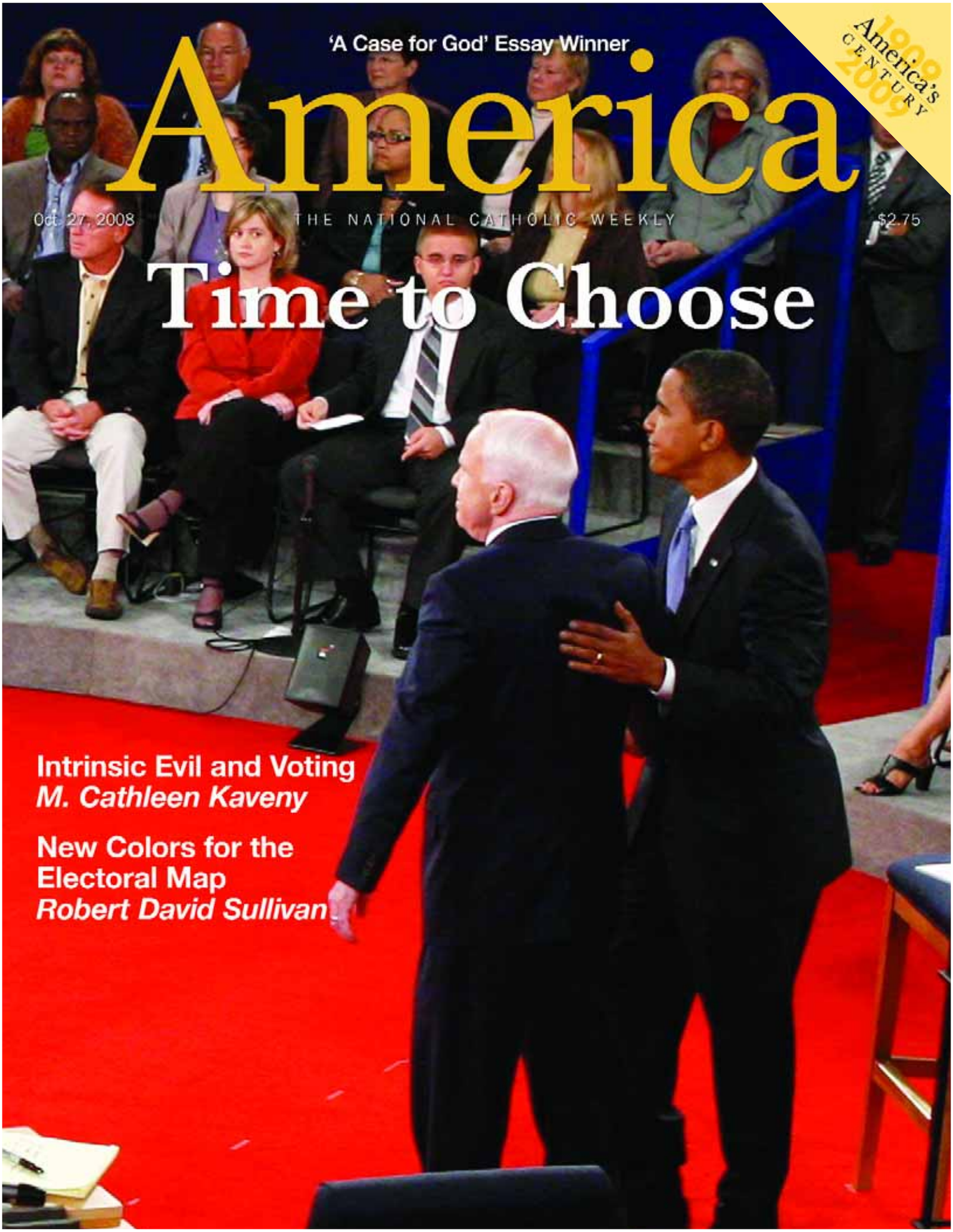

'A Case for God' Essay Winner

America

1909 America's CENTURY 2009

Oct. 27, 2008 THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY $2.75

Time to Choose

Intrinsic Evil and Voting
M. Cathleen Kaveny

New Colors for the Electoral Map
Robert David Sullivan

Of Many Things

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI was unprepared for its first African-American student. When James Meredith's application for admission was rejected in 1961 because of his race, he took the school to federal court, claimed discrimination and won. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the university had to admit Meredith, who arrived on a Sunday (Sept. 30, 1962), accompanied by 500 federal marshals and other guards. President John F. Kennedy and U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy had anticipated resistance, but because they had personally discussed the integration of the university with Mississippi's Gov. Ross Barnett, they thought Meredith had ample protection. Instead, riots broke out. A mob of 2,000 people attacked the guards, shots were fired, dozens were injured and two students lay dead at Ole Miss. The next day soldiers escorted Meredith to his first class. It took 23,000 federal troops and National Guardsmen, all dispatched by President Kennedy, to restore order on campus.

Forty-six years later almost to the day (Sept. 27, 2008), Ole Miss welcomed the Democratic candidate Barack Obama for the first presidential debate of 2008. No troops were needed; the campus was calm, the students and faculty cordial.

Such progress in race relations cries out for reflection. Whatever one's politics, the candidacy of Senator Obama marks how far we have come as a nation in casting off our racial prejudice. Although Jesse Jackson was a serious contender for the Democratic Party nomination in 1984 and 1988, until this year no candidate with a black parent has ever won a major party's nomination. This year's election may be a close one. And an African-American may win the presidency with both the popular and the electoral vote.

Nonetheless, racism lingers. How much it lingers will be seen in the extent to which the campaigns appeal to racism during these final days, and the extent to which voters allow race to keep them from voting for the black candidate. Public campaign conduct can be scrutinized and analyzed. (Under "campaign conduct" I include the work of privately funded political action committees, like Freedom's Defense Fund, the National Campaign Fund and the Black Republican PAC.) But what lies in the hearts of voters is more difficult to detect, measure and overcome.

In March Senator Obama delivered a speech on race in response to the divisive, cynical remarks of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, once his pastor. Obama showed how well he understood the anger of both blacks and whites when it is based on legitimate wrongs endured. "The fact is," said Obama, "that the comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced...reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through—a part of our union that we have yet to perfect." The speech was a high point of this presidential race.

There have also been low points. In September The New York Times quoted a parishioner of Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Scranton, Pa., who stood in the rectory kitchen and ruled out voting for Mr. Obama because he is black. "Are they going to make it the Black House?" he added.

"I'll never vote for a black person"; "Hang that darky from a tree!"; "He's a half-breed and he's a Muslim"—said some people in Indiana and Pennsylvania to the mostly high school or college students working for the Obama campaign, according to a Washington Post article on May 13. In Vincennes, Ind., the Obama campaign headquarters was vandalized. Yet in its press release, the campaign kept the incident in perspective: "After campaigning for 15 months in nearly all 50 states, Barack Obama and our entire campaign have been nothing but impressed and encouraged by the core decency, kindness and generosity of Americans from all walks of life. The last year has only reinforced Senator Obama's view that this country is not as divided as our politics suggest."

Decency, kindness and generosity, not to mention our mutual concerns, could form a strong basis for unity. As Senator Obama put it, "If we walk away now...we will never be able to come together and solve challenges like health care, or education, or the need to find good jobs for every American." One need not endorse the candidate to endorse that dream. Maybe this year a majority of voters will move beyond prejudice and the politics of division.

Karen Sue Smith

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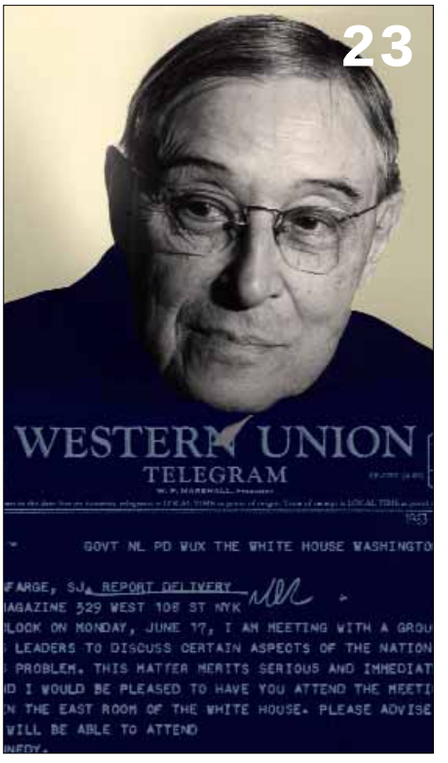
Cover photo The presidential nominees John McCain, left, and Barack Obama, look out to the audience at the conclusion of their debate in Nashville, Tenn., on Oct. 7. Reuters/Rick Wilking.

Articles



This week @ America Connects

James T. Keane, S.J., discusses **America**'s colorful history on our podcast. Plus, from the archives, Joseph A. Califano Jr. on the myths of drug legalization and John Langan, S.J., on abortion politics. All at americamagazine.org.

Editorial

Voting One's Conscience

CONSCIENTIOUS CATHOLIC VOTERS face difficult choices this Election Day. Like both of this year's presidential nominees, few U.S. politicians fully endorse the church's social ethic, a moral framework that defies the ideological and partisan categories of American politics. In frustration, some might say it would be easier if Catholic bishops simply told us for whom to vote. Appropriately, they do not. Nonetheless, some Catholic leaders and commentators imply that the bishops have done exactly that. But the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has chosen to focus instead on how Catholics should form their consciences in advance of the election.

In their document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, published almost a year ago, the bishops called Catholic voters to prayerful reflection on the principles of Catholic moral and social teaching. First among these fundamental ethical principles is the dignity of the human person and his or her consequent right to life, "the most fundamental human good and the condition of all the others." Issues that involve direct attacks on life itself, such as abortion or euthanasia or unjust war, therefore, should be the first concern of Catholic voters. Our duty to protect innocent human life, they wrote, "has a special claim on our consciences and our actions."

At the same time, the bishops reminded us of the breadth of our moral responsibility. "Catholic teaching about the dignity of life calls us to oppose torture, unjust war, and the use of the death penalty; to prevent genocide and attacks against noncombatants; to oppose racism; and to overcome poverty and suffering," they wrote. "Nations are called to protect the right to life by seeking effective ways to combat evil and terror without resorting to armed conflicts...."

Some have argued—misleadingly—that our moral obligation to defend innocent human life means that it is never morally permissible for a Catholic to vote for a candidate who supports abortion rights. Yet the bishops have articulated conditions under which it may be possible. Given the specific choices facing voters, disqualification of pro-choice candidates is neither automatic nor universal. While it is never permissible to vote for a candidate who supports abortion rights "if the voter's intent is to support that position," it may be permissible for a voter who rejects a candidate's pro-abortion rights position to vote for the candidate, according to the bishops, "for truly grave moral reasons."

Wisely, *Faithful Citizenship* does not specify what counts as grave moral reasons. What might they be? The voter is required to speculate: The likelihood of reducing the abortion rate? Leading the campaign to support stem cell research on adult cells instead of fetal cells? Opposing preventive war and torture? Providing health care for the uninsured? Readiness to join a new international regime to curb global warming? Salvaging the American economy?

The right to life, rooted in the dignity of the human person, necessarily implies rights to all the goods of human life, including peace and security, a home, health and employment. As Pope Benedict himself noted when he was prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "a political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility toward the common good." In other words, Catholics are not automatic single-issue voters, regardless of the issue. Catholic social teaching is a unity and must be applied accordingly.

A CANDIDATE'S CHARACTER ALSO MATTERS. A voter's decisions, according to the bishops, should also "take into account a candidate's commitments, character, integrity and ability to influence a given issue." Political history should also count. Repeated failure by a candidate or a party to make good on campaign promises must be calculated into a voter's judgment. Prudence requires voters to remember that in choosing a political candidate, they are not choosing an amalgam of ideas and policies but a person in a specific and delimited political situation. Prudence also requires voters to recall that there are different ways of responding to compelling social problems that are morally acceptable.

Conscientious voters have a momentous decision before them. Catholics should be grateful that the bishops instruct us on how to form our consciences, but not for whom to vote. As Pope Benedict XVI has noted, "the church does not impose but freely proposes the Catholic faith." The church's teaching, therefore, is not a political platform, nor is it a penal code that can be cited in part without reference to the whole. But neither can it be ignored, for its principles make sure and certain demands on the consciences of voters where, ultimately, the election of 2008 will be decided.

Guest Editorial

Racism and the Election

IN THEIR 1979 STATEMENT *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, the Catholic bishops of the United States did not hesitate to label racism "a sin" and a violation of "the fundamental human dignity of those called to be children of the same Father."

Racism can be called our nation's own specific "original sin." The existence of slavery cast the shadow of hypocrisy over the otherwise noble proclamation of the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in our Declaration of Independence. The greatest number of Americans killed in war to this day was during the Civil War, which had the conflict over slavery at its roots. For generations our political life was distorted by the influence of public officials whose foremost goal was to preserve the essence if not the form of slavery in a segregated and discriminatory social system.

Race and the Church in the United States

The bishops who declared racism a sin in 1979 did so in full knowledge that racism was a plague not merely in society at large but had even invaded the church, which too often conformed to the prejudices of society in its own interior life. Happily, in the decades before the statement was issued, numerous Catholics, including clergy and religious, gave witness to their awareness of the evil of racism by participating in the civil rights movement. Through words and actions, these men and women helped focus the nation's attention on the discrimination and segregation that was allowed to flourish in our midst and on the personal and social devastation which these practices inflicted on so many of our fellow citizens.

In the early 1960's one bishop, Archbishop Joseph Rummel of New Orleans, excommunicated outspoken opponents of his plans to desegregate the archdiocesan schools, including a powerful local politician. In this he received the support of the Holy See whose spokesman, as reported by The New York Times, said that "any Catholic unwilling to admit the fundamental equality of all human beings...proclaims that he is not a Catholic."

All the clergy, religious and laypeople who joined Martin Luther King Jr. and the other leaders of this great movement shared the hope that American society could and would overcome this evil.

As we draw near an election day on which one of the major party candidates for president is for the first time a person of African-American ancestry, we should be able to do so with a sense that whatever the outcome, America has crossed another threshold in healing the wounds that racism has inflicted on our nation's body politic for our entire history. However, in view of recent media reports regarding race-based voting, this potentially healing moment could turn into the infliction of one more wound if racism appears to determine the outcome. Because of that menacing possibility, it is worth recalling for Catholics and all Americans the central affirmation of *Brothers and Sisters to Us:* racism is a sin.

A Renewed Commitment

Last November the bishops issued *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the most recent of the documents we issue every four years during the teachable moment of our most important national elections to acquaint Catholics with their responsibilities in the forum of public policy. In that document we spoke of the things we must never do as individuals or a society because they are always incompatible with the love of God and neighbor. We cite the taking of innocent human life as one example of such intrinsically evil actions. Racism is another.

In any election people have many reasons to support one candidate or to oppose another. Some of these reasons may be wise and good, some not so good, and others simply wrong. The promotion neither of abortion nor racism can ever be a motivation for one's vote. Voting for a candidate solely because of that candidate's support for abortion or against him or her solely on the basis of his or her race is to promote an intrinsic evil. To do so consciously is indeed sinful. That is behavior incompatible with being a Christian. To allow racism to reign in our hearts and to determine our choice in this solemn moment for our nation is to cooperate with one of the great evils that has afflicted our society. In the words of *Brothers and Sisters to Us*, "It mocks the words of Jesus, 'Treat others the way you would have them treat you.'"

Blase Cupich

BISHOP BLASE CUPICH, bishop of Rapid City, S.D., is an occasional contributor to **America**.

U.N. Panel Calls Religion a Force for Freedom

Maryann Cusimano Love, associate professor of international politics at The Catholic University of America, addresses the U.N. forum on peace-building, Oct. 7.

The same unwavering, absolute commitment to faith that can make religion a source of conflict and division can also make it a powerful force for freedom, justice and liberation, panelists said at an Oct. 7 forum at the United Nations. They also said the Catholic Church, because of its social teaching and transnational nature, is particularly well positioned to prevent conflicts from breaking out and to mediate those that are ongoing. The forum on "Peace-building: A Role for Religion" drew a standing-room-only crowd of more than 100 people. It was co-sponsored by the permanent observer mission of the Holy See, the Path to Peace Foundation and the Catholic Peacebuilding Network. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, apostolic nuncio to the United Nations, said the Holy See delegation helped draft guidelines used by the U.N. Peacebuilding Commission to acknowledge the role of faith-based organizations at the forefront "in fostering dialogue, in peacemaking and in post-conflict resolution."

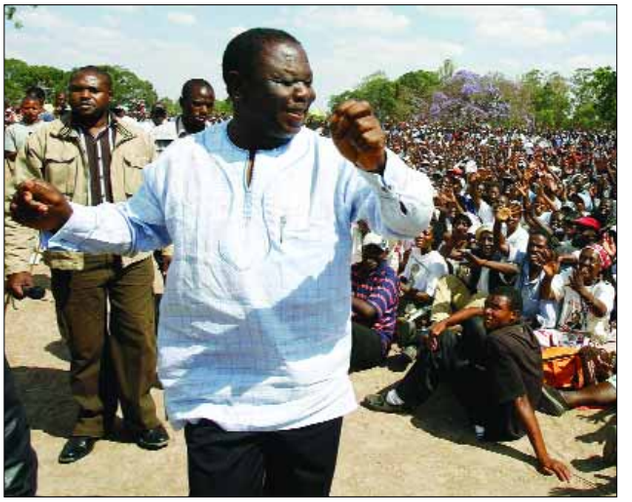
Iraqi Church Leaders Risk Lives for Ministry

Iraq's leading churchman said the situation in parts of his country remained "disastrous and tragic," and he said church leaders were risking their lives daily to proclaim the Gospel. Cardinal Emmanuel-Karim Delly of Baghdad, the Chaldean Catholic patriarch, made his comments Oct. 14 at the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God. His speech received a huge round of applause from the more than 200 bishops present. Cardinal Delly said life in Iraq is like a Way of the Cross for many people. "Peace and security are lacking, just as the basic elements for daily life are lacking," he said. "There continue to be shortages of electricity, water and gasoline, telephone communication is increasingly difficult, roads are blocked, the schools are closed or endangered, hospitals run on a reduced staff and people fear for their safety," he said. He said everyone fears kidnapping and intimidation, including church workers. He noted that 16 priests and two bishops in Iraq have been abducted and released after payment of ransom.

Conn. Bishops Criticize 'Judicial Activism'

The Connecticut Supreme Court's Oct. 10 decision permitting same-sex marriage in the state was "a terribly regrettable exercise in judicial activism," the state's Catholic bishops said. The court "has chosen to ignore the wisdom of our elected officials, the will of the people, and historical, social and religious traditions spanning thousands of years by imposing a social experiment upon the people of our state," the bishops added. In a 4-to-3 decision in Kerrigan v. Commissioner of Public Health, the court majority ruled that "the state's bar against same-sex marriage infringes on a fundamental right in violation of due process and discriminates on the basis of sex in violation of equal protection." Eight same-sex couples sued after they applied for marriage licenses in

Zimbabweans Suffer While Leaders Play Politics



Morgan Tsvangirai, the Movement for Democratic Change leader, greets supporters at a rally in Harare, Zimbabwe, Oct. 12.

With Zimbabwe's power-sharing deal in jeopardy, the country's leaders are playing politics at the expense of the suffering majority, a church official said. "Life here is extremely difficult," especially in rural areas where some people are said to be surviving on wild fruit, said Alouis Chaumba, who heads the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe. The hope of ordinary Zimbabweans that the power-sharing deal would improve their lives "has been dashed," he told Catholic News Service in an Oct. 13 telephone interview from the capital, Harare. The "greatest blunder" in the power-sharing deal, which aimed to give President Robert Mugabe and the opposition equal power in a unity government, was that "cabinet posts were not sorted out as part of the agreement," Chaumba said. The deal, signed in September by Mugabe and opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, said the opposition would hold 16 cabinet seats and the ruling party 15. The rivals have yet to work out details of the new government, including which side will control which ministries.

2004 in the town of Madison and were denied the licenses. In 2005 the Connecticut Legislature said same-sex couples in the state could enter into civil unions, with the "same rights and privileges" as spouses in a marriage," but continued to define marriage as "the union of one man and one woman."

Knights' Survey Outlines Catholic Views

American Catholic voters in 2008 tend to be more moderate than U.S. voters as a whole, according to a survey commissioned by the Knights of Columbus and released Oct. 14. "A plurality of Catholic voters, 39 percent, are Democrats, and 45 percent describe themselves as moderate. Only 19 percent say they are liberal," the survey said. The survey was conducted by telephone with 813 self-identified Catholics Sept. 24-Oct. 3 by Marist College's Institute for Public Opinion. Those who identified themselves as practicing Catholics outnumbered nonpracticing Catholics by close to a 2-to-1 ratio. Interviewers polled 1,733 Americans in all, Catholics and non-Catholics. On the subject of abortion, 48 percent of all Catholics surveyed said they were "pro-life," while 47 percent said they were "pro-choice," and 5 percent said they were unsure. But twice as many practicing as nonpracticing Catholics—59 percent to 29 percent—called themselves "pro-life," while 65 percent of nonpracticing Catholics said they were "pro-choice," compared with 36 percent of practicing Catholics.

Tiny Alaskan Radio Station Honored

KNOM, an AM radio station in Nome, Alaska, is not only the little station that could. It's the little station that does—over and over again. Owned by the Diocese of Fairbanks, Alaska, with a broadcast day that includes news, music, and educational and public service programming for listeners in western Alaska—one of North America's most remote regions—KNOM was named radio station of the year for the 16th time by the Gabriel Awards, sponsored by the Catholic Academy of Communication Arts Professionals. The awards, which honor movies, television and radio, "recognize outstanding artistic achievement in a television or radio program or series which entertains and enriches with a true vision of humanity and a true vision of life," according to the Catholic Academy in a statement announcing the awards.

106-Year-Old Absentee Voter

Sister Cecilia Gaudette, a 106-year-old American member of the Religious of Jesus and Mary, will vote for the first time in 56 years and will cast her ballot for president for Senator Barack Obama, Democrat of Illinois. The nun, a retired music and art teacher, has lived in Rome for 50 years and only recently found out that she could register for an absentee ballot without returning to the United States. But after giving interviews to CBS News, BBC Radio and Italian television, the New Hampshire native is not taking any more phone calls, not doing any more interviews and not posing for any more photographs, said a spokeswoman at the motherhouse of the Religious of Jesus and Mary. "Sister Cecilia is very tired," the spokeswoman told Catholic News Service Oct. 13. In the interviews, Sister Cecilia said she was sure Obama would win, just like the last U.S. presidential candidate she voted for—Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower, in 1952. "I always said, 'I voted once and I won the election,'" she told CBS News.

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Four Saints Give Examples of Holiness

A statue of St. Alphonsa Muttathupadathu arrives at St. Mary's Church in Bharananganam, India, Oct. 12, the day the saint was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican.

Pope Benedict XVI canonized four new saints, including the first native-born saint of India, during a two-hour liturgy in St. Peter's Square Oct. 12. The new Indian saint is St. Alphonsa Muttathupadathu, a nun from southwestern India who was known for her holiness during a lifetime of suffering. "She wrote, 'I consider a day without suffering as a day lost.' May we imitate her in shouldering our own crosses so as to join her one day in paradise," the pope said. The others canonized were: St. Narcisa de Jesús Martillo Moran, a 19th-century Ecuadoran laywoman known for her deep prayer and penitence; St. Gaetano Errico, an Italian priest who founded the Congregation of Missionaries of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in the 19th century; and St. Maria Bernarda Butler, a Swiss nun who founded the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary, Help of Sinners. The four saints together, the pope said, offer a beautiful example of holiness and deserve the attention of the universal church.

The Eighteenth Horse

‘Often, all God needs to bring new insights to birth are empty space and unrushed time.’

Max was an old man by the time I met him. He had known his share of pain during his long life; and though he was more than happy to regale any listener with stories from his youth, there were some no-go areas. There were some fierce knots in the colorful tapestry of his life that he would neither touch nor allow anyone else to touch. That was the deal with Max.

One thing he loved to do was confront you with mind-puzzles. In a happier age (and if he had not been expelled from high school for overly exuberant behavior), he might have been something of a mathematician. As it was, he liked to indulge his other talent—for clowning. Max was a joke waiting to happen. Easy to be with. Impossible to live with. A walking paradox. A puzzle in his own right.

One day he came up with the matter of the 18th horse. I do not know whether he figured my own merely feminine logic (he lived before the age of political correctness) would overlook the obvious flaws in the calculations involved in it. But the strange thing is that I have kept coming back to this particular brainteaser, sensing that it had something to tell me about God. Anyway, this is the story he told me.

Once upon a time there was a great nobleman. He lived in a castle and had three sons. He also owned a variable number of horses. It was impossible to predict how many of them there would be at any particular time, given that now and again old ones would die off and new foals would be born.

Eventually the nobleman died and left a will in which he stipulated the following. “When I die, my horses are to be divided among my three sons in the following proportions: My eldest son is to receive half of my horses. My second son is to receive one-third of my horses. My youngest son is to receive one-ninth of my horses. And no horse is to be either left over or chopped into parts to make the equation work.”

When the old man died there were seventeen horses. This left his sons with something of a difficulty. However much they wracked their brains, they could not make the problem work out. Finally in desperation they sought the help of a local wise man who lived in a cave not far from the castle. “I’ll come right over,” he promised, and soon the sound of galloping hooves was heard in the courtyard.

“Now,” said the wise one, tying up his own horse alongside the other 17, “let’s do the sums. ‘Half to go to the eldest son.’ Half of 18 is nine. ‘One-third to go to the second son.’ One-third of 18 is six. ‘One-ninth to go to the youngest son.’ One-ninth of 18 is two.” So the eldest son rode away with his nine horses, the second son with his six horses and the youngest son with his two horses. No horse was either left over or chopped into pieces. And the wise one rode back to his cave on his own horse—the 18th horse.

So the problem of the nobleman’s legacy was solved, but I was still left with the problem of why this silly story should still be lingering in my mind, demanding attention, many years later, long after Max had died.

I think I am beginning to crack it though. I notice that I not infrequently get into tangles in my mind that seem to have no logical solution. The worst kind of knots are those around relationship issues and moral dilemmas. Whatever you do, the sums just do not work out. Whichever course of action you choose, someone is going to be offended. However carefully you explain something, you know you are going to be misunderstood. Whichever route you follow, there are going to be serious compromises.

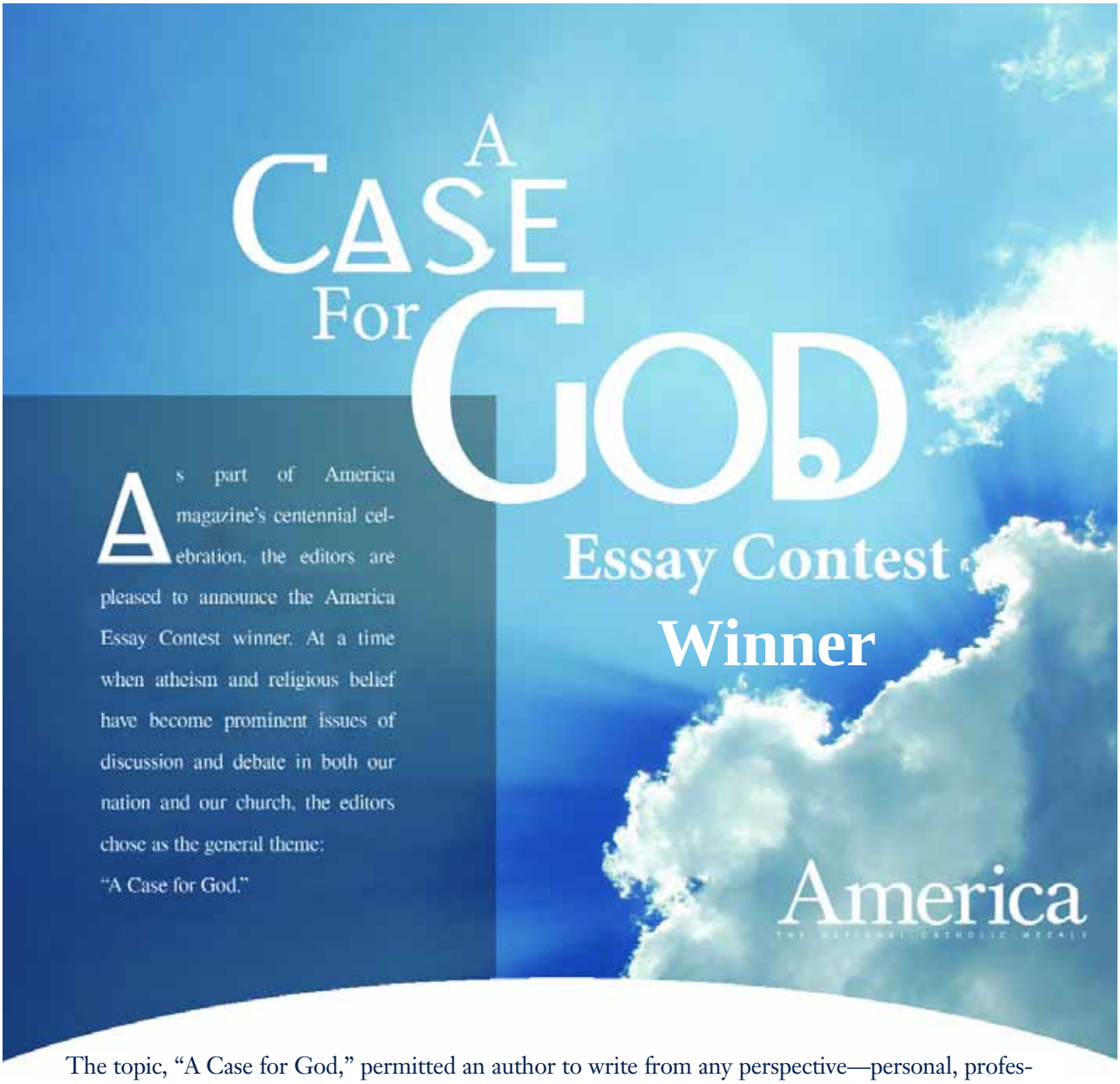
When this happens, I have started inviting the 18th horse into the equation. The 18th horse is simply there. He is not taking sides. He is not doing the working out for me. But by his very presence, he brings a whole new perspective to the matter in hand. Because of him, I can look at the whole issue differently. I used to think that maybe God is like the 18th horse. But now I am coming round to thinking that the 18th horse is actually more like prayer, reflective prayer, that does not demand solutions or black-and-white guidance but simply enfolds the whole problem in itself and allows you to sit with the question. Then, sometimes at least, like an over-tightened knot, something will loosen and give, and the whole thing will start to move again.

When problems seem intractable, and we ask ‘Where is God in all of this?’ it might be worth inviting the 18th horse into our consciousness. He will simply be there, infusing his wisdom into the tangle. And when the way forward starts to emerge, he will go away again. But he will always be on call, next time we get snarled up. What this means in practice, for me, is finding two things: a quiet space and some reasonable length of undisturbed time, and then simply sitting with God and the problem so that my heart and God’s heart together can hold the questions and make room for new perspectives. That is often all God needs to bring new insights to birth: empty space and unrushed time.

God, of course, never goes away, but our awareness of God comes and goes. The 18th horse of reflective prayer is always on call, to enlighten the smallest and the largest of questions, including the very big question that many **America** readers will be addressing next week. You might even choose to give him a permanent stable in your heart.

Margaret Silf

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



The topic, "A Case for God," permitted an author to write from any perspective—personal, professional, academic, apologetic or devotional. The entries we received spanned the full range. Congratulations to Lyn Burr Brignoli, whose moving essay about the faith of a young boy with Down syndrome (see next page) stole our hearts, revealed something profound about God and won the competition and the $3,000 prize.

The competition was keen. We received more than 400 entries, a good number of which are of publishable quality. To every participant the editors extend a sincere thank you.

In order to determine a winner, we first narrowed the field to the best 80, which we sent to two independent judges, asking them to identify the top 10. Only two manuscripts appeared on both their lists. A committee of editors created a short list of five, including these two, and the entire editorial board then voted to choose the winner. A few of the authors mounted philosophical arguments; others told stories about themselves or someone else; still others reflected on personal experiences, global events, suffering or social injustice.

Karen Sue Smith

Dragen, Here Is Your Letter

BY LYN BURR BRIGNOLI

DRAGEN WAS 6 YEARS OLD when he first came to me for religious instruction. Our director of religious education had never accepted a child with Down syndrome into the parish program before, and she did not really know what to do with him. Yet she thought I seemed like a natural for the job.

I had met our director only a few months earlier. I had never taught religion before. I had only recently been received into the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil at St. Mary's in 1998. Though I had no experience with Down syndrome myself, I was intrigued with the challenge: How do you talk about something as abstract as God with a child who has Down syndrome?

Dragen (pronounced DRAY-gun; his father is from Bosnia-Herzogivina) was small for his age, a bright, mischievous boy with a marvelous smile. He was already familiar with many prayers and the Mass. I eventually learned that from an early age he had been attending Mass most mornings with his grandmother. He would enter our little classroom, look at the crucifix on the wall, put his arms out to his side and drop his head down, imitating the posture of Jesus on the cross, a gesture that unnerved me at first.

In our first weeks and months together, I was for the most part poking around in the dark. Not having any teaching materials and feeling inadequate to the task, one day I told him, "Jesus is in your heart." We had been singing together along with a tape, "Thank you, thank you, Jesus in my heart," when I said, "Dragen, Jesus is in your heart."

Dragen looked away, as if disturbed, then moved into the corner of our tiny room and faced the wall. After a minute or so with his back to me, finally, he turned to face me.

"I can't see my heart," he said.

I went home that night thinking about his words. It came to me that I would need to create a visual metaphor to help him understand.

At an office supply store, I found a blank triptych that stood about as tall as he was. I pasted one half of a large red foam-board heart onto each door. Inside, on the center panel, I pasted an icon of Jesus and taped a wooden cross above it.

Dragen was delighted. He knocked on the doors of the heart saying, "Knock, knock. Who is it? It's Jesus." Opening and then folding the doors of the heart around himself, he was in Jesus' heart, just as Jesus was in his. One day some months later, quite spontaneously, he took a small wooden cross from the table and, pretending it was a key, applied it to the red foam heart. It was as if he knew somehow that the cross was the key to Jesus' heart and the key to opening his own. I was astonished. He had taken the visual metaphor and run with it.

The homemade triptych was only the beginning. I began to create more and more tangible materials for him. I realized then that something extraordinary was happening. While the "facts and concepts" of the faith seemed almost meaningless to him, the most spiritual aspect, the inner core of our faith, seemed to affect him deeply. We were communicating in the language of the psalms, using images and metaphors that allowed Dragen to articulate what he already knew of God himself. I was merely giving him a language to express it.

He loved our time together. "Is today Monday?" (our day), he would ask his mother each morning. He was growing and thriving spiritually, and so was I. My time with Dragen was launching me directly into my own experience of God—away from the linear, logical formulations of dogma, so often causing more confusion than clarification. Here on the boundary between this "other" person and myself was where I found God in a unique way. Dragen was moving me away from my head, from my academic training in calculus, chemistry and biology, from my years as a medical writer, into a deeper experience of God, beyond mere logic.

Pain and the Cross

Dragen and I were developing a wonderful relationship, learning to encounter God together. When I was with Dragen, I began to experience God as I did at no other time and in no other way.

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Nevertheless, a cloud hung over our sessions. From the beginning Dragen's mother had warned me that the doctors did not expect him to live long. Along with the Down syndrome and an array of other medical problems, Dragen was born with his bladder outside his body. Within hours of his birth the first of many drastic, life-saving operations had begun.

Pain was something Dragen knew all too well. Sometimes he would lie down on the carpet of our little room. "Does Mary love me? Does Jesus love me?" He was reciting "the pain litany," letting me know that he was in pain, although he rarely complained, short of screaming when it became unbearable.

At the end of that first year, when he had just turned 7, Dragen underwent major surgery again. I went to visit him at home after a particularly lengthy hospital stay. It was a steamy August day; he answered the door in his underpants. I had brought along a tape recorder with one of his favorite tapes, "Jesus, Remember Me." He took the recorder and disappeared into his bedroom, reappearing minutes later. He was holding the recorder to one ear, the music playing full volume. In his other hand he held a crucifix high over his head. Around his neck he had tied a towel, which was hanging down his back like a cape. Around and around the room he marched, singing. He was the priest, the choir, the altar server, the congregation—the whole church. He missed attending Mass, I realized.

After a while he went over to the sofa, lay the crucifix down, and began loosening the nails from Jesus' body. He pried Jesus off the cross and kissed him, whispering, "I love you, I love you." He was giving Jesus a break from the pain.

Not long after Dragen's operation, his mother told me, she had come into his bedroom and found him naked on the bed, his arms outstretched. "What are you doing?" she asked. "I'm Jesus," he answered, pointing to the new stoma surgically implanted in his side to accommodate a catheter. He was identifying with Jesus, wounded in his side, as he hung naked upon the cross. The cross had a profound, personal meaning for Dragen.

Dragen had entered into the metaphor of the crucifixion and was living out of it. By participating in his own crucifixion, he was also entering into the Great Crucifixion. Through the door of the particular, he was entering the universal. I saw then a child with mental disabilities experiencing God with all of his being.

When I began working with Dragen, my job was to "make a case for God" to a little boy with disabilities, yet over time it became apparent that he already knew God. But now, paradoxically, the task of making a case for God was shifting back onto me. It was becoming a personal question—how to make a case for God to myself in the face of suffering? Specifically, why does a loving God permit an innocent child like Dragen to suffer? Does such a God exist at all?

ART BY STEFANIE AUGUSTINE

I had come to faith as an adult in a time of intense emotional pain. My childhood was also intensely painful. And I began to see that a lifetime of spiritual and emotional suffering had prepared me for this encounter with Dragen. From my own childhood I knew how "otherness" felt. Somehow I knew what it was like to be a child with Down syndrome in a culture that all too often regards people like Dragen with withering glances, that tosses out careless, unkind remarks, which are not lost on someone as sensitive as he is.

My own pain, transformed, was now a gift. It enabled me to see something in the core of Dragen's being that was so magnificent I wanted to shout it out to a mostly deaf and blind world. My own pain had enabled me to draw closer to Dragen, to transcend the boundaries of doctrine and enter into the heart of God, where I had had to let go of the question of suffering and simply live out the tough day-to-day reality of it.

Surrender

Dragen turned 16 years old this spring; the doctors say he has far outlived their expectations for him. At last count he had had over 50 operations, including, most recently, a kidney transplant. I have been with him now for 10 years.

Each time he goes into the operating room he seems completely stoic. "'Be brave, Dragen. It goes better that way.' That's what Poppy [his grandfather] told me," he said once, sitting up with the surgical cap on his head as he was being wheeled in on a gurney. He seems to know in his deepest elemental being the truth of Christ, not just about him. It appears that Dragen has completely and totally surrendered to God, while I still rail and question: God, what are you doing? Or I cry out: O God, please take him home; spare him more pain.

Over the last few months Dragen's health has been deteriorating. When we are together we talk of his own death now. We visit each other frequently. On the days Dragen comes to my house, typically we go to the cemetery. His grandmother, "Nanny," died nearly five years ago now, and he still misses her terribly. We sit on the grass in the graveyard in front of her tombstone, and we pray and sing together with a tape recorder blasting full volume, "Alleluia, He Is Coming."

"Look at all these people who will welcome you into heaven." I say, my hand sweeping around, indicating all the tombstones. "Hooray, Dragen! We are so happy to see you!" they will say; and Dragen claps his hands and grins, delighted.

After one such visit, Dragen asked me to write him a letter about death. I wrote...

Dear Dragen,

Remember when you asked me, "Write me a letter about death"? I didn't forget. So here is your letter about death.

In the Bible it says, "The Lord, our God, holds the keys of death." This is true and real. This is what God promises us. And Jesus promises us. And Jesus always tells the truth. Because he is truth, he cannot lie.

When it is time to die, Jesus will come with a key to the door of death. He will open the door and then together with the angels and saints and Mary, the Blessed Mother, you will float up over the rooftops and trees and everything, and you will just float up to heaven with Jesus. You can just relax, because Jesus will do it for you.

It is good to die. Everybody is going to die. But only God knows when it is time for you to die. He knows the right time, and then he sends Jesus with the keys to the doorway. God knows what is best for each person.

The Bible tells us that heaven is the holy city of God. It is where God is living with all the people who belong to God, like Nanny and Poppy and Christina and Richard. God is always there with them. The Bible says there is no crying in heaven. No more sadness. And there will be no pain in heaven. In heaven God will make all things new—including your body! You will have a new body in heaven.

God loves you so very much, Dragen, more than 480 large houses! You will be so very happy with him.

Who will cry when you die? Most of all, Mommy will cry because she will miss you. Your Dad will cry. Aunt Jeanie, Aunt Dede, Aunt Dottie, your cousins, Cathy and Walter, Father Bob, Sister Mary Frances, your friends and teachers, the bus driver, the doctors and nurses and your aides will cry. And of course, I will cry.

But then we will remember that Dragen will have no more pain and Dragen will have a new body in heaven! And then we will remember that Dragen will be so happy to see Nanny and to see Jesus and Mary. And that thought will comfort us and make us smile. We will hold you close to ourselves in our hearts. We will still feel you with us, and then when we die, we will all be together!

I love you,
Miss Lyn

Dragen's suffering has drawn me into the tangible, living crucifixion of Jesus where I am crucified myself and humbled and where all my questions melt away. Yet as I enter into the crucifixion with Dragen, somehow, paradoxically, I am able to catch a glimpse of the compassionate God.

Here is where God resides—on this boundary between "the other" and myself. I do not confuse Dragen's gifts with my gifts, but rather I am able to participate in his gifts just as he is able to participate in mine. My own gifts are honed in the process; my love becomes so much bigger than myself. Here, too, I become more compassionate. I am, therefore, living a transcendent life on this border between myself and Dragen. Is this not God—Jesus himself living in me, living in Dragen, in this place where we meet?

The only way I know to articulate this encounter is in the language of poetry.

I feel the dimensions of truth in image—"the keys to the doorway of death," the verse from the Psalms. I can see the keys, I can hear them jingling on a key chain, I can feel them cold against my skin and taste the metal on my tongue. This image engages all of my being, as my own death will also do. This biblical description of death is truth, albeit not on a literal level, but it is a truth that carries me beyond a merely logical mindset, away from an arid, thirsty land without hearing and seeing, without feeling, without music, without singing—and without poetry.

"Write me a letter about love?" Dragen asked me the last time we were together.

"Dragen, here is your letter about Love." A

Intrinsic Evil and Political Responsibility

Is the concept of intrinsic evil helpful to the Catholic voter?

BY M. CATHLEEN KAVENY

As the November national elections approach, we need not delve too deeply into Catholic political discussions to realize the importance of the term "intrinsic evil." The term is used not only in such documents as *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the 2008 Voting Guide for Catholics issued by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, but also in political skirmishes among American Catholics. But what, exactly, is an "intrinsic evil"? Why should voters give special attention to intrinsic evils in considering the candidates? Almost no Catholic opinion-maker who invokes the term goes on to ask these questions, let alone to answer them.

Perhaps this is because the answers seem obvious. After all, the term "intrinsic evil" seems to connote great and contaminating evil—evil that we take inside ourselves simply by associating with it. The term itself suggests that "intrinsic evil" involves wrongdoing of an entirely different magnitude than ordinary, run-of-the-mill wrongdoing. Consequently, intrinsic evils must pose great moral dangers to both individuals and society at large, and these dangers ought to dwarf all other considerations in casting one's vote.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship tells us that intrinsically evil actions "must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned," because "they are always opposed to the authentic good of persons." At the same time, in national debates during the current election season, some Catholic political commentators have complained about Catholics who support candidates who do not, in the commentator's judgment, adequately oppose such intrinsic evils as abortion, euthanasia and homosexual acts, the last of which are implied by gay marriage.

The foregoing is meant to illustrate how the term "intrinsic evil" is used in the passionate give and take that characterizes many Catholic discussions about voting for a pro-choice politician. It is, however, in significant tension with the great weight of the church's long moral tradition. The term "intrinsic evil" does not have its roots in the expansive imagery of the church's prophetic witness, but rather in the tightly focused analysis of its moral casuistry. It is not a rhetorical flourish, but rather a technical term of Catholic moral theology. Ultimately, as Pope John Paul II reminds us in his encyclical *The Splendor of Truth* (*Veritatis Splendor*), it is rooted in the action theory of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The Meaning of 'Intrinsically Evil'

In a nutshell, the fact that an act is called an intrinsic evil tells us two and only two things.

First, it tells us *why* an action is wrong—because of the "object" of the acting agent's will. To identify the object of an action, one has to put oneself in the shoes of the one acting, and to describe the action from her perspective. The object is the immediate goal for which that person is acting; it is "the proximate end of a deliberate decision" (*VS*, No. 78).

Second, the fact that an act is intrinsically evil tells us that it is *always* wrong to perform that type of act, no mat-

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ART: SHUTTERSTOCK/PORTIA REMNANT

ter what the other circumstances are. A good motive cannot make an act with a bad object morally permissible. In other words, we may never do evil so that good may come of it. To echo an example used by both Pope John Paul II and St. Thomas, a modern-day Robin Hood should not hold up a convenience store at gunpoint in order to give the money to a nearby homeless center. Robin Hood's good motive (altruistic giving) does not wash away the bad object or immediate purpose of his action (robbery).

But to say that an act is intrinsically evil does not by itself say anything about the comparative gravity of the act. Some acts that are not intrinsically evil (driving while intoxicated) can on occasion be worse both objectively and subjectively than acts that are intrinsically evil (telling a jocose lie). Some homicides that are not intrinsically evil are worse than intrinsically evil homicides. Furthermore, the fact that an act is intrinsically evil does not by itself tell third parties anything at all about their duty to prevent that act from occurring.

The following analyses and reflections may provide some clarity and further issues for reflection as we continue to debate the use and misuse of church teachings in the political realm.

1. "Intrinsically evil" does not mean "gravely evil."

Reflecting Aquinas's action theory, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that for an act to be morally good, it needs to be good in every respect. For an act to be morally wrong, however, any single defect will suffice. It can be performed for the wrong motive; if I give alms solely in order to earn fame, then my act is morally wrong. It can be performed under the wrong circumstances; it is entirely good for a newly wedded couple to consummate their union, but not in the church vestibule immediately following the ceremony. Most significantly for our discussion, the immediate "object" of the acting agent's will can be disordered or defective. Because an act takes its identity primarily from its object, Catholic moralists say that an act with a defective or disordered object is "intrinsically" evil.

Intrinsically evil acts are acts that are wrong by reason of their object, not by reason of their motive or their circumstance. *The Splendor of Truth* (No. 80) states that they are "'incapable of being ordered' to God, because they radically contradict the good of the person made in his image." Consequently, they can never be morally good, no matter what the intended outcomes. What are some examples? It is always wrong to act with the intention of killing an innocent human being, no matter what the context or larger motivation. This prohibition rules out not merely contract killing but also intentional killing of the dying in order to end their suffering, intentional killing of unborn children and saturation bombing of cities in wartime.

The church has taught, however, that there are other intrinsically evil acts that have nothing to do with violent assault. Not surprisingly sex, like death, also provides fertile ground for their identification. Masturbation, homosexual acts and contracepted heterosexual acts are all, according to Catholic moral teaching, intrinsically evil, in part because "they close the sexual act to the gift of life" (*Catechism*, No. 2357). It is never licit for a married couple to use contraception, even if a pregnancy would threaten the life of the woman and the baby she carried. The church teaches that if natural family planning does not provide sufficiently reliable protection, the couple must refrain from sex until menopause rather than use contraception even once.

One might argue, in response, that contraception in this case is acceptable because of the serious threat to the mother and child. Pope John Paul II, however, rejected that form of argument in *The Splendor of Truth*. No virtuous motive and no other feature of an intrinsically evil act can make it a good act, although it can mitigate the wrongdoing substantially. To hold otherwise, according to the pope, is to be a "proportionalist" and thereby to place oneself outside the Catholic moral tradition. Needless to say, there are Catholic moralists who disagree with the tradition, and who argue for its revision on a number of grounds. But this is official Catholic teaching.

Over the centuries, Catholic moralists have also identified other acts as intrinsically evil. For example, lying (defined as making a false assertion with the intent of deceiving) has often been identified as an intrinsically evil act. Consequently, it too is always wrong. So it is wrong to lie to the F.B.I.; it is also wrong to tell your Aunt Edna that you think her purple sunflower hat is fabulous if you think it is hideous. While such a lie would be intrinsically evil, it would not be a serious evil. To recognize that an act is intrinsically evil does not necessarily mean that it is a grave evil, either objectively or subjectively. While the church has long taught that all sexual misdeeds are objectively serious, it has also recognized that subjective culpability can vary from case to case. Objectively speaking, lying is not always seriously wrong. And few moralists would deny that contraception is less seriously wrong than abortion, which involves the taking of human life.

Furthermore, not all intrinsically evil acts involve a significant violation of justice, the precondition for making an act illegal. No serious candidate for national office maintains that masturbation, homosexual acts or contraception should be outlawed in the United States today; and most Catholic legal theorists, whether conservative or liberal, would agree with them.

2. An intrinsically evil homicide is not always worse than every other wrongful homicide.

At this point, someone might object: "The foregoing reflections may be true about intrinsically evil acts in general, but not about intrinsically evil acts involving the taking of life—particularly innocent life. Surely these must be the worst acts of all and the greatest acts of injustice, and therefore are the acts that the law needs to condemn most harshly." But even this claim does not hold up under closer scrutiny. Intrinsically evil acts do not necessarily make for the worst form of homicide, with respect either to the subjective culpability of the killer or to the objective wrong done to the innocent victim. The following two examples ought to make that clear.

Consider first a man who burns down his own building one night for the insurance money, foreseeing but not intending that a single mother at work there will die in the blaze. He does not want her to die; her death forms no part of his purpose or plan. He simply does not care whether she dies or not. Now this is a heinous act, revealing great depravity on the part of the perpetrator and causing great harm to the victim. It is not, however, intrinsically evil. The object of his act, to burn down his own building, is not wrong in and of itself. The act is wrong because of its motive (theft by insurance fraud) and because of its circumstances: the likelihood that an innocent woman would lose her life in the course of it.

Contrast this with a situation involving an elderly man suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease. Fearful of undergoing a protracted and difficult death, he begs his wife to kill him. Finally, she acquiesces to his pleas and kills him painlessly with an overdose of barbiturates. The wife has committed an intrinsically evil act. She has intentionally killed a helpless, innocent person. Her act is seriously wrong, yet her personal blameworthiness is mitigated by her motive of alleviating suffering. Moreover, the objective injustice is mitigated by the fact that her husband not only consented to the act, but begged her to do it.

The law ought to prohibit both acts, because both harm the common good. At the same time, however, the legal system ought to recognize that the first act, which is not intrinsically evil, is morally worse, both subjectively and objectively, than the second act, which is intrinsically evil. District attorneys would be eager to prosecute the death-dealing defrauder to the full extent of the law, but many of them would decline to press a murder case against the wife whose love and loyalty to her suffering husband took a deeply misguided form.

3. Preventing intrinsically evil acts is not always our top moral priority.

Some commentators have suggested that voters ought to prioritize opposition to gay marriage and abortion because third parties have an overriding duty to prevent intrinsically evil acts and to protect their potential victims. But this argument is incorrect. It is not always most important for

third parties to intervene to prevent harm caused by intrinsically evil acts. Sometimes preventing harm caused by other kinds of wrongdoing, or even harm caused by natural disasters, can take priority.

Let us return to an earlier example. If a third party were unable to help both, he or she could legitimately choose to save the woman about to die as a result of her boss's fire-setting (an evil act, but not an intrinsically evil one) rather than to protect the man with Lou Gehrig's disease who is about to be voluntarily euthanized by his wife (an intrinsically evil act). Furthermore, under some circumstances one might legitimately choose to protect a person endangered by a natural disaster before coming to the rescue of a victim of human wrongdoing. One might choose, for example, to save a toddler about to drown in a flash flood rather than prevent that act of euthanasia, although the toddler's death would not be due to any human wrongdoing at all.

More generally, one's obligation to intervene to prevent harm to others, whether or not it is directly caused by an intrinsically evil act, depends upon a number of factors. Is one in any way responsible for the harm about to occur? Does one have a special responsibility for either the perpetrator (if there is one) or the victim? What is the likelihood that one's efforts to intervene will succeed? Will those efforts make matters worse if they do not succeed? What good will one fail to do, what evil will one fail to prevent, if one devotes oneself to this particular rescue effort rather than to another? Is intervening in this situation incompatible with performing other duties?

4. The motive and circumstances of particular actions also deserve moral scrutiny.

Some Catholic commentators have claimed that the certainty we have about the wrongfulness of intrinsically evil acts means that we should give their prevention priority over other acts, which may or may not be wrong, depending upon the circumstances. Their argument seems to run like this: the church teaches that abortion, euthanasia and homosexual acts are always wrong, but not that war or capital punishment is always wrong. Therefore, good Catholics ought to focus their political efforts on preventing acts they know to be wrong, and remain agnostic about the rest. One commentator has suggested that the church gives us "wiggle room" on issues that do not involve intrinsically evil acts.

This way of understanding a Catholic approach to the morality of human action is deeply mistaken. The church teaches that acts can be wrong because of their object, motive or circumstances. If a particular act is not wrong by reason of its object, we have a duty to consider motive and circumstances before performing it or endorsing it, particularly if the consequences might bring great harm to other people (as, for example, collateral damage in war).

It is true, for example, that some wars are just and some wars are unjust. Yet this does not mean we can be agnostic about the justice of a particular war being waged by our own government here and now. We have a duty to evaluate that particular war according to the criteria set forth in just war theory. In order to justify the decision to go to war (*jus ad bellum*), seven criteria must be met: just cause, competent authority, comparative justice, right intention, last resort, probability of success and proportionality of means to ends. We cannot justify indifference to or agnosticism about a particular war on the grounds that war in general is not "intrinsically evil." If we judge a war to be just using these criteria (e.g., World War II), we ought to support it. If we judge a war to be unjust (e.g., the Vietnam War), we ought to oppose it. We cannot hide behind a veil of culpable ignorance. There is no "wiggle room" on such questions for morally serious citizens.

5. Intrinsic evil is not the only useful category in deciding one's vote.

Given the preceding analysis, how much help does the category of "intrinsic evil" offer us in deciding whom to vote for in an important national election? In my view, not much help at all.

A defender of the category's usefulness might say that the fact that a candidate does not disapprove of an intrinsic evil reveals an unworthy character. That may be the case. But so does callousness toward the foreseen (but unintended) consequences of an unjust war, particularly toward the children who are orphaned, maimed or killed. So does indifference toward starving children in this country and in the world as a whole, many of whom are done an injustice not by individual Americans, but by American policy as a whole. In this fallen world, moral character alone is not enough. Political competence and other practical skills are also required. The person with the best moral character may not be the best president.

Second, a defender of the usefulness of the category of "intrinsic evil" might say that it helps us prioritize our actions, and that politicians have an obligation to oppose intrinsic evils, particularly those occurring within our borders, before addressing other sorts of evils occurring elsewhere. After all, we cannot police the world. The trouble with this argument is that in a democracy, we do need to police ourselves. If our policies, including our military policies, are unjustly harming the inhabitants of other countries, we have a duty to stop causing harm outside our borders that is at least as urgent as our duty to prevent harm within them. We Americans justly impose the same duty on other countries, including those harboring terrorists.

'Intrinsic Evil' as Prophetic Language

Finally, the defender might admit that there is one issue of overriding importance for which the term "intrinsic evil" is useful in political considerations: abortion. For more than three decades, the regime of legalized abortion has taken the lives of well over a million unborn children a year. The Supreme Court of the United States not only permits this regime, it honors it as the instantiation of a fundamental right. In this circumstance, the term "intrinsic evil" helps evoke why abortion deserves prime consideration in voting. Abortion happens inside a woman's womb, inside what should be the safest relationship of all: that between mother and child. Abortion happens deep inside our society, permeating big cities and small towns alike.

But note that this use of the term "intrinsic evil" has moved far beyond the technical use normally employed in Catholic action theory: it is evocative, not analytical. Its prophetic tone echoes Vatican II's "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et Spes*, No. 27):

> Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator.

Pope John Paul II used this passage to illustrate the incompatibility of intrinsic evil with human flourishing in "The Splendor of Truth" (No. 80). Like the use of the clearly prophetic word "infamies" in the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," the prophetic use of the term "intrinsic evil" is meant to start an urgent discussion among people of good will about grave injustices in the world. It does not provide a detailed blueprint for action. Identifying infamies is one thing. Deciding upon a strategy to deal with them is something else again. For many pro-life Catholics, the issue of voting and abortion comes down to this: what does one do if one thinks that the candidate more likely to reduce the actual incidence of abortion is also the one more committed to keeping it legal? The language of intrinsic evil does not help us here. Only the virtue of practical wisdom, enlightened by charity, can take us further. A

New Hues for the Electoral Map

BY ROBERT DAVID SULLIVAN

MAPS DIVIDING THE NATION into blue states and red states fail to capture the real differences and contradicting trends within what have been called, facetiously, the United States of Canada and Jesusland. One alternative is the four-region model (Northeast, South, Midwest, West) long used by the U.S. Census Bureau. But what kind of political description would apply to a "Midwest" that stretches from Detroit to Dodge City? Or to a "South" that includes both George W. Bush's best county in 2004 (Ochiltree, Tex.) and his worst (Washington, D.C.)—as well as Barack Obama's best county (Jefferson, Miss.) and his worst (Magoffin, Ky.) in this year's Democratic primaries?

For such reasons I have developed a 10-region model, shown on the map (p. 21). These regions are roughly equal in voting strength (each cast about 12 million votes in the 2004 election), but each has a distinct history and political bent.

This year Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee, seems to be focused on three goals: increase John Kerry's narrow 2004 margin in the Hispanic-heavy region of El Norte (with the goal of winning Colorado and New Mexico and becoming competitive in Florida); erase the Republican Party's customary solid lead in South Coast (winning Virginia and possibly North Carolina, plus going over the top in Florida); and reduce the Democrats' often-huge deficit in Cumberland (allowing Obama to take Ohio and possibly Indiana). By contrast, if the late September polls are at all correct, the Republican nominee, John McCain, has only one viable strategy to counteract any Electoral College gains by Obama. He must capture Chippewa, which narrowly went for Kerry last time, to have a chance of winning the electoral votes of Michigan, Pennsylvania and possibly Minnesota and Wisconsin.

I assigned counties to the 10 political regions primarily on the basis of how they voted in presidential elections going back to 1948. (In the past 15 elections, no one has been elected president without carrying at least five of these regions.) In particular, I looked at changes from one election to the next, as opposed to the simple margins of victory by one party or another. I wanted to give a sense of where shifts in voting patterns led to shifts in party control of the White House. In 1960, for example, John F. Kennedy and the Democratic Party captured the White House by running nearly 10 points above Harry Truman's 1948 showing in the heavily Catholic and urbanized Northeast corridor—thus compensating for Kennedy's running well behind Truman in other parts of the country. And in 2000, George W. Bush ran 11 points above the previous Republican nominee, Bob Dole, in the oil-rich and military-influenced Comanche region, helping him to capture the electoral votes of Arkansas, Louisiana and, most crucially, Florida.

All but three of the regions are geographically coherent. The exceptions are Upper Coasts, which includes most of New England and the Pacific Northwest (both part of the Green Party base, if it had one); El Norte, which is based in the Southwest but also takes in the largely Latino area of Miami; and Frontier, which is based in the Rocky Mountains but also includes a slice of "Live Free or Die" New Hampshire (the Libertarian Party base, in its wildest dreams).

In 2004, Bush's strongest region was Comanche, where he beat Kerry 63 to 36, and he scored solid wins in four other regions. Cumberland (60 to 40) has the nation's highest percentage of non-Hispanic white residents (90 percent) and was George H. W. Bush's best region when he unsuccessfully sought a second term in 1992. The sprawling Frontier region (58 to 40) was the strongest region for Ronald Reagan when he captured the White House in 1980. Southern Inland (58 to 42) was the only region to support Jimmy Carter in 1980 but has been reliably Republican ever since. South Coast (53 to 47) is the fastest-growing region and edges out Southern Inland for the highest share of African-American residents (24 percent).

Kerry won three regions with ease: Upper Coasts (60 to 38), the slowest-growing region; the Northeast Corridor (60 to 39), which barely beats the Upper Coasts as the most highly educated region; and Mega-Chicago (54 to 45). But his narrow margin in El Norte (51 to 48), where Hispanics make up 42 percent of the population, may have cost him

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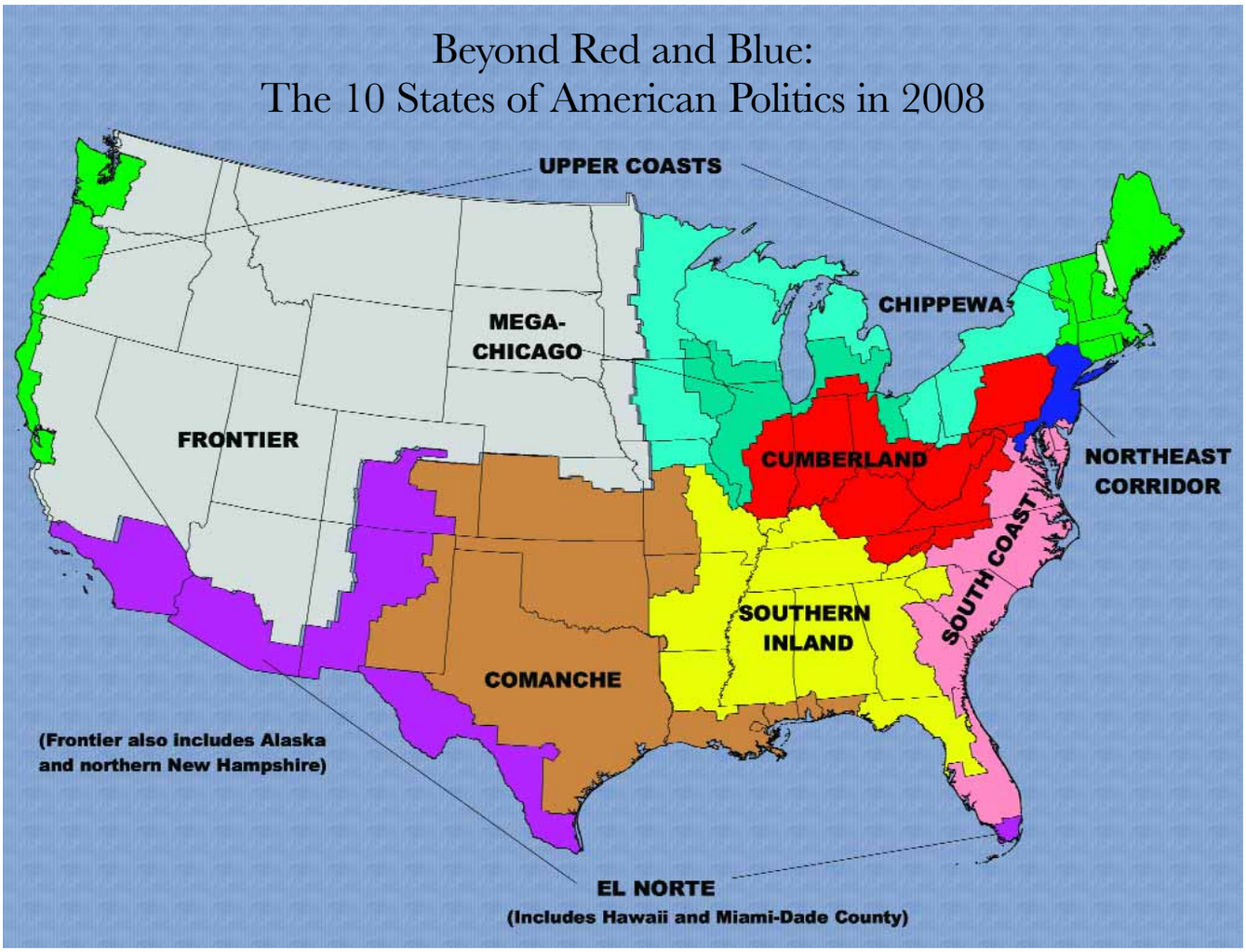

Colorado and Florida. And a thin victory in Chippewa (also 51 to 48) probably doomed his efforts to carry Ohio.

The 2004 regional breakdown roughly corresponded with education patterns. The Democrats carried four of the five regions with the highest percentages of college graduates, losing only Frontier—and running especially badly in the highly educated suburbs of Kansas City, Omaha and Salt Lake City. Four of the remaining regions went for the Republicans, with Chippewa going against the flow. Flint, Mich., and Youngstown, Ohio, were among the areas with few college graduates but a strong majority of Democratic voters. But although Chippewa has a relatively small share of college graduates, it is second only to Upper Coasts in the percentage of the population that has graduated from high school, while the Democratic region of El Norte has the highest number of dropouts.

Kerry also carried four of the five most urbanized regions, losing only South Coast, thanks to poor showings in cities such as Jacksonville, Fla., and Virginia Beach, Va. Bush won the five most rural regions except for Chippewa, again, where he lost mostly rural counties close to the Canadian border from New York to Minnesota. These two exceptions are the regions most likely to switch parties this year, assuming a competitive election.

A few more variables help explain the regions' distinct political characteristics. Between 2000 and 2004, Bush's biggest jump (4.1 points) was in the Northeast Corridor, and the biggest increase within that region was 11 points in Staten Island. (He carried that borough but lost the rest of New York City.) He also got a bounce of at least three points in Southern Inland, El Norte, Comanche and Cumberland. His most anemic rise was in Mega-Chicago (1.2 points), where he was weighed down by a three-point drop in Columbus's Franklin County, Ohio. That region also gave Obama his biggest margin in this year's

MAP COURTESY OF AUTHOR

This article is part of **America**'s series "A Closer Look," offering in-depth perspectives on important issues during the 2008 presidential campaign.

Democratic primaries (60 to 37 over Hillary Clinton). Obama also scored solid wins in South Coast and Southern Inland and narrow wins in the Northeast Corridor and Frontier. Clinton ran strongest in Cumberland (56 to 42) and easily won El Norte and Chippewa, while barely taking Upper Coasts and Comanche.

State by State

The 10 political regions do not award any electoral votes, of course, but they give big clues to what each candidate needs to do in order to carry "swing" states. Here is how some of the most hotly contested states are likely to play out.

Ohio. A top priority for Obama is to minimize his losses in the Cumberland section of the state that cost Kerry the presidency in 2004. That means, for example, reducing Bush's 71-29 margin in Batavia's Clermont County, on the Kentucky border. (This was the same margin as in 1988, when George H. W. Bush trounced Dukakis in Ohio.) In the Democratic primary, Obama generally fared poorly in this part of the state, but he won Cincinnati's Hamilton County by a wide margin; a high turnout in that city could help offset inevitably lopsided losses elsewhere in southern Ohio.

At the same time, Obama must maximize his strength in the Mega-Chicago part of the state. That means pushing the Democratic trend in Franklin County, where Kerry's 54 percent was six points better than Bill Clinton's 1996 performance, and where Obama got a solid 57 percent in the Democratic primary. Finally, Obama must win the tie-breaking Chippewa region. Watch the city of Mentor in Lake County, east of Cleveland, which went for Clinton by two points in 1996 and for Bush by three points in 2004.

Pennsylvania. This is McCain's best chance to compensate for any Bush states that Obama is able to pick up. With Obama likely to run up a big margin in the Northeast Corridor's Philadelphia area, McCain must maximize his party's natural strength in Cumberland. That means pumping up his percentages in Lancaster and York counties, where Bush finished in the mid 60s in 2004 but ran slightly behind his father's showings in 1988. The rub is that Obama carried Lancaster in the Democratic primary and got a respectable 45 percent in York. Meanwhile, Hillary Clinton crushed Obama nearly three to one in the Scranton area, which gave a solid incumbency bounce to Bush in 2004, but McCain cannot count on a boost from the birthplace of the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, Joe Biden.

A win in Pennsylvania also hinges on McCain's at least breaking even in the Chippewa part of the state. One bellwether is Washington County, just outside Pittsburgh, which Kerry carried by less than one point in 2004 and where Obama got only 29 percent in this spring's primary.

Virginia. The Northeast Corridor piece of the state (small but containing several populous suburbs of Washington, D.C.) has recently become safe Democratic territory, but this is another state where Obama must watch his Cumberland flank. For example, the Blue Ridge area's Roanoke County (which surrounds, but does not include, the city of the same name) jumped from 60 percent to 65 percent for Bush in 2004. Obama, who lost the county by 11 points in the primary, must prevent another Republican uptick here.

But as in Florida (see below), a win in the South Coast may be the key to statewide victory. Virginia Beach (noted above) vaulted from 56 percent to 59 percent Republican in 2004, and Obama (who received 65 percent of the city's vote in the primary) probably has to keep his loss here down to single digits. A bellwether for both Virginia and the South Coast region may be Henrico County, outside of Richmond. Bush won it 54 to 46, but he actually slipped a bit here between 2000 and 2004.

Florida. Assuming that the Republicans get their customary landslide wins in the Comanche city of Pensacola and Southern Inland counties on the north Gulf Coast (and that the Democrats rebound to a solid lead in El Norte's Miami), this swing state should be decided in the swing region of South Coast. Look to Orlando's Orange County, which Kerry won by fewer than 1,000 votes last time. Obama lost the county by nine points in the Democratic primary, but that's considerably better than he did in Florida as a whole, where candidates did not actively campaign because the contest was not sanctioned by the party. A solid Orange County win for Obama would probably give him the state and make the electoral votes of Ohio irrelevant.

Michigan. The Cumberland part of the state is small, but it represents the vanguard of the Republican vote in a state that McCain would love to deliver for the Republicans for the first time in two decades. Watch Jackson County, west of Ann Arbor. Bush jumped from 52 percent to 56 percent in 2004; if McCain cannot bump that figure up a little, he probably cannot win the state. As for the Democratic-leaning Mega-Chicago part of the state, keep an eye on three counties. In 1988, Dukakis received 60 percent in Detroit's Wayne County, 37 percent in affluent suburban Oakland County and 39 percent in the more blue-collar suburban Macomb County. By 2004, the respective numbers for Kerry were 69 percent, 50 percent and 49 percent. McCain must arrest that trend if he is to be competitive statewide. Finally, McCain has to get a boost in the Chippewa region. Sparsely populated Gogebic County, on the Upper Peninsula next to Wisconsin, may be a good test case. Bush received 47 percent here in both 2000 and 2004; if McCain and Sarah Palin cannot get a majority this fall, they are not likely to take Michigan's 17 electoral votes. McCain's announcement in early October that he was pulling resources from Michigan has likely put the Wolverine state out of reach. A

The Manner Is Extraordinary

The life of John LaFarge

BY JAMES T. KEANE AND JIM McDERMOTT

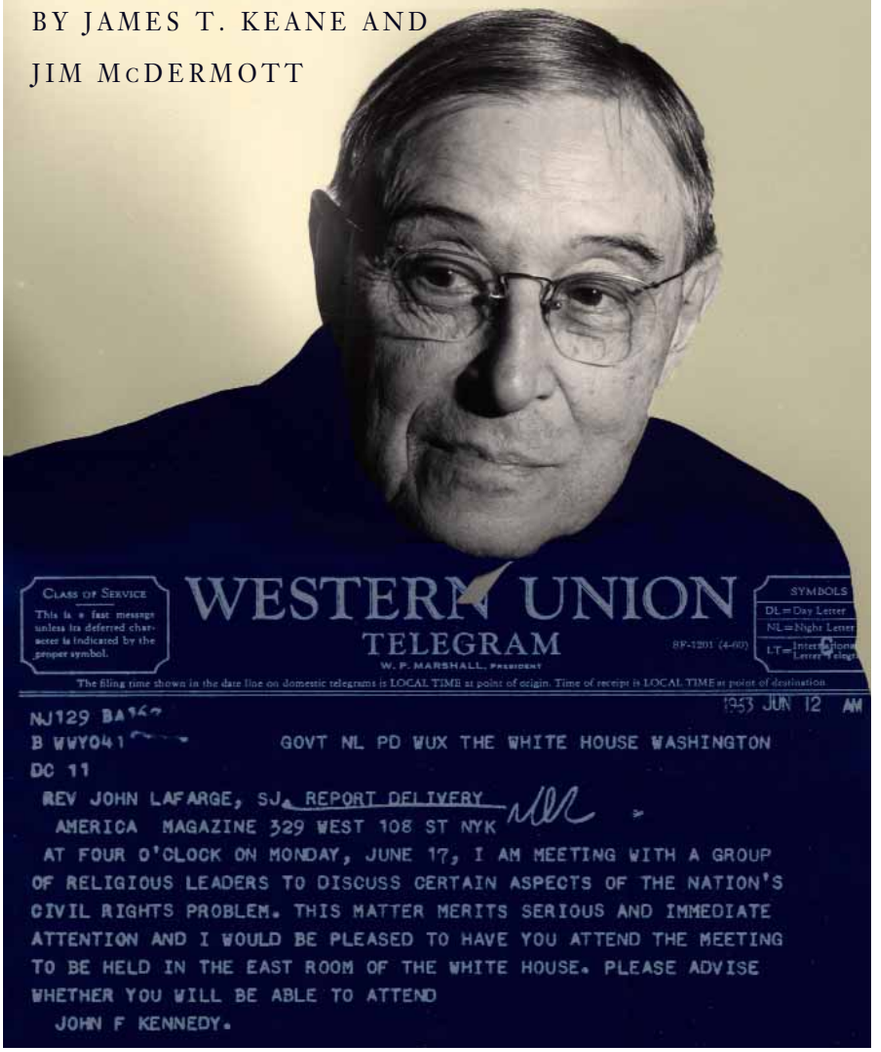

PHOTO FROM **AMERICA** ARCHIVES

ON NOV. 26, 1963, in the church of St. Ignatius Loyola in Manhattan, Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston spoke before hundreds of mourners of the "three Johns" whom the world needed so dearly and yet had lost in recent memory. The first was John F. Kennedy, 35th president of the United States, who had been assassinated four days previous and whose death the nation was still mourning. The second was "Good Pope John," John XXIII, who had died that June during the proceedings of the Second Vatican Council. The third, and the real subject of Cushing's eulogy, was John LaFarge, S.J., a famous pioneer in the field of interracial justice and an editor of **America** for 37 years, including four years as editor in chief, who had died on Nov. 24, 1963.

Almost every prominent figure in the civil rights movement during those troubled times attended LaFarge's funeral. They came to pay their respects to an unlikely crusader, a man born of the utmost privilege who by virtue of his long discernment and pastoral experience had come to see racial divides and the long history of discrimination against African-Americans in the United States as the crucial issue of the age.

The Catholic Church in the United States owns a long and complicated history in the realm of race relations, filled with praiseworthy and prophetic moments, but also marked by a long record of discrimination as well as many shameful episodes in which bigotry and ignorance have trumped church teachings and the Gospel message. When the church finally confronted this painful legacy in the 20th century, no name was more closely associated with Catholic efforts for justice for the oppressed than that of John LaFarge, S.J., the fifth editor in chief of **America**.

A Famous Pedigree

Born in 1880 in Newport, R.I., into an aristocratic and artistic family, John LaFarge held one of the most distinguished surnames in the United States. His father, also named John, was an artist whose works grace many of the most famous churches and museums in the United States. He is remembered not only for his watercolor paintings but also for his extraordinary work with stained glass. John senior was also a close friend of the novelist Henry James and Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulists. Six years before his death in 1910, he was one of the first seven persons chosen for membership in the newly formed

JAMES T. KEANE, S.J., and **JIM McDERMOTT, S.J.**, are associate editors of **America**. This is the third in a series of articles on the history of **America**.

American Academy of Arts and Letters. His sons Oliver Hazard Perry LaFarge and Christopher Grant LaFarge were famous architects in their own right (the latter drew up the original Byzantine design of the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City), and numerous other descendants also became prominent artists. His grandson Oliver LaFarge won the 1929 Pulitzer Prize for his novel *Laughing Boy*.

John LaFarge, S.J., graduated from Harvard in 1901; but during both his high school and university years he was plagued by poor health, which caused him to take periodic breaks from his studies. LaFarge disliked Harvard, distrusting both the "modernist spirit" of the students and what he saw as anti-Christian attitudes among faculty members, one of whom was the influential philosopher George Santayana. Soon after he matriculated, LaFarge left for Innsbruck, Austria, to study for the Catholic priesthood. In his autobiography, *The Manner Is Ordinary*, LaFarge wrote of a conversation with his mother upon his departure: "For some reason or other, which neither she nor I could ever explain, she begged me on that occasion: 'Don't let them make you a Jesuit.' I replied, 'Mother, dear, nothing can ever make me a Jesuit.' In later years we were somewhat mystified over this."

Four years later, LaFarge recanted, traveling from Austria to Rome to seek permission to enter the Society of Jesus. LaFarge's inspiration for becoming a Jesuit, he wrote later, emerged during his annual retreat as a seminarian, as he meditated on the material poverty of Jesus: "The idea of being a priest and of not sharing the poverty of the great High Priest seemed to me intolerable." Because of his high social standing in this country and abroad, LaFarge's petition was accepted personally in Rome by Luis Martin, S.J., the superior general of the Jesuits. He was ordained a Catholic priest in Innsbruck on July 26, 1905, and entered the novitiate of the Jesuit's Maryland-New York Province later that year.

Early Influences

LaFarge originally wanted to go into academia, but his recurring episodes of poor health gave his Jesuit superiors pause; chief among their concerns was that LaFarge would work himself to death. Anthony J. Maas, S.J., LaFarge's local superior when he was completing the Jesuits' ordinary program of studies, put their thoughts in stark if colorful terms: "You have the choice of being a live jackass or a dead lion." Instead of being sent to graduate studies, LaFarge was assigned to work in various parishes as an assistant pastor.

After a number of short-term assignments, LaFarge was sent in 1911 to St. Mary's County, Md., a rural area with a racially mixed population (including a large number of impoverished African-Americans descended from the area's slaves) where the Jesuits had first established mission churches in 1634. The Jesuit history with African-Americans in southern Maryland was not without its shameful side; for many years the Jesuits had themselves owned a number of slaves. Fewer than eight decades earlier, the Society of Jesus had sold off its slaves upon orders from Jesuit superiors in Rome.

LaFarge's work with the local African-American population affected him deeply and shaped many of his attitudes toward race relations. In the "long years of country missions," LaFarge publicly decried the many obstacles facing both his parishioners and the Jesuits serving them: rural economic survival, how to evangelize and preach properly to interracial populations, the issue of community life in a racially prejudiced society and how to promote education for the poor, among others. These themes set the stage for his later interests in racial desegregation and interracial dialogue.

In 1926, LaFarge established the Cardinal Gibbons Institute, an industrial school for African-American boys in southern Maryland. Despite "a disheartening obstacle of general public indifference to anything connected with the South or the Negro," LaFarge claimed "tremendous interest in the whole idea of a project that was national in scope, the first national project undertaken by Catholics on behalf of the Negro." The school struggled from the beginning, hurt both by the financial catastrophes of the Great Depression and the indifference of many Catholics, but the community leaders whom LaFarge encountered would remain with him in various projects throughout his life.

Coming to America Magazine

In 1926, LaFarge left southern Maryland to join the staff of **America**, then under the direction of editor in chief Wilfred Parsons, S.J. The assignment radically changed the scope and nature of LaFarge's work, as he became ever more prominent in the world of writing and public speaking. While he did not entirely leave behind his previous interests, retaining close ties to the Catholic Rural Life Movement and remaining in constant touch with his colleagues from Maryland, **America** would be the primary outlet for his advocacy for the rest of his life.

LaFarge began writing and speaking on interracial dialogue and racism almost immediately. In 1934 he founded the Catholic Interracial Council of New York, which included among its goals the elimination of ignorance regarding race issues, social justice on the model of the old Catholic Action movement and a struggle against Communist inroads. By 1960, there were 42 Catholic Interracial Councils around the United States, and they joined together as the National Catholic Conference on Interracial Justice in 1959. In later years, Catholic Interracial Councils gained popularity with political activists as an avenue for interracial dialogue, and gained much publicity in the 1960s for their popularity with college students.

In 1937, America Press published LaFarge's most important book on race relations, *Interracial Justice: A Study of the Catholic Doctrine of Race Relations*, which emerged out of his philosophical education as well as his experiences in Maryland and New York City in the 1920s and 30s. The book laid out a lengthy argument for rethinking American racial attitudes, particularly racist attitudes that blamed the relative lack of African-American intellectual or economic achievements on a supposed inferiority. LaFarge attributed this apparent disparity to the economic and cultural impoverishment that African-Americans had suffered at the hands of the ruling classes in America since their unhappy arrival.

Using his training in philosophical Thomism, LaFarge argued that human rights were natural to all people regardless of race, class or creed; the rights of individuals were not bestowed by governments, but were merely protected by them. The U.S. Constitution "is not the source or origin of our natural rights," LaFarge argued. "It is the governmental instrument by which the national sovereignty guarantees…those natural rights which the citizen enjoys by virtue of the very fact that he is a citizen and as such is vested with certain rights as he is bound by certain duties."

This argument impressed an unlikely reader, Pope Pius XI, who in 1938 asked LaFarge to help write an encyclical on racism, to be titled "The Unity of the Human Race" (*Humani Generis Unitas*). Pius had been impressed by the portability of LaFarge's natural law argument, which could be applied to any society's racist policies, including those of Nazi Germany. The encyclical was never released, however, and only years later was its existence and LaFarge's participation in its composition confirmed.

Despite his opposition to interracial marriage (because of the social damage he believed it caused children), LaFarge also made a strong case for the immorality of American segregation on practical grounds, saying that when mandated it "imputes essential inferiority to the segregated group," and actually would end up hurting the groups enforcing it by depriving them of the cultural and

economic benefits of free exchange. This approach exemplified LaFarge's primary strategy throughout his career, combining philosophical and religious reasoning with practical, politically sensible approaches to social ills.

LaFarge became executive editor of **America** in 1942 and editor in chief in 1944; he established during his tenure the progressive editorial tilt that the magazine has retained in large degree to this day. As he readily admitted, he was not a skilled administrator, and after four years LaFarge stepped down as editor in chief, while remaining on staff as an associate editor. He continued to write extensively on race relations, but also contributed his thoughts regularly on labor, foreign affairs, McCarthyism, Catholic liturgical debates and countless other issues.

His influence on the civil rights movement began to decline in the 1960s as the movement benefited from the emergence of African-American leaders and took on a more assertive tone at odds with LaFarge's more conciliatory approach. Still, LaFarge's prominence in the movement earned him a spot on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial behind Martin Luther King Jr., during his famous "I Have A Dream" speech in August 1963.

In addition to his many books and his contributions to **America**, LaFarge also wrote for countless overseas periodicals as well as for such American reviews as Commonweal, Liturgical Arts, Sign, Catholic World, Saturday Review and many more. He also wrote over 30 book reviews a year for **America**, as well as for The New York Times, Saturday Review, Thought, Interracial Review and the Herald-Tribune.

Early Ecumenism

While most famous for his work on race relations, LaFarge was also a great champion of interfaith and ecumenical dialogue, though his work in this area was often stymied by the attitudes and policies of his own church. Longstanding Catholic concerns over "indifferentism," the acceptance of relativist approaches to the truth claims of different religious traditions, made it difficult for Catholics of his time to receive permission to appear in public with rabbis or Protestant ministers. Furthermore, a long history of anti-Catholic bigotry on the part of various U.S. Protestant denominations, which in a few cases continues into the present day, hindered any significant ecumenical efforts. LaFarge's gentle pressure on bishops and Catholic organizations to reach out to other faiths and Christian denominations nevertheless continued for years, and finally found some fruition with the ecumenical and interfaith reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

Ever practical, LaFarge viewed interreligious and ecumenical dialogue not in solely theological terms, but as a practical interfaith response to external threats. "If we Catholics are not to be completely isolated in the battle against atheism and paganism and their attendant evils," he wrote in 1942, "we cannot conduct the battle alone." The progress made on issues of interfaith and ecumenical dialogue in the past few decades can be attributed in many cases to seeds that LaFarge and his colleagues planted in the 1940s and earlier.

Criticisms

Not all of LaFarge's peers and later biographers found his efforts and attitudes to be without blemish. Recent historians have argued that for all his progressive ideas on race, LaFarge (like other white pioneers for racial justice) was often unaware of his own paternalistic attitudes, particularly when it came to including African-Americans in structures of authority or recognizing the urgency of the racial crisis facing the nation at the time. LaFarge was also capable of allowing his fear of Communism to color his ideas on race, to the extent that he sometimes seemed to promote interracial activities as a way to counteract Communist infiltration into American minority politics. These tendencies diminished LaFarge's influence in the civil rights movement in the crucial years of the late 1950s and early 1960s, particularly as he had already reached his 80s before the movement gained real momentum.

Final Days

LaFarge's last book, *Reflections on Growing Old*, offered him a chance to comment on his status as something of an elder statesman, both among American Jesuits and among larger circles of social progressives. "Old age is a gift," LaFarge wrote, "a very precious gift, not a calamity. Since it is a gift, I thank God for it daily."

LaFarge died on Nov. 24, 1963, soon after that book's publication, at the age of 84. "He was never one to identify the status quo with the Law of God," his fellow editors wrote soon after his death, "nor, by the same token, to lose the vision of ultimate and abiding values underlying social change." A year later, the editors of **America** announced the establishment of an institute bearing his name that would be dedicated to interracial affairs.

America's editor in chief at the time, Thurston N. Davis, S.J., wrote of LaFarge's important influence on the development of the magazine: "Whatever influence [**America** has] today, what authority we can muster in the world of the press, we owe largely to this gently dogged priest whose broad sympathy for his fellow man spanned the whole world round and constantly spilled over onto our pages." A

Listen to an interview with James T. Keane, S.J., at americamagazine.org/podcast.

Hands-On Parenting

How parents can prevent teen drug abuse

BY JOSEPH A. CALIFANO JR.

THE ANNUAL back-to-school surveys of The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University seek to identify situations and characteristics that increase or decrease the risk that a teen will smoke, drink, get drunk, use illegal drugs or abuse prescription drugs. This year's CASA survey of teens and their parents focused on how what parents do—and don't do—influence the risk of substance abuse by their 12- to 17-year-old children.

The results are disturbing. Although virtually all mothers and fathers are concerned about the challenges of raising their kids, many do not realize how certain of their actions affect the likelihood that their children will become substance abusers. Many are not willing to take actions to prevent placing their children at higher risk of substance abuse.

Compared to the time when they were growing up, almost nine out of 10 parents surveyed (84 percent) said that in these days it is harder to keep teenagers safe, and 3 of 4 parents (72 percent) said it is harder to raise a teen "of good moral character." With this in mind, why are there so many parents who either don't appreciate the impact of their actions on their children's vulnerability to substance abuse or who don't try harder?

Teens whose parents are "hands on"—engaging themselves in their teens' day-to-day lives, relaxing with them, having frequent family dinners, supervising them, establishing standards of behavior, instilling a sense of the importance of religion in their children and setting positive examples of healthy behavior—are much less likely to smoke, drink or use drugs.

Problem Parents

Many parents are doing a good job in raising their children. But this year's CASA survey uncovered problem parents who enable (some even encourage) their 12- to 17-year-olds to use tobacco, alcohol and illegal prescription drugs. By their action and inaction, and by failing to become part of the solution, these parents become part of the problem of teen alcohol and drug abuse.

This year's survey identified as problem parents those who:

- fail to monitor their children's leaving their home and hanging out on school nights (Monday through Thursday),
- fail to keep away from their children their own dangerous and addictive prescription drugs, like painkillers and stimulants,
- fail to address the problem of drugs in their children's school,
- set a bad example.

"It's 10 p.m. Do you know where your child is?"

Some 46 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds—compared to only 14 percent of their (unknowing or disingenuous) parents—said they typically left home to hang out with friends on school nights.

Not knowing where your kid is and what your kid is up to on a school night is risky business. Why? Because the later teens are hanging out with friends on

ART BY SEAN QUIRK

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school nights, the likelier it is that drug and alcohol use will be going on among them. Half of those teens who come home after 10:00 p.m. say that is the case, as do almost a third of those who come home between 8:00 and 10:00 p.m.

Parents as Passive Pushers

Some parents become "passive pushers" by leaving around the house addictive prescription drugs like OxyContin and Vicodin, making them easily available to their children. Among kids who abuse prescription drugs to get high, 34 percent say they get them from their homes; another 31 percent say they get them from their friends. Since it's fair to assume that a third of those friends in turn get the drugs from their homes, it's likely that for almost half of kids abusing addictive prescription drugs, the pills are coming out of the family medicine cabinet.

These kids tend to think prescription drugs are safer than drugs bought from street dealers since these drugs come from a pharmacy and mom and dad use them. A few decades ago, parents used to lock their liquor cabinets; perhaps the time has come for them to lock their medicine cabinets, or at least keep track of the number of pills there.

Pessimistic and Naïve Parents

Almost all parents—including those who believe that drugs are used, kept and sold at their child's school—say it is important that their teen's school is drug-free. Yet, of the almost half of parents who say their children are in drug-infested schools, only 39 percent believe the goal of making their child's school drug free is realistic.

> This year, for the first time, more teens said prescription drugs were easier to buy than beer.

Not surprisingly, in view of this parental attitude, one in five middle schoolers and almost two-thirds of high schoolers attend schools where drugs are used, kept and sold. Research consistently demonstrates that compared to kids at drug-free schools, those at drug-infested schools are three times more likely to smoke marijuana and get drunk in a typical month, and twice as likely to smoke and drink. Nevertheless, one-third of parents believe that the presence of illegal drugs in their teen's school does not make it any more likely that *their* child will try them.

These pessimistic and naïve parents should not accept drug-infested schools as inevitable, any more than they would tolerate asbestos-infested schools as an acceptable risk for their children. State laws require that parents send their children to middle and high schools. These parents should demand that the state remove drugs from schools. No government should require parents to send their children to schools where drugs are used, kept and sold.

Prescription Drugs and Marijuana

The ready availability of illicit substances puts an extra burden on parents to stay engaged with their teens. Availability is the mother of use and, for most teens, prescription drugs and marijuana are as easy to get as candy.

Each year we ask teens which of these is easiest to buy: cigarettes, beer, marijuana or prescription drugs. For the first time in the history of CASA's survey, more teens said prescription drugs were easier to buy than beer. The proportion of teens who say prescription drugs are easiest to buy jumped by 46 percent since 2007.

Marijuana is more available than ever, with 23 percent of teens able to get the drug in an hour or less, and 42 percent of teens able to get it in a day or less. The survey reveals a 35 percent increase over last year in the number of teens who can get marijuana in an hour or less, and a 14 percent increase over last year in teens who can get the drug in a day or less.

From 2007 to 2008—in just one year—we saw an increase of 1.4 million teens who can buy marijuana in an hour or less (4.4 vs. 5.8 million), and an increase of 1.1 million teens who can buy marijuana in a day or less (9.5 vs. 10.6 million). In this same year, the population of 12- to 17-year-olds decreased by almost half a million.

More than two-thirds of 17-year-olds can get marijuana in a day or less. Half of 16- and 17-year-olds say that among teens their age, smoking marijuana is more common than smoking cigarettes.

A Mom and Pop Operation

Preventing substance abuse among teens is primarily a mom-and-pop operation. Every mother and father should ask, "Am I doing the parenting essential to help my child negotiate the difficult teen years free of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs?"

Most important are the ABC's of setting a good example: not smoking or using illegal drugs, not abusing alcohol or prescription drugs. The saddest revelation of this year's survey was that a quarter of 12- to 17-year-olds knew parents of friends or classmates who used marijuana, and 10 percent knew parents of friends or classmates who smoked pot with teens.

All parents should monitor their children on school nights, keep dangerous prescription drugs out of their children's reach, demand that their children's schools be drug free, and be engaged in their child's life.

There are no more powerful examples of parental engagement than getting a teen involved spiritually and having family dinners. Teens who are religiously involved and who have frequent family dinners are at much lower risk of using and abusing substances. Mom and pop are key here. Compared with teens who attend religious services weekly—whether Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim—those who never attend such services are three times likelier to use marijuana and twice as likely to smoke and drink. In 21st-century America, it is unlikely that teens are regularly attending religious services unless their parents are taking them.

And what a difference dinner makes! Young people who have dinner with their parents at least five times a week are far less likely to smoke, drink or use drugs than kids who have family dinners less than three times a week.

The payoff for good parenting is enormous: A child who gets to age 21 without smoking, using illegal drugs or abusing alcohol is virtually certain never to do so. In this day and age, few, if any, children are going to make it through the turbulent decade from age 11 to 21 without engaged parents. If parents are not part of the solution, they become part of the problem. A

From the archives, Joseph A. Califano Jr. on the myths of drug legalization, at americamagazine.org/pages.

Book Reviews

Common Fear, Shared Vision

The Same Man

George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh in Love and War

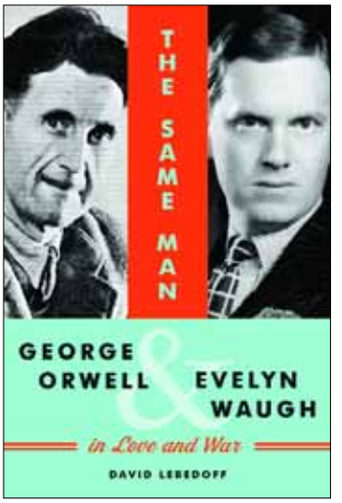
By David Lebedoff

Random House. 288p $26
ISBN 9781400066346

First, to dispense with the obvious, there seem to be no two more disparate men of 20th-century letters than George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh. So the reader enters David Lebedoff's *The Same Man: George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh in Love and War* provoked, in several senses of that word, to see how Lebedoff will convincingly develop his thesis that they were "the same man" in terms of their own time and their views of the future.

The award-winning *Cleaning Up* (1997), one of five earlier books by David Lebedoff, a Harvard Law School graduate who is now an attorney in Minneapolis, deals with the Exxon Valdez trial; but it is in *The New Elite: The Death of Democracy* (1981) and *The Uncivil War: How a New Elite Is Destroying Our Democracy* (2004) that one finds the key to Lebedoff's reading of Orwell and Waugh. The moral code of Lebedoff's "new elite," those experts he sees as comprising the new "test-score meritocracy," is disbelief in any moral code at all, "the pernicious doctrine known as moral relativism." Lebedoff argues that in their hatred of the moral relativism of their time and their seemingly opposite ways of fighting against what they saw as the inevitable future of their civilization, Orwell and Waugh were "the same man." Both of them, he writes, "hated, really hated" their own time and understood the futility of a life without faith—Orwell from the perspective of atheism and Waugh from that of a convert to Catholicism.

It takes some time in this short dual literary biography for Lebedoff to make this point, although that is not necessarily a criticism. The opening chapters show Eric Blair (before he adopted the name George Orwell) and Evelyn Waugh at school and in their early forays into the world—Orwell conditioned by prep-school snobbery to reject the class system and Waugh using it to begin his relentless climb into society. These chapters are a very good read, but they tend to cement the notion that these two young men could not have been more different. Orwell rejected the opportunity to go to university, although his Eton education would have qualified him for it, and began his career as an officer in the Indian Imperial Police in Burma, following in the footsteps of his civil servant father. Waugh's famously chronicled years at Oxford set him on a path in pursuit of social standing and pleasure.



Similarly, the chapters on the courtships and marriages of the two men suggest that while Waugh was seeking status rather than love, Orwell (described by Lebedoff as "perhaps the least eligible bachelor in the British Isles" because of his poverty, his health and his inconvenient political positions) was looking for a soulmate, someone not only intelligent and well educated, but beautiful and sympathetic to his socialist views.

When Waugh's first marriage failed, he converted to Catholicism and was allowed to marry a second time to Laura Herbert only when the marriage to Evelyn Gardner (the "she-Evelyn," to their friends) was annulled. Both women had connections to the aristocratic Herbert family, and Waugh made sure the Herbert coat of arms was displayed over the front door of his country house. Orwell's marriage to Eileen O'Shaughnessy, an Oxford graduate and student of J. R. R. Tolkien, appeared to be an improbable love match. She understood that his work came before all else, and that he was not always the most faithful of husbands, but she willingly followed him to Spain when he was engaged in fighting against Franco during the Spanish Civil War and, more important perhaps, to a depressing village house in Hertfordshire where he wrote and she ran a small store. Lebedoff captures the flavor of these two contrasting personal lives in engaging, almost gossipy, prose. The short chapter on Waugh and Orwell as fathers—Waugh had seven children by his second wife; Orwell and Eileen adopted a baby boy—is alternately painful and touching.

It is in the discussion of the service of Orwell and Waugh during the Second World War and of their writing that Lebedoff develops most convincingly the thesis that the two men were not really on opposite ends of a spectrum, but that they, in fact, shared a moral philosophy rooted in a common hatred of relativism and a fear of the future that their own times were ushering in.

Given the skill with which Lebedoff analyzes certain parts of their work, one would like more direct engagement with the writing of both men. His reading of the scene in *Brideshead Revisited* in which Lord Marchmain dies absolved by the church he has hated and rejected makes clear Lebedoff's point that this and much else of Waugh's writing is not, in fact, about nostalgia for a lost time but "fundamentally…deeply religious." He argues that after his conversion Waugh's dissatisfaction with the modern world led him to put his faith in the hereafter; Orwell's angst led him into politics in an attempt to change that world. The two men met only once, when Waugh visited the dying Orwell in the hospital; they corresponded and critiqued each other's work on occa-

The Reviewers

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George M. Anderson, an associate editor of **America**, is the author of *With Christ in Prison*.

David Garrison is professor of English and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Georgia Southwestern State University, Americus, Ga.

Karen Sue Smith is editorial director of **America**.

sion, clearly respecting and admiring one another while disagreeing about how to confront the world.

The Same Man is written in the lucid prose that Orwell himself would have admired. Lebedoff is clearly positioning both Orwell and Waugh to reflect his own views on moral relativity (further reading of his *The Uncivil War* is useful to define that view). One of the bonuses of Lebedoff's dual biography is that it reminds us of the pleasures of reading both Orwell and Waugh again, sending us back to *Brideshead* and *1984*, to the essays on language and politics and to the long list of their works we may have missed. Lebedoff makes the case that they are still relevant. ***Sharon Locy***

What Good Can Come

The Church of the Second Chance

A Faith-Based Approach to Prison Reform

By Jens Soering

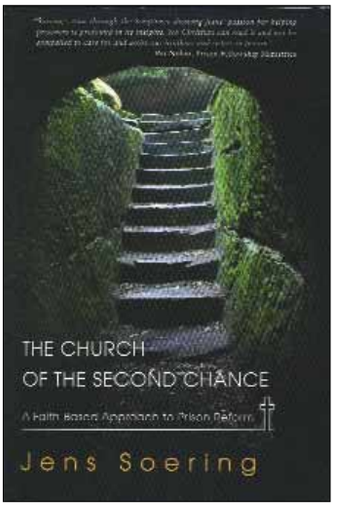
Lantern Books. 326p $22 (paperback)
ISBN 9781590561116

Prisoners have often written about their lives behind bars, but Jens Soering's *The Church of the Second Chance* stands out because it involved considerable research. How, a reader might ask, could a person serving a life sentence for murder, with only limited access to a typewriter and none to computers, produce a book filled with reliable information from respected sources like the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, the American Bar Association and the Vera Institute of Justice? The index provides a guide to these and other respected organizations consulted in the preparation of the book.

The author of three previous books dealing with various aspects of incarceration—one of which won first place among the 2007 Catholic Press Association awards—Soering was fortunate in having skilled outside friends (his "elves," as he calls them) who did part of the research that lends the book much of its credibility. Other friends helped cover the cost of the professional typing service that produced the manuscript for the publisher. As he himself points out, such assistance is rarely accessible to those behind bars.

A Catholic who speaks of finding strength in centering prayer, Soering makes it clear that whatever the denomination, faith can play an important role in the lives of prisoners struggling with their confinement. Religious themes also find their way into the interviews that form part of the book.

Among the most striking is an interview with Kinda White, whose daughter was raped and killed by two teenagers. An adjunct professor of philosophy, psychology and criminal justice at a university in Texas, Dr. White not only forgave the perpetrators; she was able to move away from the concept of retributive justice that dominates the criminal justice system in the United States. After immersing herself in works like Howard Zehr's *Changing Lenses: A New Focus on Criminal Justice*, she opted for restorative justice, a stance that led her to join the anti-death penalty group, Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation. She became a member of the board and eventually began speaking publicly about nonviolent alternatives to the death penalty. In the spring of 2001, she arranged to speak with one of the two who had killed her daughter— not the experience of most who have lost a loved one to murder. The interview underscores the author's and Kinda White's belief in restorative rather than retributive justice. Soering is careful to acknowledge, though, that some offenders are too dangerous to be anywhere except in confinement.



Prison reform advocates frequently observe that the families of prisoners, too, undergo a punishment of their own. Studies have repeatedly shown that frequent contact with relatives enhances the chances for a prisoner's successful transition back into the community. But because of the great distances that separate many prisoners from their families, incarcerated men and women rely on the telephone to maintain contact. Unfortunately, as the author explains, exorbitant charges that benefit private companies like M.C.I. create harsh financial burdens for low-income family members. Such telephone charges are but the tip of the iceberg of ways in which purveyors of "services" within the criminal justice system reap huge profits. At the same time, by spending too little money on caring for the estimated 20 percent of the U.S. prison population who are mentally ill, prison systems not only intensify their suffering, but also almost ensure their return to prison after release.

Two-thirds of those who complete their sentences, in fact, whether mentally ill or not, re-offend within three years. The Second Chance Act, signed into law in the spring of 2008, at least offers some hope that the obstacles prisoners face on leaving prison after completing their sentences may finally be receiving needed recognition by Congress. In addition, Soering cites a few programs that do assist in the re-entry process. In his own state of Virginia, where he is serving his sentence, the Department of Corrections and the federal government jointly operate a re-entry program for high-risk offenders. Six months before release, they receive identification documents—crucially important for obtaining Medicaid and food stamps—as well as help in accessing housing and substance abuse programs. Kansas has a similar state-run program, and one county in Oregon provides re-entry assistance for juvenile offenders in the form of work constructing homes for Habitat for Humanity. But as the author notes, even though we know what to do with respect to restorative justice models of these kinds, "we lack the will to do it"—and also the funding that would make such hopeful initiatives more widely available.

Our extraordinarily long sentences, through measures like mandatory minimums and three-strikes-and-you're-out laws, stand in marked contrast to sentencing practices in European countries.

There, Soering points out, prison terms of "ten to twelve years are deemed very long and twenty years is the outside limit." Such differences between the U.S. approach to sentencing and, say, that of France and Italy (Mr. Soering quotes an Italian judge as saying, "no one stays twenty years in prison") may lead readers of this informative, scripturally rooted book to question the viability of our present approach to crime and punishment.

George M. Anderson

Between Real and Imagined

That Little Something

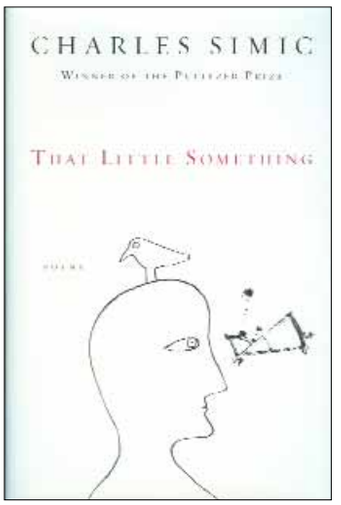
Poems

By Charles Simic
Harcourt. 96p $23
ISBN 9780151013593

Charles Simic's poetry is and always has been gnomic. His poems read like little messages containing clues—though often, at first sight, clues too cryptic to be put to use. It both pleases and puzzles that at just the moment when a poem seems to approach a newly discovered center of gravity, Simic is likely to twirl his cape, avoid meeting our eyes and disappear, a mime slipping through a dark curtain. His art is an absolute determination to transform into language the endless contingencies of consciousness, especially as these are colored by memory and dream, and always to do so in the guise of a nimble (and at times indifferent) magician.

With *That Little Something*, his 18th collection, the Pulitzer Prize winner and poet laureate, who turns 70 this year, continues. Here we see over and over again the poem as an act that sets the stopped moment against the flowing of time, sets this next to that and situates on the page the act of thinking, "that little something," which wasn't anything until...just now! Such transformations are accomplished through high culture and low, bold insight and cliché, the real and the surreal (though less so than in earlier volumes), gravity and comedy, wakefulness and dream. "Poems," Simic observed several years ago, "are other people's snapshots in which we recognize ourselves."

Born in Belgrade in 1938, and thus into a childhood darkened and broken by war, Simic immigrated to the United States at the age of 16. His poetic voice, which is a quite different voice from the one that appears in his frequent and meticulous contributions to the New York Review of Books, is the voice of one who is ever so slightly always the outsider—a cryptic, shrewd, on-to-something voice, but one darkened by an unwillingness to *assume* human goodness. It is the voice, in short, of someone to whom difficult things have happened and even greater heaps of difficulty seem likely, though this is not to say that the voice is without humor. Anything as mundane as extracting straightforward meaning, however, like pulling a hefty blood orange from a small grocery bag, is discouraged. What we ordinarily construe as meaning is as elusive in Simic's work as justice in Kafka's or cause and effect in José Saramago's. In the title poem he writes,



The likelihood of ever finding
it is small.
It's like being accosted by a
woman
And asked to help her look for
a pearl
She lost right here in the
street.

Simic's verse is consistently marked by an informality, by a range of diction, by surrealist statements, and is almost always located in precise, minor moments of attention. In his collection of prose pieces published in 1994, *The Unemployed Fortune Teller*, Simic asserts that "the secret wish of poetry is to stop time." Not surprisingly then, individual poems become small acts that set the present against not the past itself but the passage of time:

In a city where so much is hidden:
The crimes, the riches, the
beautiful women,
You and I were lost for hours.
We went in to ask a butcher for
directions.
He sat playing the accordion.
The lambs had their eyes closed in
bliss,
But not the knives, his evil little
helpers.
Come right in, folks, he said.

Ezra Pound asserted more than once that "the image is not an idea." Simic knows this. For him, the image is that trace of the mind finding (or stumbling into) a code that represents it, the mind, at work. "The poem," he writes, "is as much the result of chance as of intention." A line such as "The lambs had their eyes closed in bliss" or lines like "Raised as I was by parents/ Who kept the curtains drawn,/ The lights low, the stove unlit" give us something much more than just an image or just an idea. Such lines compel us to conjure, through *feeling*, a brief knowledge of a particular sensibility, the way the artist Joseph Cornell's boxes (about which Simic has written with deep interest) compel us into a minor version of an imagined world, a world in which symbolic structures are personal, but not private. Clocks, watches and other artifacts of time, for example, figure largely. This language, which desires desperately to make the moment live, causes reverberations among the past, the present and eternity. At times, Simic can sound like Dickinson, first among American poets with an ear to the music of mortality:

Soul's jukebox
Playing golden oldies
In the sky
Strewn with stars.
When I ask God
What size coin it takes
I'm greeted
With stunned silence.

That Little Something has no pretense to great weight or social polemic. Simic

imagines the poem not as an act of critique or outrage but as a gesture of intimacy. The finest poems in the volume appear at first simplistic, but the language is keen, and the unstated relationships among the strands of thought—memory, observation, imagination—alert us to a consciousness that emerges in us as we assemble these lovely poems. These two stanzas from "Memories of the Future" illustrate the power of such relationships:

The animals in the zoo don't hide their worry.
They pace their cages or shy away from us
Listening to something we can't hear yet:
The coffin makers hard at work hammering the nails.

The strawberries are already in season
And so are the spring onions and radishes.
A young man buys roses, another rides
A bike through the traffic using no hands.

The reliable and instructive American poet and teacher William Stafford used to refer to the writing of poetry as riding a bicycle in the dark; for Simic, the trick is riding that bike through traffic, hands up, managing to balance a delicate movement of thought through a world of dangerous and ceaseless distraction.

David Garrison

A Daring and Innovative Artist

Mary Cassatt

Prints and Drawings From the Collection of Ambroise Vollard

Catalogue By Marc Rosen, Susan Pinsky
University Press of New England. 164p $50
ISBN 9780974162188

Mary Cassatt built and enjoyed an international reputation during her lifetime, and since her death in 1926, the popularity of her work has grown. Cassatt had studied painting from the age of 16 and worked for two decades solely as a painter. She took up printmaking when Edgar Degas invited her and Camille Pissaro to launch with him a new graphic arts journal to be called Le Jour et la Nuit. The trio produced a number of prints for the venture, but it never took off. Cassatt's love of printmaking, however, did. She excelled at the art form and experimented boldly with it, taking a single image through multiple variations of form, tone, texture and color. After 1880 she produced as many original prints as she did paintings.

While *Mary Cassatt*, a 2008 exhibition catalogue from Adelson Galleries in New York City, is not written for the general reader, anyone can enjoy the images it contains. Over the last eight years Adelson Galleries has mounted three exhibitions (each with its own catalogue) devoted exclusively to Ambroise Vollard's collection of Cassatt's works on paper: her pencil sketches and drawings, prints (drypoint, etchings and aquatints) and counterproofs, which are prints made from pastels. Vollard, the legendary dealer who championed Édouard Manet, Paul Cézanne and many of the Impressionists, as well as Pablo Picasso, bought Cassatt's

Who Cooks for You?

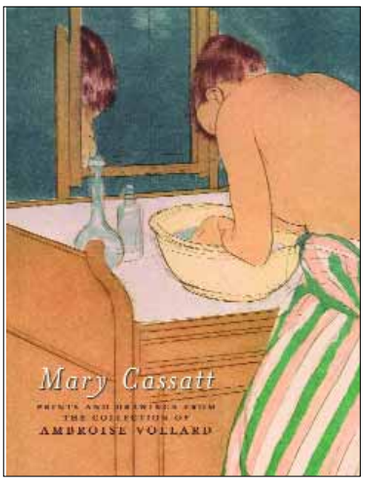
In the old pine,
the one that broke
  but still stands watch
    over the house next door
  where the old lady
lives no more,
an owl, big as a dream,
spends the night.
I've seen him
  in that off-color hour
    before stars,
as he raises and lowers
  his seraphim wings—
launching the self
he may not know he has
into the faith of air.

In the night, he calls
and, from a where unseen,
another answers: they question.
And brood. And chuckle—
like monks of a feather.
I, in my bed, window open,
  winter or summer,
nudge my slumbered husband.
We surface. And listen,
holding hands in human darkness;
knowing precious little,
but willing to learn:
ready to laugh
  at the punch line.

Stella Robbins

STELLA ROBBINS, whose poetry has appeared in literary magazines, is also a painter.

prints directly from her in bulk. Cassatt had pulled some of these from Degas's printing press and later from her own. In the deal she sold Vollard prints at various stages of execution and with wide variations among them. Vollard also purchased a few Cassatt prints from dealers and other artists. He accumulated nearly 300 in all.



A few of the images in this catalogue will be familiar. Some of her prints had been bought or published in books, and many had been exhibited in retrospectives during Cassatt's lifetime. But Vollard's collection was largely kept intact after Cassatt's death. More important, after Vollard's death in 1939, his entire collection was bought by Henri M. Petiet, who kept these prints stored and unframed until he died in 1980. The Cassatt works in the three Adelson exhibits had therefore been unseen by the public for at least 60 years.

The catalogue contains a foreword by Warren Adelson and an essay by Nancy Mowll Mathews on the relationship of Cassatt and Vollard as artist and dealer/collector. Matthews has written an insightful biography of Cassatt and is an expert on her prints. The volume includes two short essays on Henri Petiet and on the papers used for printmaking, plus notes, some technical, on each print.

Cassatt's works on paper stay true to her typical themes: women and children in natural poses, family and guests at home, and theater- and operagoers out on the town. For those like myself who appreciate the process of ideas taking shape, the sketches and drawings and stages that lead up to a painting more than the final work itself, this book is a special delight. One can see the artist's mind at work, trying this and that, adding shadows, background or some detail, a pattern on a sleeve, or altering the entire mood by darkening the halftones, choosing a new color scheme or reversing the lights and darks. One can assess Cassatt's decisions about medium, paper and size, in relation to the subject or desired effect. Some of the tenderest scenes—like "Quietude" and "The Caress," both of which depict a woman holding a baby on her lap—are made in drypoint, a delicate medium in which an image is drawn directly onto a copper plate with a wire-thin needle. These images tend to be small, monochrome and minimalist, which ironically magnifies the emotional intimacy they convey. Other prints, often of multiple figures, are large. For these, like "Gathering Fruit," Cassatt used several techniques, multiple plates, a full sheet of paper and luscious colors.

Glossy reproductions of Cassatt's art—her prints, oils and drawings—are easy enough to find in book form. But a catalogue like this one, not just of Cassatt's prints but of an array of prints purchased by a single dealer at a particular point in history, satisfies a reader who wants something beyond the general. Here one can see the artist in action, the dealer in action, and the two of them transacting business in their day. One also sees how works of art are moved across generations, each generation assessing whether this work of art (and this artist) still merits attention.

Karen Sue Smith

Classified

Appeals

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THE SAN MIGUEL SCHOOL of Camden, a Catholic Lasallian middle school for boys, seeks an energetic and visionary PRINCIPAL for its curricular and co-curricular programs. The Principal reports to the President. The qualified applicant must have at least a master's degree in educational administration and previous elementary and/or middle school administrative experience, preferably in Catholic schools. Interested candidates should send their résumé, statement of educational philosophy and three references to: The San Miguel School of Camden, Attn: Principal Search Committee, 836 South Fourth Street, Camden, NJ 08103, or by e-mail to: SanMiguel.Camden@gmail.com. Deadline for applications is Nov. 1, 2008.

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Letters

Identity Theft

Re "Identity Crisis," by Melanie Morey and John Piderit, S.J. (10/13): "Identity theft" is more like it. What really counts at a Catholic university is who teaches and what they teach. With the attenuation of theology and philosophy requirements at Catholic universities and the striking decline of Catholics on faculties, the Catholic identity of the major Catholic universities is properly in question.

Most Catholic university administrators, if they talk about Catholics on the faculty at all, speak of a "critical number" of Catholics, a phrase the authors employ several times. That is a useless measure, for it means only what the administrators say it means.

William H. Dempsey
Arlington, Va.

Rhetoric and Reality

"Escaping the Political Mire," by Olga Bonfiglio (10/13), is an excellent review of the important book *A Nation for All*, by Chris Korzen and Alexia Kelley.

As a longtime social worker, I know that one of the prime motivating factors behind welfare reform was the belief that many women were having children just to receive more public assistance. Even if this were true in some cases, at least these children had some degree of financial security.

Removing or limiting this support forced more women into the workforce, leaving their children in day care and weakening the mother-child bond, and it made pregnancy termination a more likely option. The workforce also exerted its pressure against further pregnancies, births and children, as all are counterproductive for firms that employ women. This made abortion even more likely.

Decisions made largely for economic reasons, such as reduced welfare expenditures, are usually not pro-life.

Jim Lein
Minot, N.D.

Naming the Beast

The analysis of our current financial crisis by Paul D. McNelis, S.J. (Current Comment, 10/20) was refreshing, because his remarks did not come from a point of view born of a corporate profit model. He provided a historical and moral perspective on our current financial crisis that is calming, because it helps release our thinking from capitalism's egocentric nature and our popular culture's "show me the money" financial values.

No matter how loudly the beast cries, we will not be defined by this moment in time.

Rene Lorio
St. Louis, Mo.

Living Wage

The article by Paul D. McNelis, S.J. (Current Comment, 10/20) on the current financial crisis reflects a serious disconnect with low-wage earners throughout the nation. Much of the credit card debt we have accumulated, I'm willing to bet, is because people are trying to make ends meet in regions where the cost of living is enormous, such as the San Francisco/Monterey Bay area, Los Angeles, New York and similar metropolitan areas. Low wage earners have been suffering from stagflation for at least a decade now, but it hasn't been noticed or reported by economists who focus on macroeconomics.

It's time to remember what a living wage is, and examine what happens to those at the bottom who have not had the benefit of a living wage. It's also time to review *Rerum Novarum* and reflect on its timeliness even today.

Chris Nunez
Santa Cruz, Calif.

Get to the Point

It would be much more honest of J. Brian Bransfield ("Conscientious Election," 10/13) if he had simply said "Vote Republican" instead of dancing around the issue.

Tom Bastien
Denver, Co.

without guile

"Remember when a hard drive was a long trip on the road, log on was adding wood to the fire and a backup was something that happened to your commode?"

CARTOON BY RICK PARKER

Letters

Lesser of Two Evils

Re "Respecting Religion" by Michael Sean Winters (10/13): Get off John F. Kennedy's back about his approach to religion in politics. Would you have preferred that Richard Nixon win in 1960?

Charlie McNamee
Minot, Mass.

Lost in Translation

Re: "Expressing Holy Things," by Bishop Victor Galeone (9/8): Every day the members of ICEL should repeat the following ten times: "Liturgical language should be accurate, faithful and clear." Perhaps then they would be inspired to listen to the suggestions of those bishops who have experience with "John and Mary Catholic" and what they need for prayerful participation in the Mass.

Let us pray that many other bishops will join Archbishop Pilarczyk, Bishop Trautman and Bishop Galeone and continue to insist that these changes must be an improvement over what we have now.

P.S.: Do any members of ICEL speak English as their first language?

Anne Michel, C.S.J.
Brentwood, N.Y.

No More Changes

Thank you to Bishop Victor Galeone for speaking up for "John and Mary Catholic" in "Expressing Holy Things" (9/8). Please leave the Mass translation in understandable English, and keep trying to convince the other bishops in our country to consider the Catholic people, even if they personally are becoming bored with the whole argument.

Many of us are seeing too much of the spirit of the Second Vatican Council being chopped away. Must it also be so with the liturgy?

Shirley Craigshead
Moose, Wyo.

Reverent, Noble and Accurate

Bishop Victor Galeone's article on liturgical translations ("Expressing Holy Things," 9/8) was not helpful to the cause of reverent, noble and accurate translation of the Latin Missal into English. I deeply regret that at the recent meeting of the U.S. bishops in Orlando, he and some of his fellow bishops were able to stall the approval of the ICEL translation of the changeable parts of the mass.

After the Vatican's recent approval of the unchanging parts of the Mass, this delay was a bitter pill to swallow for thousands of American Catholics and for the other English-speaking episcopal conferences throughout the world that had already approved the text.

The ICEL translation is a good one. Of course, it isn't perfect; nothing is. The perfect is the enemy of the good. I just hope the Holy See finally steps in to ensure that the English-speaking people of the world will soon have an up-to-date English translation of the Roman Missal, like all the other linguistic groups in the church.

Gino Dalpiaz, C.S.
Chicago, Ill.

War and Conscience

I am writing to protest the full-page ad you ran reading "The Infantry Provides Firepower," which ironically followed an article by Mary Ann Walsh, R.S.M., "Conscience and the Catholic Voter" (10/6). Are the Quakers the only ones who get it?

The just war theory, much less our two pre-emptive strikes on Muslim countries, doesn't have a Gospel leg to stand on.

Kathryn Shannon, M.M.
Monrovia, Calif.

A Bit of Advice

I was saddened by two letters in your recent issue ("Poor Choices" and "Help Needed," 10/13). Two writers, both obviously deeply committed to the political process and wanting to vote in light of their very own formed adult consciences, express themselves as stymied. One writer considers himself disenfranchised because the message he hears from the pulpit in his local parish contradicts his carefully formed conscience. Another, a self-confessed anti-abortion liberal, wonders whether she will sin if she votes for candidates who espouse a pro-choice political position, though they may themselves be personally anti-abortion.

Both of these patently conscientious adult Catholics find very little positive in the positions of candidates whose claim to Catholic votes seems limited to their support for the official church position on opposition to stem cell research, abortion and contraception.

As long as such people find their educational experience and their commitment to becoming true followers of Christ contradicted by what they are told from the pulpit and from their bishop's pronouncements, my non-authoritative, non-binding advice to them would be to say a prayer for the perhaps benighted, doubtless overworked parish priest, and another for the bishop who has not the slightest notion that there is a world of difference between "teaching" and "laying down the law."

And yes, let them then go and vote for the poor, the orphans, the widows and all the marginalized, and for candidates who do not say, "I've got mine; I earned it; tough on you."

(Rev.) Franklyn J. Bergen
Tucson, Ariz.

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The Word

Eternal Life, Christian Style

All Souls (A), Nov. 2, 2008

Readings: Wis 3:1-9; Ps 23:1-6; Rom 6:3-9; Jn 6:37-40

"If, then, we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him" (Rom 6:8)

THIS YEAR the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (traditionally known as All Souls Day) interrupts the cycle of Sundays in Ordinary Time. The choice of Scripture readings is quite extensive and even confusing, as a glance at the Lectionary Nos. 668 and 1011-15 will show. I have chosen texts that are among those most often selected in liturgies for this day.

Our secular culture has a hard time confronting the reality of death. Many of us try not to think about death, use euphemisms in talking about it and seek every natural and unnatural means to avoid it or put it off. For some, physical death is the absolute end of life. Therefore we should either "eat, drink and be merry" (hedonism) or use all our resources and efforts to make this world into a better place, because it is the only world we have (exclusive humanism). In certain late Old Testament books and in the New Testament, however, a different perspective on life and death emerges. While recognizing the natural character of physical death, these texts hold out hope for an eternal life with God and the avoidance of what can be called "ultimate death."

Today's Old Testament reading from the book of Wisdom (sometimes called the Wisdom of Solomon) is often used as the Old Testament reading at Catholic funerals. It comes from a Jewish book written in Greek in Alexandria in the first century B.C. The author was trying to bring together the best insights of the biblical and Greek philosophical traditions. While recognizing the reality of physical death, he offers the hope that wise and righteous persons may nevertheless enjoy eternal happiness with God and the blessed faithful. Even though skeptics (there were many in the writer's time) regarded physical death as the absolute end of life, this biblical writer insists that the wise and righteous may and should hope for immortality, so they can regard the sufferings of the present and even their physical death as moments along the way to their future fullness of eternal life with God.

While the New Testament writers shared this belief in life after physical death, they based it not on the ancient Hebrew concept of Sheol as the abode of the dead (as the early Old Testament writers did), nor on the Greek philosophical idea of the immortality of the soul nor on the Jewish (especially Pharisaic) concept of the general resurrection of the dead. Rather, they based their hope for eternal life first and foremost on the resurrection of Jesus Christ as "the firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18).

In today's selection from John 6, Jesus proclaims that it is his Father's will that "everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day." This statement implies that for those who believe in Jesus, eternal life has already begun. It does not begin at the moment of physical death. Instead, it begins in the act of faith in Jesus as the revealer and revelation of God. He becomes the point of "crisis" or decision for all. And Jesus promises that on the last day, at the general resurrection, those who believe in him will be raised, vindicated and richly rewarded. Thus John combines present and future eschatology. The pivot in all this is the resurrection of Jesus as the preview and guarantee of our future resurrection. In him and through him we have already begun to experience eternal life, and we can expect it to be even better.

In today's selection from Romans 6 (the earliest theological reflection on Christian baptism), Paul focuses on the link between Christ's death and resurrection and our baptism. Through baptism we have entered into both the death of Jesus and the eternal life of the risen Christ. Baptism involves dying with Christ in order to live with Christ. The water of baptism at once symbolizes death (by drowning) and life (without water life is impossible for humans). Baptism involves receiving the Holy Spirit, which is the power of God to live a virtuous and fruitful life in the present and to enjoy eternal life in the age to come.

What John and Paul hoped for was eternal life with Christ. The hope for eternal life is a desire planted deep in the human psyche. Yet we need some good reason on which to base our hope. John, Paul and other early Christians were convinced that they had found a good reason in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. If resurrection and eternal life can happen in the case of Jesus, they can happen in our case too, provided that we remain "in Christ," that is, we share in the power of his life, death and resurrection, which we have experienced in faith and baptism.

Daniel J. Harrington

Praying With Scripture

- Do you believe in life after death? Why?
- What does faith in the risen Christ have to do with hope for eternal life?
- Do you ever reflect on the significance of baptism in your life? What might it have to do with enjoying eternal life in the present?

ART BY TAD DUNNE

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