a just war or whether there is such a thing as a "legitimate preventive strike." Catholics must work to avoid war. People and nations have a right to defend themselves, but any response to aggression must be proportionate. If someone shoots you, you cannot annihilate his or her whole family or country to send a message. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* also points out that the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. Given the power of nuclear weapons at a nation's disposal today, it is hard to conceive a justification for their use.

Church teaching on the death penalty also has developed in recent decades. The catechism states that the death penalty is not acceptable if there are alternative means to keep a criminal from harming others. Penal sentences, such as life sentences without parole, protect society and make the death penalty seem to be based more on a desire for vengeance than for justice.

3. God speaks through our hearts and minds. Wise decision-making speaks through the stirrings of the heart, which reflect lived experience. Hearts are moved, for example, when people see immigrants huddled together waiting for employment so they can support their families. They are moved when shoppers overhear people without health insurance ask a pharmacist if a non-prescription medicine will cure strep throat (it won't). Hearts are moved when people read that a 12-year-old without dental care died of a brain infection that started as an abscessed tooth. Scriptures in defense of widows and orphans call us to be compassionate, to have a preferential option for the poor. Stirrings of the heart must influence our vote.

Compassionate responses move our consciences to make moral decisions. As the bishops say in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, conscience is more than a mere "feeling" about what we should or should not do (and it certainly does not justify doing whatever we want). Conscience is God's own voice revealing to us what we must do. As prideful and imperfect individuals, we can sometimes mistake the voice of our own wants and desires for God's voice. So we must test our consciences by asking whether they are in harmony with the truths of our faith. A proper-

ly developed Christian conscience will always be in accord with the teaching of the church. The bishops identify (No. 18) three key steps to forming one's conscience:

> …this begins with a willingness and openness to seek the truth and what is right by studying Sacred Scripture and the teaching of the Church as contained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. It is also important to examine the facts and background information about various choices. Finally, prayerful reflection is essential to discern the will of God.

4. Fidelity to conscience is more important than party loyalty. Thinking Catholics cannot blindly accept party platforms or the positions of candidates. We have to examine all the issues before voting. Saying, "I always vote Democratic" (or Republican) is an easy but unintelligent approach.

5. Simplistic reasoning is simpleminded. It can be difficult to see clearly in an election year. Voter guides abound, but many are written from a particular political persuasion and some manipulate church teachings to support a partisan cause. The publications of some religious groups read like the Democratic or Republican Party at prayer. Simplistic voter guides that view life as a series of black-and-white choices are unrealistic. Life is not that easy.

6. Gut feelings may be your conscience speaking. Often we cannot articulate a concern, but we still feel it inside. One sign of a gut reaction is becoming uncomfortable with an initial decision. We cannot rest with it, or, as we sometimes say, just can't stomach it. It does not feel right. This is a call to reconsider a decision or a usual way of acting, to consider whether we have formed our conscience. Having done so, we need to reflect on what God is calling us to do. In politics it means questioning traditional party loyalty because we sense something is just not right.

7. Politics is the art of the possible. Voters need to evaluate the likely effectiveness of proposed policies and whether a candidate is fully committed to them and can act on them. "These decisions should take into account a candidate's commitments, character, integrity, and ability to influence a given issue. In the end, this is a decision to be made by each Catholic guided by a conscience formed by Catholic moral teaching" (*Faithful Citizenship*, No. 37).

8. Your neighbor can be an ocean away. As the world grows smaller, the neighborhood does not stop at the corner or even the shore. Global solidarity is a fact of modern life. Such awareness should prompt actions to prevent international violence. The motto of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, "If you want peace, work for justice," rings truer every day. Poverty and discrimination breed social unrest. Until ordinary Americans face their obligation to help not only those in need here but also those abroad,

the United States will leave itself vulnerable to smoldering rage all over the globe.

9. The political process begins long before you pull the lever in the voting booth. In the Internet age, political involvement can be a matter of a few keystrokes. It is not overly time-consuming to answer polls, send messages and ask the hard questions. It is also easy to contact campaigns and party headquarters. It takes more time, but it is even more helpful to attend rallies and discuss thoughtful questions, to bring up important issues and elevate the overall discussion. Politics is too important to leave to politicians.

10. We hear God in prayer. In our noisy world it is often hard to hear the voice of God. We can, however, create a climate where we can hear God speak through our own selves. Sometimes this happens in church, when we are pulled away from life's worries and concerns for an hour. It happens too whenever we can remove ourselves from the media bombardment and other noise around us. We need to make time to contemplate our world and move toward an inner peace. We need to bring our political decisions to God.

Standing with God leads us to do the right thing. A

Mark Judge on love, theology and rock 'n' roll, at americamagazine.org/connects.

Days of Awe

Forgiveness, atonement and the High Holy Days

BY ARTHUR SCHNEIER

THE JEWISH TRADITION has four new year observances, of which the two most notable are Passover, which celebrates the birth of the Jewish people, and Rosh Hashanah, which celebrates the birth of the world. "On this day the world was created," we read in our Rosh Hashanah liturgy. Rosh Hashanah is a universal moment that demands actions to bring about universal reconciliation. In the Jewish tradition, reconciliation entails a dual process: a personal act of forgiveness by the penitent and an attempt to establish a new relational order between God and man and between man and man.

Following Rosh Hashanah (Sept. 30 this year), Jews observe 10 days of repentance. Maimonides (1135-1204), the great Jewish sage, warns that it is insufficient merely to ask for forgiveness; what is desired is an act of reconciliation.

Pope Benedict with former New York Mayor Ed Koch, left, and Rabbi Arthur Schneier, right, at the Park East Synagogue in New York.

PHOTO: CNS/GARY HERSHORN, REUTERS

Surviving the Holocaust forced me to ask myself many difficult questions. After experiencing the beast and best of man, I was in a quandary: Do I rebel against God or try to reconcile myself with God and a failed humanity? Do I give up or sustain my faith in man's ability to change? I opted to pay a price for survival with a determination to build bridges with people who face oppression and tyranny and to make conciliation and reconciliation my life's work. From helping to heal the tensions and rifts in Northern Ireland to bringing together warring sides of ethnic conflicts in southeastern Europe, my ecumenical colleagues from the Appeal of Conscience Foundation and I have sought to establish contact with religious communities between East and West who were cut off during the cold war and to make use of our common belief in God to help reconnect hostile nations. The Days of Awe, which call for penitence, prayer and charity, boost our capacity to reconcile ourselves with God and our fellow man.

Making Redemption Possible

The last two decades have witnessed numerous historic acts of forgiveness ranging from governments apologizing for the mistreatment of their citizens to religious leaders of one faith apologizing to those of other faiths for past misdeeds.

Apologies alone, however, do not suffice. The High Holy Days require us to be penitent and seek forgiveness if a wrong is committed against God and man. Even after one apologizes, if the apology is not accepted, then one must reach out to the injured party on two other occasions and attempt reconciliation. This law of reconciliation is complemented by a certain posture on the part of the injured parties, namely, being accepting of and merciful toward those who have wronged them.

Forgiveness without acceptance fails to change the facts on the ground. Acceptance without forgiveness allows the perpetuation of senseless martyrdom. Mercy and forgiveness together create conditions that make relational redemption possible. Just as God is the *Av Harachaman*, Merciful Father, so we must be merciful children in accepting sincere apologies.

The peak of the High Holidays is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (Oct. 9 this year). Atonement is the end result of a long process of repentance that moves from introspection to forgiveness and culminates in reconciliation: to be "at one" with God and man. When the process is completed, not only has the human being changed, but his relationship to those around him has been transformed. Yom Kippur is referred to as a "Sabbath of Sabbaths." As the Sabbath is a time when man reconciles himself with nature, Yom Kippur is a day when man reconciles himself with God and man.

Historic Acts of Forgiveness

It is the spirit of reconciliation—not just forgiveness—that stands behind the recent global gestures of rapprochement. The evolving bonds of friendship and cooperation between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people are historic in their ability to create new social and political ties between Jews and Catholics worldwide. The Second Vatican Council's

RABBI ARTHUR SCHNEIER is president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation and senior rabbi at the Park East Synagogue in New York City.

"Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" (1965) not only apologized for past mistreatment but tried to reconcile Christians with their "older brothers." Without its declaration that "we cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God," we would never have witnessed Pope John Paul II's visit to the Rome Synagogue and Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Park East Synagogue, my congregation, on the eve of this past Passover. The spirit of reconciliation made our meeting possible and allows Jews and Christians to see each other as having a shared mission in the world.

The admissions of guilt issued by Germany after the Holocaust were accepted by the State of Israel and the Jewish people because they came with concrete measures and attitudinal changes in an outreach to the Jewish people and the fledgling state.

Likewise, the apology issued by the apartheid state of South Africa was remarkable only because it was accepted by a leader who, having spent 20 years behind bars, could respond to his captors' apologies by saying: "The moment to bridge the chasms that divide us has come.... We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity—a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world." Without Nelson Mandela's acceptance and the government's willingness to change the facts on the ground, all the apologies in the world would not have sufficed.

Conversely, we still await a true reconciliation among Christians, Muslims and Jews, in which peace will triumph over the misunderstanding and demonizing of the other. Only then will Isaiah's words become a reality: "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" (Is 11:6).

May Rosh Hashanah, the anniversary of the creation of the world, inspire us to help perfect an imperfect world. May God spread the canopy of peace over us all. May we help God establish that peace through reconciliation, tolerance and reciprocal respect. A

Fall Books

What Holds Us Together

Beyond Tolerance

Searching for Interfaith Understanding in America

By Gustav Niebuhr
Viking. 256p $25.95
ISBN 9780670019564

If the second half of the 20th century could be called the ecumenical era, the initial decades of this century signal the start of the interfaith era. In the years following the promulgation of *Nostra Aetate*, the Catholic Church took early leadership in outreach efforts to other religious traditions, but it was a rather lonely leadership. Now many other Christian denominations have begun their own programs of interreligious dialogue. Since 2002, for example, an Anglican initiative convened by Archbishop Rowan Williams in collaboration with Georgetown University has sponsored an annual gathering in places like London, Doha, Washington, Sarajevo and Singapore. In both plenary assemblies and intensive working sessions, an invited group of Christian and Muslim scholars engage in the close study of Biblical and Koranic passages pertinent to a particular theological topic. Such sustained exegetical analysis can open rich veins of theological reflection, while the continuity of a core group of participants allows intellectual trust to build.

Recent interfaith outreach has not been limited to Christian initiatives. A letter issued last October by 138 Muslim leaders addressed to the heads of all major Christian denominations captured wide attention. Entitled "A Common Word Between Us and You," this document draws upon scriptural texts from both traditions, seeking to foster a conversation about the commonality of love of God and love of neighbor in Christianity and Islam. A number of those addressed, including Lambeth Palace and the Vatican, have taken steps to respond to the October letter. Organizations without a religious affiliation have also become quite active in this sphere. Institutions as diverse as the U.S. State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy, the World Economic Forum and the United Nations have launched programs to enhance interreligious and intercultural understanding. The social and political concerns sparked by recent world events and by accelerating demographic shifts have put interfaith relations on the agendas of many groups for whom this subject had not previously been a focus of attention.

Such institutional efforts, whether international or national, form the backdrop for the more personal, local and regional investigation that this volume undertakes. Crisscrossing the United States and interviewing adherents of many faiths, Gustav Niebuhr, former religion reporter for The New York Times and now a professor at Syracuse University, explores the proliferation of interfaith initiatives emerging on the American landscape. His visits to churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and gurudwaras (Sikh places of worship) and his conversations with clerics and congregants are chronicled in the recently released *Beyond Tolerance: Searching for Interfaith Understanding in America*.

The seeds for this instructive and insightful study can be found in the article Niebuhr and his colleagues wrote for The New York Times about random attacks

The Reviewers

Jane Dammen McAuliffe is president of Bryn Mawr College in Bryn Mawr, Pa.

Rev. Robert P. Imbelli, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, teaches systematic theology at Boston College.

William A. Barry, S.J., is co-director of the tertianship program for the New England Province of the Society of Jesus, a retreat director and editor of the periodical Human Development.

Vincent Ryan is a doctoral candidate in medieval history at Saint Louis University.

Angela O'Donnell teaches English, creative writing and Catholic studies at Fordham University in New York City.

Paul J. Fitzgerald, S.J., associate professor of religious studies at Santa Clara University, Calif., contributed "Married in the Eyes of God: a Spirituality for Interfaith Marriage" in the forthcoming *Companion to Marital Spirituality* (Peeters).

against Muslims, or those thought to be Muslims, in the immediate aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001. He found plenty of material for that article; but he also found the beginnings of a counter story, a story about gestures of support extended to Muslims and to mosques, gestures motivated by a desire to defend and to protect, to reaffirm the welcome and hospitality that continue to characterize so many American communities. In six brief chapters Niebuhr describes the deeds of Muslims, Sikhs, Jews, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and others whose efforts, great and small, are forging an interfaith culture of outreach, connection and dialogue. The significance of Niebuhr's title is captured in a key statement: "What holds society together is not just people who will tolerate others, but people who will actually go beyond that, to provide the glue that nourishes social relationships." This book is about that glue.

Although his focus is the present, Niebuhr's narrative is enriched with numerous references to the long history of American religious diversity. In one chapter we hear about the Cape Cod synagogue that began life in 1797 as a Congregationalist church. When because of diminished size, the Christian congregation could no longer sustain the building, the remaining few deeded it to the flourishing Jewish community of Falmouth. In a later chapter, Niebuhr takes us from Falmouth to Flushing and the 17th-century house of John Bowne, a local farmer who in concert with others rejected the restrictions that Governor Peter Stuyvesant placed upon Quaker immigrants to New Amsterdam. The group's 1657 protest statement, the Flushing Remonstrance, stands as a milestone in the evolving history of American religious liberty.

The people Niebuhr profiles, the examples of interfaith engagement that he describes and the various forms of mutual collaboration he catalogues make for a decidedly optimistic picture. Yet the author acknowledges that shadows exist and that powerful, negative currents exert their force. He quotes a young Muslim social entrepreneur who compares his relatively modest resources to those of Hezbollah; he recognizes that this nation's political rhetoric is bellicose and blinkered; and he acknowledges that many American Christians share the sentiments of those who cannot condone any dialogue that is not aimed at proselytization and conversion.

Nor does Niebuhr shy away from the hard questions: What is the ultimate advantage of all this interreligious activity? Other than the creation of personal friendships and the warm glow of mutuality, is there any lasting value or larger benefit? In his final chapter Niebuhr ventures a "measured yes" to these queries and quotes Albert Camus on the radical courage of clear-eyed hope. Camus's prescient words in a 1946 publication, *Neither Victims nor Executioners*, complement remarks made two years earlier by the renowned theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, the author's great-uncle. Well before the demographic changes wrought on the American religious landscape by mid-60s revisions in U.S. immigration legislation, the older Niebuhr had reflected upon religious diversity and its challenges: "The solution requires a very high form of religious commitment. It demands that each religion, or each version of a single faith, seek to proclaim its highest insights while yet preserving a humble and contrite recognition of the fact that all actual expressions of religious faith are subject to historical contingency and relativity." The older Niebuhr's great-nephew has amply demonstrated that this theological attitude now animates countless efforts of interfaith exchange and interaction. The verbal documentary that this volume offers allows us to hope in Camus' formidable gamble: "that words are stronger than bullets." ***Jane Dammen McAuliffe***

All He Ever Wanted

No Ordinary Fool

A Testimony to Grace

By John Jay Hughes

Tate Publishing. 344p $19.99 (paperback)

ISBN 9781606041826

In his most affective and affecting epistle, St. Paul wrote to the Philippians: "I give thanks to my God for all my memories of you" (Phil 1:3). Paul's eucharistic remembering came repeatedly to mind while reading the Rev. John Jay Hughes's lovely and moving autobiography, *No Ordinary Fool*. Calling to mind and narrating the events of his life—the sorrow of his mother's death when he was but six years old, the emotional and spiritual closeness to his Anglican priest father, his own ordination to the priesthood as an Episcopalian and subsequent reception into the full communion of the Catholic Church, his painful alienation from his beloved father, his fruitful scholarly and pastoral ministry—all this and more Hughes celebrates as a testimony to grace.

As a precocious and sensitive child, the loss of his mother at so early an age had and continues to have an indelible impact. He says simply: "From this blow I have never recovered. I belong today to the walking wounded."

Yet, from this unfathomable sorrow there came a conviction of grace. Let me allow Hughes to recount the decisive occurrence in his own voice:

> I can no longer recall the exact day when I discovered God in the darkness. I can fix it, however, before the age of nine. One day I realized the parting was not forever. With blinding certainty it came home to me that I would see my mother again, when God called me home. From that day to this the unseen spiritual world—the world of God, of the angels, of the saints, and of our beloved dead—has been real to me.... Decades later I realized that this insight was the beginning of my priestly vocation.

Hughes spent six happy years as a priest in the Anglican Communion, mostly in parish ministry. Four aspects of that priestly service continue to characterize his approach to priestly ministry to this day. They have relevance not only for priests, but for all those seeking to respond generously to the Lord's call.

First, early in his ministry he made a commitment to tithe whatever income he received. To his surprise he found the practice of tithing not a burden, but a

source of blessing. He writes: "Since it is based on faith (trusting that our needs will be taken care of if we give away the first portion of our income), it deepens faith. It enables us to use money sacramentally, by making something material a vehicle of the spiritual—gratitude."

Second, Hughes soon became convinced of the need for a sustained prayer life as the soil of fruitful ministry and, indeed, of all growth in Christ. Moreover, this discipline must be practiced in season and out of season, whatever feelings of consolation or desolation accompany one's prayer. As he writes wisely: "Neglect of this fundamental truth is the root cause of much of the Church's present difficulties."

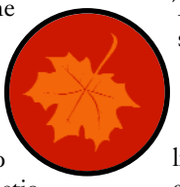
Third, from teenage years the practice of confession has been crucial to his spiritual life. Indeed, one of the sorrows he experienced in becoming Roman Catholic before the Second Vatican Council was that he did not hear pronounced the consoling words of absolution, which he had heard and rejoiced in as an Episcopalian. Instead, Catholics before the council were instructed to pray the Act of Contrition while the priest mumbled absolution in Latin. The irony, of course, is that the linguistic intelligibility of the sacrament has also witnessed a decline in its celebration—though there are welcome signs of a rediscovery of this great grace.

Finally, a practice that Hughes learned from his Anglican mentors and which he has followed faithfully is never to preach on Sunday without a written text before him. The obvious advantage is that one thereby disciplines oneself to a clear beginning, middle and ending to structuring the interconnections among them. Those who have read Father Hughes's published homilies know the care and the imagination they exhibit. He tells us that in homilies he shuns "moralism." He explains that even when preaching the moral law, he presents it "not as the standard we must meet before God would love and bless us, but rather as the description of our grateful response to the blessings and love bestowed upon us by our loving heavenly Father as a free gift."

Father Hughes writes with passion and conviction, spicing his recollections with telling incidents and wry humor, often enough directing his wit at his own

false steps and follies. But it is the author's Jacob-like wrestling with the call to Catholicism that provides the distinctive drama of the narrative.

In his early 20s he began to wonder whether the Anglican tradition had not in fact splintered itself from the Catholic Church, a questioning that his high-church father dismissed as "Roman fever." Resolved for a time, the questions re-emerged forcefully after his ordination as an Episcopal priest. The stumbling block was his suspicion of exaggerated papal claims. But as he studied and consulted about them, he found them less an obstacle than he had feared.



The decision, in 1960, to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church was motivated by no emotional appeal or aesthetic attraction to the preconciliar church, but solely by his persuasion of the truth of its claim. In his view this entailed no repudiation of his past nor of the abundant graces he had received. As he wrote his father at the time, "It was not so much that I had come to find Anglicanism wrong, as incomplete." But all efforts at explanation were spurned; the elder Hughes barred his son from the family home; and, though correspondence continued between them, they never saw each other again.

Hughes's subsequent studies in Innsbruck (where he attended the lectures of Karl Rahner, S.J.) and in Münster (where he heard and greatly appreciated Joseph Ratzinger) were followed by his conditional ordination as a Catholic priest. His account of his many years of priestly ministry in the postconciliar church as teacher, theologian and pastor will elicit respect, gratitude and frequent moments of recognition as readers recall their own experiences and enter (as I did) into silent, yet spirited conversation with the author.

One will find much to relish and to learn from in this marvelous testimony to grace. Eucharistic remembering provides the *cantus firmus* that inspires and sustains Hughes's honest and joyful witness. His book evokes, in an almost sacramental way, what St. Paul saw to be the fruit of grace: "an overflow of thanksgiving to the glory of God."

Robert P. Imbelli

The Noonday Demon

Acedia and Me

A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life

By Kathleen Norris

Riverhead Books. 352p $25.95
ISBN 9781594489969

Leave it to Kathleen Norris to make an ancient and almost unknown word relevant to modern readers, believers or not. The poet and author of a number of best selling memoirs, such as *The Cloister Walk* and *Dakota*, which brought the wisdom of the desert monks and nuns and of the Rule of St. Benedict to bear on modern life, here brings close attention to her own experience and her immense reading to bear on exploring the nature of acedia, the "noonday demon," as the basic temptation besetting the modern world. True to her calling as a poet she notes that the word acedia at root means a lack of care. In the noonday sun the monks of the desert were tempted to give up caring for their way of life and eventually for God. Norris is careful to distinguish acedia from depression, with which it has many similarities. She comes at the distinction from a number of different directions, among them the following: "A crucial distinction between depression and acedia is that the former implies a certain level of anguish over one's condition, while in the latter it remains a matter of indifference."

In an account of the "noonday demon" by the desert monk Evagrius Ponticus (A.D. 345-99) she found an explanation of her experience as a teenager overwhelmed by an ennui that left her with a sense that nothing really mattered. Over the years she collected references to it and during the writing found herself reflecting not only on its effects on monks and nuns, but also on writers like herself and her husband, on commitments such as her own marriage and on modern life. Readers walk with her through life in a small town in South Dakota, a difficult but deeply loving marriage; her husband's bouts with alcoholism and severe illness and finally his death; her widowhood; and her dialogue with ancient and modern writers who have grappled seriously with life's ultimate issues. It is a bracing and enlightening journey.

Along the way the reader learns a good bit of healthy spirituality and theology as an antidote to much of the shallow tidbits of both that pervade modern life. Many have banished the word "sin," for example, but often its real meaning is ter-

Listen to an interview with Kathleen Norris, at americamagazine.org/podcast.

ribly distorted, not least because of a sadly truncated theological and catechetical teaching. A biblically sound notion of sin has to start with the knowledge of God's abiding love. Sin can be understood only by those who realize that they are the apple of God's eye, made in God's own image. In other words, a Christian understanding of sin begins with a healthy self-regard. Only from that viewpoint can we see our sinfulness as a falling short of our best selves. Norris also notes that acedia was one of the eight bad thoughts that are not sins themselves but can, if they are not discerned and fought, lead us to fall short of our calling to be images of God. In time these bad thoughts became the seven deadly sins.

Norris writes that the shift from "thoughts" to "sins" led to an emphasis on acts rather than underlying dispositions. The monks expected to be besieged by bad thoughts; hence they encouraged paying attention to them to note their provenance and their outcome so as to discern them as leading human beings to becoming less human, less whole, less caring.

Jesus himself had noted that the problem was not so much our acts, but our dispositions: "For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile" (Mt 15:19-20). Also, in the move to seven deadly sins acedia was dropped. Norris believes that acedia's loss of prominence allowed it to continue its deadly work with less restraint. I was reminded of C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*, in which Screwtape reminds his young devil nephew that their policy is to keep their existence secret.

Commitment to a profession, to a marriage, to an athletic or artistic career or to any way of life requires the hard work of practice, often boring practice. It is such a commitment that acedia attacks so insidiously. When she was a teenager, Norris played the flute but hated to practice. Her teacher told her that she was an amateur. That's the difference between someone who can bear the discipline of daily practice and routine and someone who cannot; the latter remains an amateur in the game of life. "The early Christian monks staked their survival on their willingness to be as God had made them, creatures of the day

to day." They saw clearly that the antidote to acedia's blandishments was commitment to the discipline of developing good habits, another name for which is virtues. Our age flees from such commitment and finds, like ancient Rome in its decline, that it needs "bread and circuses" in order to stave off boredom.

Acedia and Me is not a book for the amateurs of life, but for those who take seriously their creation as images of God—God who cares enough to create our world and us and to pitch his tent within it and with us. For the sake of God's world Norris has written this book. I hope that many will take it to heart.

William A. Barry

'Armed Pilgrimage'

Fighting for the Cross

Crusading to the Holy Land

By Norman Housley

Yale Univ. Press. 356p $38
ISBN 9780300118889

The Crusades are typically thought of as the wars between Christians and Muslims in the Middle East that occurred during the 12th and 13th centuries. While this was their most famous manifestation, it was not the only one. They also involved conflicts against the Moors in Iberia, heretics in southern France, pagans in northern Europe and the political opponents of the papacy on the Italian peninsula. Yet, though medieval Christians viewed all these various campaigns as crusades, fighting in the Holy Land was understood as being the ultimate form of crusading. In his latest book on the subject, the prolific Norman Housley, a professor of history at the University of Leicester, provides a full immersion into the origins, experience and impact of crusading to the Middle East.

Since the events of Sept. 11, 2001, there has been a noticeable surge of books on the Crusades. The "politically incorrect," "idiots" and even those with short attention spans have all had titles aimed at satisfying their apparent thirst for crusading knowledge. In contrast to most of these recent tomes, however, Housley's book is not a narrative history of the

Crusades. While he does provide a short overview of the various crusading campaigns in the East so that the average reader has the foundation to proceed, his primary aim is to determine what crusading meant for the men and women involved.

For many, the decision to go on crusade was rooted in personal piety. We tend to think of crusading as a holy war, but medieval people perceived it primarily as a new type of pilgrimage. Pilgrimages were an increasingly popular spiritual activity during the 11th century, and Jerusalem was considered the holiest place on earth. Pope Urban II's fusion of penitential and pilgrimage language with warfare in proclaiming the First Crusade received great support throughout Europe. His message resonated especially with those who felt weighed down by an aching sense of sinfulness—namely the knightly class. While the audience was ripe, recruitment efforts were still necessary to secure the involvement of potential enlistees. Crusade preachers employed a variety of techniques and approaches. Some argued what a great bargain crusading was, since the punishment for one's sins would be wiped away in exchange for participating in the expedition. Other preachers used motifs that played particularly to aristocratic audiences. For example, the Holy Land was portrayed as Christ's fief and the crusaders as his vassals, who needed to regain their lord's lost domain.

The fact that they were motivated chiefly by piety does not mean that all crusaders maintained entirely pure motives. Some certainly enlisted to gain worldly riches. Others probably saw this as a secondary advantage to taking the cross. However, the old argument that crusading was mainly undertaken for financial reasons is no longer viable. As Housley convincingly demonstrates, crusading was a financially draining enterprise. At different times the crown or the church tried to help underwrite the costs, but most crusaders had to rely chiefly on family resources to fund their expeditions. Cash was crucial, and to raise it lands were often sold for a fraction of their actual value. Many were bankrupted by crusading.

Others have claimed that crusading was mostly for younger sons who had no prospects for inheritance. It was the "land" part of the Holy Land that moved their hearts. Studies of the crusaders' backgrounds, however, have indicated that the oldest sons were the most likely to participate. On the other hand, if the Crusades were really a thinly veiled land-grab by impecunious younger sons, the evidence does not support such a view. When the First Crusade ended, after venerating the Holy Sepulcher most of the remaining participants returned home.

While the sections on preparation and motivation might be the most interesting parts of the book, the chapters on travel and warfare are enlightening on a number of issues. Gaining converts was a minimal concern for either side. Famine and disease were often more deadly than combat. The crusaders' horses were extremely important. The Muslims understood their great military value and began targeting these animals. The Christian sources often indicate how crippling food shortages were for both the crusaders and their steeds and sometimes discuss casualties in terms of horses lost. An anecdote about a crusader lamenting having to ride a donkey (since all his horses had perished) is amusing, but also quite telling.

Though it is published by an academic press, *Fighting for the Cross: Crusading to the Holy Land* is accessible to a general audience. Housley regularly incorporates quotations from contemporary sources, which, along with an assortment of maps, photographs and illustrations, further enhance the average reader's understanding of different aspects of crusading. The book loses some momentum in the last chapter and ends somewhat abruptly. A more focused conclusion or summation would have been useful. Also, the subtitle of the book is slightly misleading, since three of the key expeditions that Housley considers had ultimately little to do with the Holy Land. The Fourth Crusade was permanently sidetracked to Constantinople, and the Fifth and Seventh Crusades were focused on Egypt. But as a title, "Crusading to the eastern Mediterranean" doesn't have quite the same ring. Clearly, these minor shortcomings detract little from a study that succeeds in providing us with a better understanding of what the experience of crusading entailed.

Vincent Ryan

Wisdom From the Beasts

The Truro Bear and Other Adventures

Poems and Essays

By Mary Oliver
Beacon Press. 96p $23
ISBN 9780807068847

Mary Oliver's newest book, *The Truro Bear and Other Adventures: Poems and Essays*, will certainly please connoisseurs of her work and will likely win her new readers as well. The 35 poems and prose sketches in the collection that have been previously published present themselves as familiar friends to Oliver fans, while the 10 new selections bear the stamp of her signature style. The pleasures that await the reader just discovering the work of the Pulitzer-prize-winning poet are those delivered by her previous 18 volumes: her keen eye for telling detail, the surprise of the unexpected and, most important, the authoritative voice that portrays our world as both ordinary and enchanted, full of natural beauty and supernatural holiness, and marvelous in its many perfections.

The Truro Bear covers familiar terrain in terms of genre, yet Oliver makes use of the traditions she borrows from in interesting ways. The strain most evident in the poems is that of environmentalism, a subgenre deeply embedded in American literary tradition. Oliver's poems hearken back to her 19th-century mentors—particularly Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman—in their attentiveness to the natural world and what it teaches us about ourselves; and yet they are compellingly current, given the fragile condition of the earth and its creatures. Her prose sketch "At Herring Cove" begins as a description of the beach, Thoreauvian in its detailed account of the sand's composition and the nine-foot rise and fall of the tide, but then moves in an unanticipated direction as the speaker recites a litany of unnatural articles—including beer cans, plastic bottles and hypodermic needles—that wash up on the shore. The catalogue grows more disturbing as she names not only the refuse we release into the environment but also the creatures it has killed: "Dead harbor seal,

dead gull, dead merganser, dead gannet...dead dovekie in winter." The list, with its anaphoric repetition, seems to sound the death knell of nature and identifies human waste as, at best, a contributing cause.

This characterization of animals as victims of human indifference is counterbalanced in the volume with those of a very different sort. Another generic model from which Oliver borrows is the fable. True to the ancient genre, the animals in many of these poems assume human characteristics, including the ability to speak, and each tale imparts a moral usually having to do with some human folly and its corresponding virtue. Yet, again, she does not conform strictly to the genre. The conversations are mediated by a very human poet who intervenes in the natural world, self-consciously so. As in poems by her predecessors Whitman and Frost, wherein mockingbirds and ovenbirds speak, the poet serves as interpreter, presenting what the beasts have to teach us in language the reader can understand.

The use of personification in the collection performs the important function of reminding us that human beings are but one part of a much larger community of creatures, but overuse of the technique runs the risk of sentimentality. This is most evident in the 13 pieces that feature the poet's dog, Percy (named after the poet, Shelley) and serve as the final movement of the volume. "The Percy Poems" can be funny and sweet (particularly for dog lovers) in the dog's-eye view of the world they present, and there is poignancy in some of them. In the fourth poem of the series, the poet, who is grieving the death of her beloved companion, finds solace in the simple actions of feeding and playing with her little dog. Clearly, he lends her life order, continuity and purpose at a moment when the reality of loss has her teetering on the brink of chaos. But the speaker's attachment to him sometimes borders on fondness in the old-fashioned sense of the word. Poets who write poems about their children run a similar risk: a child's amusing sayings are rarely as charming to strangers as they are to their smitten parents.

By the same token, there is a frankness and vulnerability in the voice of these poems as the speaker surrenders, unabashed, to this humble creature who enchants her. Indeed, along with listening, the attitude the poet most frequently assumes is that of kneeling before the creation in recognition of its holiness. This tenderness is reminiscent of the work of the Persian poet Rumi, another of Oliver's masters, who once wrote: "There are a hundred ways to kiss the ground," a line she echoes elsewhere in her poems. And kiss the ground she does, over and over again.

The most compelling pieces in *Truro Bear* are those wherein the poet acknowledges the dark, inscrutable qualities of the creatures she meets ("Alligator Poem" and "Swoon," among others). These pieces provide a corrective to the domesticated view of the natural world prevalent in other poems and bear witness to nature's power and mystery, qualities bound up with our own mortality and ineffable destiny. The speaker in "Alligator Poem" survives an encounter with death "in beautiful Florida" and describes her resurrection, amazed at "how I rose from the ground/ and saw the world as if for the second time,/ the way it really is." This is

the redemptive vision the best of Mary Oliver's poems offer, that of a fallen world implicitly governed by an unnamed god of second chances. Like Lazarus before her, the poet experiences the inexhaustible possibilities of nature in meeting its limit head on, and lives to tell the tale he did not. ***Angela O'Donnell***

Constantly Renewed

The Church

The Evolution of Catholicism

By Richard P. McBrien
HarperOne. 528p $29.95
ISBN 9780061245213

Is the Catholic Church a lifeboat or a lighthouse? In the storms that wrack the world, is the church the means of salvation for its members alone, or a beacon that would lead all to safe haven? The distinguished scholar and professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, whose previous works include *Catholicism*, *Ministry* and *Lives of the Popes*, Richard P. McBrien offers us a history of ecclesiologies—that is, a review and an analysis of the church's evolving self-understanding over time.

Too vast a project for a single volume, this book follows Karl Rahner's division of the history of the church into three great eras and focuses mainly on the third, our own present situation, after briefly presenting the first and second. Rahner identified two axial moments when the church recognized it was changing radically: the first was the Council of Jerusalem (c. 50 A.D.), when the Jewish Christian movement entered into the Greco-Roman world; the second was the Second Vatican Council (1963-65), when the movement became a world church.

Among the chief purposes of any work of history (besides telling a good story well) is to locate its readers in the present and to orient them toward the future; here, McBrien helps the reader to understand the church in the post-Vatican II era. Since there is no little debate within the church as to exactly what the council intended, much of the present volume is a close reading of texts, within the context of their composition and the immediate history before the council, but with regular

recourse to the person of Jesus, seen in the Gospels and epistles of the early church.

McBrien sketches the current debates about the nature and mission of the church as a polarity between two guiding and underlying images: the church as people of God and the church as communion. Advocates of the former image would put the emphasis on the mission of the church *ad extra*—the church as an agent of God for the salvation of humankind. Advocates of the latter image put the emphasis on the life of the church *ad intra*—the church gathered in orthodox worship and adoration of the triune God. McBrien adopts a both/and position, showing how the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" and the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" are organically linked and mutually necessary. More, to be a church for the whole world obliges Catholics to repair the fissures that divide the visible body of Christ by seeking ever fuller degrees of communion with the Orthodox and Protestants. Here McBrien accepts Pope John Paul II's invitation, issued in *Ut unum sint* (1995), to imagine a renewed primacy and collegiality that could promote Christian unity in authentic, apostolic faith.

Like the author's other great works, *The Church* is encyclopedic. It covers a vast range of topics, including authority and ministry, magisterial teaching and reception, sacraments and liturgy. In each case, McBrien provides not only a sense of the development of tradition but also a certain breadth of opinion by important (mostly Catholic) theologians, as well as a careful explication of official church teaching on the issue at hand. Such breadth typically precludes depth, yet while the sketches are often quite brief, there are ample bibliographical notes to point readers toward further investigation and study. McBrien is particularly helpful in providing the interested reader with references at different levels of complexity: for example, to explore the cultural context and the style of conciliar language, one could read the book by John O'Malley, S.J., *Four Cultures of the West*; or one could get the gist of the argument in O'Malley's article "The Style of Vatican II" (**America**, 2/24/03).

Richard P. McBrien on "What Theology Is and Is Not," at americamagazine.org/pages.

While he does a fine job of sketching out many ecclesiologies from across the theological spectrum, from conservative to progressive, McBrien tips his hand in favor of one: that of Yves Congar, O.P., to whom he dedicates the book and whom he calls "the most important ecclesiologist of the twentieth century and probably of the entire history of the Church." Congar anticipated Vatican II by illuminating six major components that make up the reality of the church. (1) As the people of God, the church is constantly renewed by the active participation of all her members, lay, religious and clerical alike. (2) Hierarchical authority is servant leadership. (3) The church is an instrument for the eschatological victory of God. (4) The church is continually called to institutional and communal reform in head and members. (5) As a communion of local churches, the universal church's structures of community and authority serve her mission. And (6) the church is ecumenical in nature and scope.

Key to appreciating Congar's ecclesiological thought is to understand it as a consequence of his pneumatology: it is the Holy Spirit, sent by the Father through the Son, who animates, informs, reforms and guides the church, so that the same Holy Spirit, working within and beyond the visible limits of the church, can lead people in faith to the Son, who in turn shows them the Father.

Ideally suited for undergraduate courses and for the educated nonspecialist, this is a hopeful book. As the author candidly sketches out the pastoral challenges to, and the internal tensions within, the church today, he is not pessimistic. Neither is he optimistic as he recalls the great gifts of the Holy Spirit that inspired those papal and conciliar texts that point the way forward for the church in the new millennium. Rather, he is hopeful as he urges the church to conform itself to the pattern of Christ, the paschal mystery, whereby the church, trusting fully and finally in God alone, can die to forms of being and doing that are no longer apt. Such "reform in head and members," guided by the Spirit, will allow the church to serve as a renewed instrument for God's ongoing project, the salvation of humankind and the perfection of all creation.

Paul J. Fitzgerald

Classified

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For more information or to apply please contact Rev. Jim Urbanic, C.P.P.S., P.O. Box 339, Liberty, MO 64069; Ph: (816) 781-4344. E-mail: JimUrbanic@aol.com. Applications and contact information submitted by Oct. 20, 2008.

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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

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Letters

Time for a Boycott

Regarding your editorial on the situation in India ("Persecution in Orissa," 9/22): it seems to me that much of the impetus for the growing religious intolerance in India stems from the booming economic strength of India that has empowered ethnic and religious majorities to express themselves in unprecedented ways. Moral education has not kept pace with this growing economy, and such education is not likely to occur until economic incentives are brought into the equation. These can encourage a spirit of tolerance, interfaith cooperation and education. Perhaps a worldwide boycott of Indian goods and services, supported by religious leaders, would encourage India's political leaders to work more fervently to rekindle the vision of unity that was so brilliantly fostered by Mahatma Gandhi and his followers.

Dan Callahan, S.A.
Toronto, Ont.

Higher Learning

Re the Rev. Terrance W. Klein's "A Space for Inquiry" (9/15): I believe that Father Klein has underrated the powerful role that Newman Centers and other chaplaincies have played in recent years. Having spent nearly 40 years in Catholic, public and other private universities, I am of the opinion that staff persons serving schools that are not Catholic regularly find themselves in very important situations and are often much better prepared to meet students where they live and work. I also have experienced strong and sensitive relationships with university administrators and faculty, as these professionals have discovered just how important church people are in assisting them in teaching and forming students.

Both Catholic and non-Catholic institutions share a task, and each seeks to manage that task well. I see no reason to think that asking the important questions, and finding people who are expected to respond to them, is easier or more effective in a Catholic institution. Actually, I have experienced just the contrary.

Patrick LaBelle, O.P.
Stanford, Calif.

Still Standing

The Sulpician Fathers are grateful to **America** for publishing a glowing birthday tribute to Father Jean-Jacques Olier ("Christians Who Can Breathe And Laugh," by William Thompson-Uberuaga, 9/15). Thompson-Uberuaga is correct in writing that we are a small community today without the national prominence we may once have had. Nevertheless, as our Web site (www.sulpicians.org) shows, we are not "down to two" seminaries in this country. The Holy Spirit, who inspired Father Olier, continues to call us to find new ways to serve the church by serving the priesthood.

(Very Rev.) Thomas R. Ulshafer, S.S.
Acting Provincial Superior
Society of St. Sulpice
Baltimore, Md.

Educational Advances

Reading "Religious Life in the Age of Facebook," by Richard G. Malloy, S.J. (7/14), I emphatically disagreed that students today simply "can't handle" Rahner or any other rigorous theological text. Students today are asked to synthesize a wider array of data and take into account many different perspectives. The great educational advances of the day have been around the process of thinking itself—not merely the memorization of stories from previous generations, but the ability to process critically and reflect on the world around us (including organized religion).

Also, Father Malloy is right that students today are exploring different religious traditions, but I do not understand why that is a negative. There is something to be said for knowing one's own tradition; but ultimately a blending of world religions is conducive to intercultural understanding, cooperation and peace.

Justin McMahon
Chicago, Ill.

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God's Banquet

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A), Oct. 12, 2008

Readings: Is 25:6-10; Ps 23:1-6; Phil 4:12-14, 19-20; Mt 22:1-14

"The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son" (Mt 22:2)

ART BY TAD DUNNE

IN BIBLICAL TIMES when ancient Israelites tried to imagine what the fullness of God's kingdom would be like, one of their favorite images was a banquet. Today's passage from Isaiah 25 provides a good example. The prophet pictures God's kingdom as a grand banquet with "a feast of rich food and choice wines." In a society in which such food and drink were in short supply, the image was powerful. The one who supplies this extraordinary meal is "the Lord of hosts," and it is open to "all peoples." It takes place on "this mountain," most likely the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which itself was an image of God's dwelling place. At this banquet God will destroy death, end all suffering and bring about salvation. At this banquet the hopes of God's people will be fulfilled.

Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my shepherd") is most famous for its pastoral imagery of God's care for us, leading us through the dark and dangerous places in our lives. The second half of the psalm, however, shifts the imagery and portrays God as the host at a lavish banquet. In the ancient Near East the two images—shepherd and host—were often applied to kings. Psalm 23 uses them to describe God as the king of kings and lord of lords.

The third banquet image in this Sunday's readings, the parable of the royal banquet in Matthew 22, develops the imagery further to make two important points about God's kingdom. We have to accept the invitation to the banquet, and we have to behave in an appropriate manner when we are allowed in.

In Matthew's version of the parable, the invitation is to a royal wedding feast for a king's son. Most people invited to such a banquet would feel honored and make every effort to attend. What is peculiar in this case is that those initially invited (the "A list" guests) refuse to come. They do not even bother to give good excuses, and they proceed to abuse and mistreat those who were sent to deliver the invitation.

We know from the start that this parable concerns the kingdom of heaven. In what is a kind of allegory, the king is God, the servants are the prophets, and the ones refusing their invitation are those who reject Jesus' invitation to enter God's kingdom. The point of the first part of the banquet parable is that if you hope to participate in God's kingdom, you must first accept the invitation. In Matthew's context, the king's harsh treatment of the city ("the king was enraged and sent his troops") alludes to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans in A.D. 70. And the rejection of the invitation by the "A list" people (like the scribes and Pharisees) opens up the banquet guests to include marginal persons (like tax collectors and sinners) and eventually even Gentiles.

Praying With Scripture

- Why was the banquet an effective way for biblical authors to describe the kingdom of God?
- How might Jesus' banquet parable enrich your appreciation of and participation in the Eucharist?
- In your everyday life, how do you combine self-reliance, God-reliance and reliance on others?

The second part of the parable (which may well have once been a separate parable) insists that it is not enough merely to gain entrance to the banquet hall. Once there, you must behave in an appropriate manner. What if you had been invited to the White House for dinner and arrived in clothes that you normally use for yard work or painting? You would probably be asked to leave. The point is that having been admitted to God's kingdom by faith and baptism, we will be expected to act in ways that befit who we have become "in Christ."

The Eucharist we celebrate as the sacrament of ongoing Christian life stands in the biblical banquet tradition. It is the banquet of God's Son and points toward fullness of life in God's kingdom. But it is not enough simply to show up. Rather, we need to participate actively, let the mystery of the Eucharist shape our identity, and we must act appropriately in our everyday lives.

The excerpts from Paul's awkward "thank you" note in Philippians 4 can help us grasp better the proper framework for appropriate Christian action. In words often compared to the teachings of Stoic philosophers, Paul first offers a classic statement of independence and self-reliance: "I have learned, in whatever situation I find myself, to be self-sufficient." Yet Paul was more reliant on God than on himself: "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." Moreover, in carrying out his mission to found new communities all over the Mediterranean world, Paul relied on a team of co-workers. And he praises the Philippians for sharing his distress during imprisonment and for sending him some kind of gift. Paul's example indicates that at its best, Christian life combines self-reliance, reliance on God and reliance on others.

Daniel J. Harrington

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