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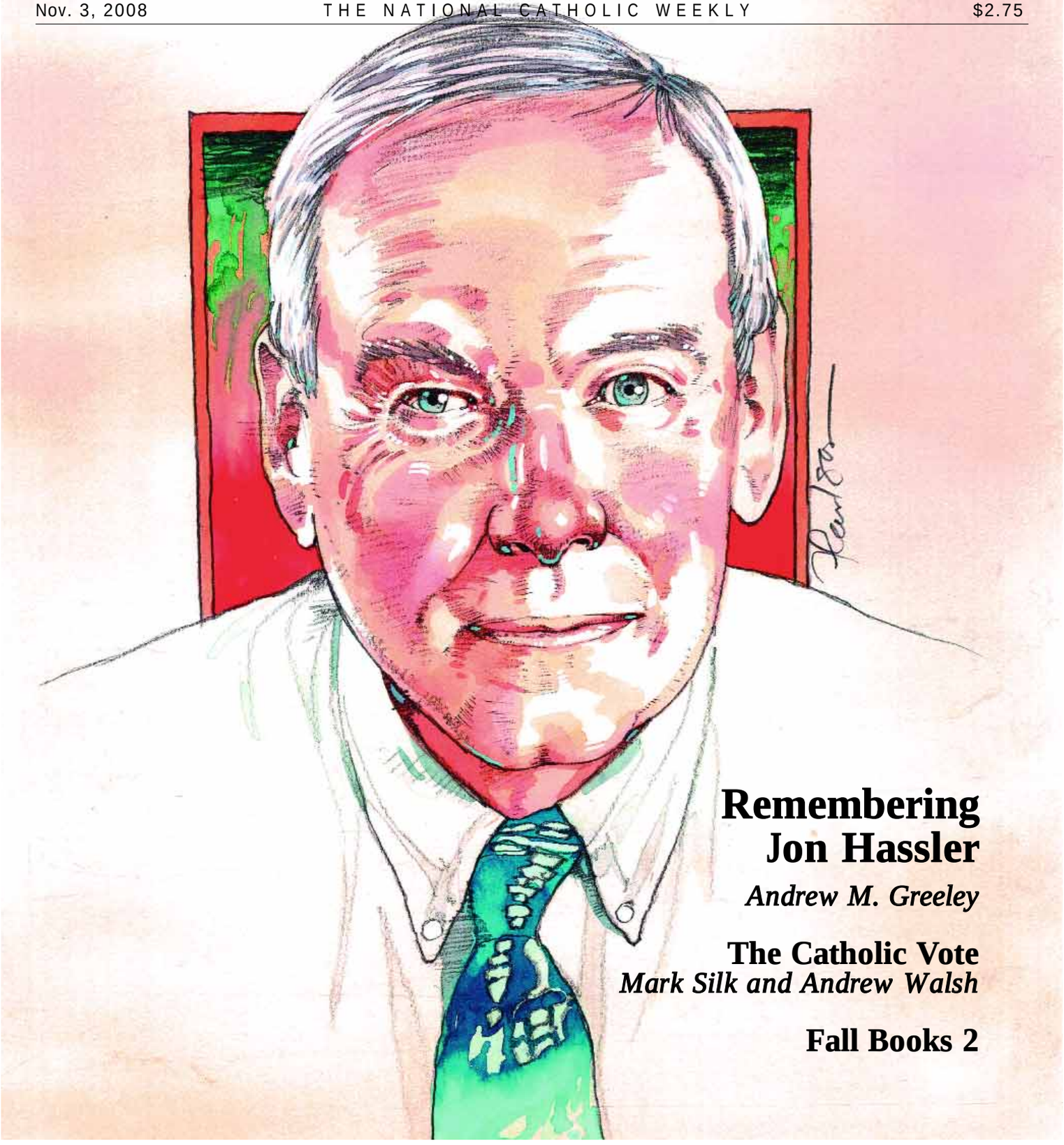

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Of Many Things

A ONE-ACT PLAY about Dorothy Day on DVD—how did that come about?

The author and sole performer of "Fool for Christ," Sarah Melici, explained the genesis of her video version of the play (FoolforChrist.org) during a conversation last summer: "People who saw the play kept nudging me, saying that a DVD would reach more people" and thus extend Dorothy Day's message of God's love for the poor and the need for Gospel nonviolence. I had been fortunate to watch the very first live performance of the play in 1998 in the dining room of Maryhouse on Manhattan's Lower East Side, the Catholic Worker house where Dorothy Day died.

Sarah continues to perform the play live around the country—so far, in over 30 states and Canada—and she continues to receive invitations from churches, universities and other organizations. But the nudging had its effect, and four years ago she began the demanding task of bringing the play to a new format, one that could be viewed in living rooms and not just on stage. Little rewriting was necessary, she said. But where to film it? "We thought of various locations, a church, the Catholic Worker farm north of Manhattan, the beach on Staten Island where Dorothy lived, but none seemed right," she said. "This was partly because with my representation of Dorothy at various periods and with others taking part in her story, what works on stage does not necessarily work in real-life locations." The de La Salle Christian Brothers finally offered her appropriate space at Manhattan College.

With a check from Nina Polcyn, a close friend of Dorothy, the fundraising had already begun. "I sent out letters, and a man in California sent a check for $100. When I wrote to thank him," she said, "he wanted to know more about the project and then mailed a donation of $10,000." Through other large donations, like one from Maryknoll, some who wished to remain anonymous and another from the Archdiocese of New York, as well as many smaller donations, Sarah received the needed amount.

For the most part, the basic props remained the same, except that instead of artificial prison bars in the first filmed scene, showing Dorothy in jail for a protest for grape workers organized by Cesar Chavez, a section of rented real bars was used. When traveling for live performances, though, Sarah carries what she calls her bar unit of lightweight wooden bars. She also carries a bag with some books Dorothy loved, like a Dostoyevsky novel, her Bible and a notebook. She brings her prison dress too, and a wig that makes her look remarkably like Dorothy.

For the film, the director positioned three cameras for effective close-ups. One is of Dorothy speaking with her dying mother about prayer and the life to come, leaning over the elderly woman with words of reassurance and hope. "Dorothy's facial expressions would not be apparent to a live audience in a large setting," Sarah said. Many who have seen both the live performance and the DVD have told her they prefer the latter.

Sarah herself says, though, "I am partial to a live performance" to convey the sense of who Dorothy Day was and the values she lived by. Having seen the live play twice, I can vouch for that. Some of the most memorable live performances have taken place in prisons. She performed twice at Sing Sing, north of New York City. The prisoners responded enthusiastically, she said, to the depiction of the many facets of Dorothy's life that are deftly woven into the play, focusing as they do on the poor (most prisoners come from backgrounds of poverty) and on nonviolence. But the play also resonated with the depiction of Dorothy as a woman of prayer. "After one performance," Sarah said, "we all gathered around the walls of a large room and prayed together."

In the course of her travels, Sarah has visited numerous Catholic Worker houses. Despite the many demanding situations the Catholic workers face every day, "what I have always noticed in them is lots of joy and good humor," she said, adding: "How else could they survive the pressures of the many needs they face?" Her live presentation was a high point of the celebration of the Catholic Worker's 75th anniversary celebration in Worcester, Mass. "I was a little worried before the performance," she said. "After all, the workers are the personification of what Dorothy stood for. But," she concluded, "they gave me a standing ovation."

George M. Anderson, S.J.

America

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106 West 56th Street
New York, NY 10019-3803
Ph: 212-581-4640; Fax: 212-399-3596.
E-mail: america@americamagazine.org;
letters@americamagazine.org.
Web site: www.americamagazine.org.
Customer Service: 1-800-627-9533.

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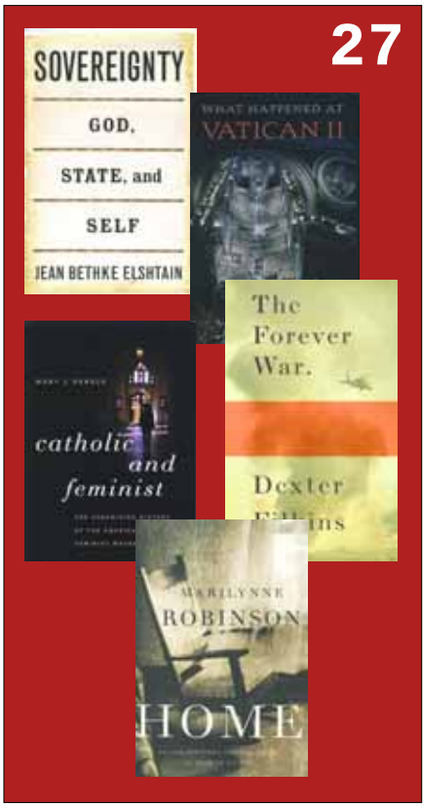


Forward in Unity

From Oct. 10 to 12, a *synaxis* (gathering) of patriarchs, primates and representatives of the Orthodox Church was held at the Phanar in Istanbul under the presidency of His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I. He opened the assembly with an exhortation to unity:

"Dearly beloved brothers in the Lord, we are called to contribute in every possible way to the unity of the Orthodox Church, transcending every temptation of regionalism or nationalism so that we may act as a unified Church, as one canonically structured body."

The fathers issued an inspiring, forward-looking document that signals special overtures to other Christian churches. The themes treated by the synaxis will have a familiar ring to Roman Catholic Christians. Pope Benedict, too, has been reminding us regularly of the need to overcome conflicts in the contemporary world, the need to resist the distancing of societal life from the life of faith, the need to protect the environment and the need to foster the sacredness of the family and marriage.

This convergence of pastoral concerns is a welcome development. We pray that it will advance ecumenism between East and West.

Encourage Savings

In 1974 and again in 1980, Congress passed legislation to encourage taxpayers to save money for retirement. Individuals with earnings under a certain cap could sock away tax-deferred savings of up to $6,000 a year by purchasing a traditional individual retirement account. I.R.A.'s are long-term investments with early withdrawal penalties that can be passed on to a beneficiary if the owner dies and that are protected from bankruptcy. Traditional I.R.A.'s offer a short-term incentive (tax deferment on the initial purchase) and a long-term incentive (tax deferment on any gains). There are specific types of I.R.A.'s for small businesses (S.E.P.), those who prefer to pay taxes up front (Roth) and high earners (non-deductible).

A second plan, the employer-sponsored 401(k), allows workers to set aside earnings, tax-deferred, of up to $15,500 to $20,500 a year, which can be invested. In these difficult economic times, they should be promoted and expanded. The maximum I.R.A. contribution could be increased and the 401(k) ceiling raised significantly. And for I.R.A. holders who do not need their I.R.A. money yet, Congress should lift the compulsory withdrawal rule for persons age 70-and-a-half who prefer to let their savings recover from the recent market nosedive.

Government should promote new incentives for saving. The most obvious change would be in the current tax on interest on ordinary savings and money market accounts. Why not exempt the interest from taxes, or cut the rate to a minimum? Though such moves decrease federal tax revenues, they would increase the stability of lenders and bulk up the money available for the government's own borrowing.

Just as government encourages charitable giving by exempting legitimate donations from tax, so it can encourage other habits: deferred gratification, long-term financial planning and thrift.

Gekko and Aquinas

"Greed is, for lack of a better word, good," said Gordon Gekko, the arbitrageur-protagonist played by Michael Douglas in the 1987 movie "Wall Street." There are two ways of interpreting the film's most quotable line. If "greed" means the self-interest that serves as the engine of classic capitalism, as Adam Smith proposed, Mr. Gekko is arguably correct. Self-interest motivates workers and companies to maximize their earnings, and therefore increases productivity, which benefits the overall economy. But if by "greed" he meant what Pope Gregory the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas named as one of the seven capital sins, then Mr. Gekko was dead wrong. At the top of the list of sins that led to the financial meltdown is greed, with pride following close behind.

Greed (and recklessness) encouraged behavior by the top executives of many financial services companies that contributed to a predictable catastrophe. Greed led the mortgage industry to invite homeowners to take on mortages beyond their means. (There was not a little greed among those homeowners, too.) Theoretically, an "efficient" market should punish overweening greed: stock prices in companies that overextend themselves in risky ventures will fall. But with few executives able to understand precisely how these financial instruments worked, the opposite happened: stock prices rose. (That's pride: the companies thought they could weather any storm.) Though the risk-taking was excessive, C.E.O.'s were rewarded handsomely. The former head of A.I.G., Martin Sullivan, received a $15 million golden parachute; and last year Richard S. Fuld Jr., the former chief of the now defunct Lehman Brothers, received a $484 million salary. "Is it fair?" asked Representative Henry Waxman at the Congressional hearings. No, it's sinful; and the sin is greed.

Editorial

A Refugee World

MILLIONS OF REFUGEES, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons struggle today throughout the world in limbolike situations. Some, like those in Palestine, have been "warehoused" for generations. Children born in refugee camps and other confined settlements grow up, start families of their own and, in some situations, pass into old age. Often deprived of free movement and the right to earn a livelihood in their host country, they endure an uncertain existence that offers little hope for achieving the kinds of basic human rights that the authors of the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees had in mind.

Both refugees and asylum seekers flee their home countries because of "a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion." Those defined as refugees by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees can hope to be accepted in another country for resettlement. Asylum seekers, on the other hand, unable to count on their own governments to protect them, flee to other countries in search of safety. There, through ever more arduous procedures, they must establish their claim to remain or face forcible deportation back to their country of origin—often to face imprisonment or death, dangers that led them to flee in the first place. Iraqis head the list of asylum seekers in industrialized nations.

In fact, Iraq now leads worldwide in the number of people forced from their homes because of ongoing violence. The U.N.H.C.R. estimates that almost five million are in need of humanitarian care. Some have been allowed to enter the United States as refugees. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, however, their numbers fell. For the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30, 2008, the U.S. State Department agreed to admit 12,000. The good news is that not only was that number achieved, but that the actual number admitted was nearly 14,000. But as advocates also point out, given the huge number of Iraqis who fled to surrounding countries, like Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt, the number admitted here is distressingly small. Some of the host countries to which they fled tend to view them more as "guests" than as refugees, with few rights or opportunities for work. There they lead a twilight existence, exploited by employers in informal work situations as they try to support their families. Many are health professionals unable to secure employment as such, and their flight has created a brain drain from Iraq that will take years to overcome. Over two million Iraqis, however, were not able even to cross the border into nearby countries. They are now internally displaced, having fled their homes yet remaining within their country, in frequently squalid conditions with relatively little help from the nation's government.

Barriers to admission have grown stricter for both asylum seekers and refugees not only in the United States but in other industrialized countries as well. Some nations have in a sense extended their actual land borders by implementing various forms of interdiction. Italian authorities regularly patrol their surrounding waters to intercept rickety boats filled with desperate emigrants from poor and violence-ridden countries hopeful of finding meager means of support for themselves and their families. Many drown in the attempt, either as their boats founder in the sea or because unscrupulous owners throw them overboard. The interdiction of Haitians at sea by the United States is another example of such an extending of borders.

BOTH AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IN THE UNITED STATES and on the international level among other industrialized countries, policy makers need to be far more mindful of the needs of refugees fleeing persecution and civil conflicts, as well as the life-threatening poverty endemic in the poorest nations. The United States, regrettably, has moved far from the invitation implied in the inscription on the Statue of Liberty, lines from Emma Lazarus's famous poem "The New Colossus": "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore." The huddled masses will remain largely where they are until Western countries like the United States and other wealthy nations agree to resettle far larger numbers of vulnerable groups.

Given its central responsibility for the devastation that has taken place in Iraq, which remains a violent and divided society, the United States has a special moral duty to help the millions of Iraqis displaced from their homes. It should play a special role in assisting refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle East, as well as from other parts of the world.

Security Stepped Up for Christians in Mosul

A displaced Christian gives pistachios to a U.S. soldier outside al-Saida monastery in Al-Qosh village, 28 miles north of Mosul, Iraq, Oct. 18. Christians in Iraq have been targets of sectarian attacks; in October, more than 1,500 Christian families fled the northern city of Mosul.

Increased security aimed at preventing further attacks on Christians in the Iraqi city of Mosul might have come too late to halt an exodus of refugees, said an Iraqi archbishop. The Iraqi government has deployed extra police on the streets of the northern city to try to end a wave of violence in which at least 15 Christians were murdered in the first two weeks of October. But Chaldean Archbishop Louis Sako of Kirkuk, Iraq, said the force of 2,500 police officers might not be enough to stop Christians from fleeing their homes or to persuade refugees to return. "We are extremely worried about the situation," the archbishop told the British branch of Aid to the Church in Need, a Catholic charity that helps persecuted Christians, in an interview on Oct. 14. "It is absolutely crucial that the government send more security and police to the area and maybe—just maybe—it will encourage the Christians who have fled Mosul to go back," he said.

Traditional Chinese Wisdom and Christianity

For the good of Chinese society and the defense of people, the Catholic Church must engage in dialogue and work with those who defend the traditional values found in Confucianism, said Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun of Hong Kong. Cardinal Zen told the Synod of Bishops in Rome on Oct. 15 that before being written as the Scriptures and incarnated in the person of Jesus, the word of God was the force that created beauty, the universe and the human person. And, he said, the traditional Chinese wisdom founded in and fostered by Confucianism contains the "seeds of the word" of God that the Second Vatican Council said are present in all religions and cultures. Cardinal Zen said the church in Hong Kong has developed a healthy dialogue with followers of Confucianism, aimed particularly at "trying to preserve the precious heritage of Chinese wisdom."

60th Anniversary of Rights Declaration

Sixty years after the creation of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these rights are under threat, several speakers said at a conference celebrating its anniversary. The false presumption that this landmark list of fundamental principles is a Western, Judeo-Christian invention and therefore would be inapplicable to Eastern, especially Islamic, cultures seems to be on the rise, they said. The U.S. Embassy to the Vatican, with support from the Knights of Columbus, sponsored a conference on Oct. 16 titled "For Everyone, Everywhere: Universal Human Rights and the Challenge of Diversity." It was one of three conferences the embassy is organizing this year to mark the 60th anniversary of the U.N. declaration. Mary Ann Glendon, the U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican, said the U.N. commission charged with drawing up a sort of "international bill of rights" asked philosophers to identify rights or values that people from different cultures, religions and political bents could agree on as universal.

Palestine a Testing Ground for Tolerance

Though Palestinians would like to serve as role models for Christian-Muslim tolerance and brotherhood, they have not yet reached that stage, said the retired Latin patriarch of Jerusalem. "Our society is made up of freedom and despotism, and we are trying to chart a path toward freedom. In Palestinian society there are Palestinians of different faces but on one single path," said Patriarch Michel Sabbah, who retired in June. "If we stumble on that path, we can fall to despotism." Religion for some of the faithful "can become a sort of despotism when it does not take into consideration respect for the other believer," he said at the opening of a conference at Bethlehem University on Oct. 15. Though Patriarch Sabbah said kinship among Palestinian Muslims and Christians does exist, he blamed "developments abroad" for "shaking that affinity." The two-day conference brought together about 100 European and Palestinian experts to discuss the role of the media and education in Christian-Muslim relations.

Racial Disparity in Abortion Rates

A leading black Catholic bishop called on African-Americans to "defend our community" against an abortion industry that he said is performing abortions on minority women at a disproportionate rate. Auxiliary Bishop Martin D. Holley of Washington, who chairs the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee on African-American Affairs and serves on their Committee on Pro-Life Activities, was commenting on a report by the New York-based Guttmacher Institute on abortion trends between 1974 and 2004. The report found that although abortion rates for all racial and ethnic groups had declined between 1989 and 2004, the rates now range from 11 per 1,000 non-Hispanic women to 28 per 1,000 Hispanic women and 50 per 1,000 black women. In 2004, 37 percent of all abortions performed in the United States were obtained by black women, 34 percent by non-Hispanic white women, 22 percent by Hispanic women and 8 percent by women of races other than white or black, the report said. "As an African-American I am saddened by evidence that black women continue to be targeted by the abortion industry," Bishop Holley said in an Oct. 15 statement. "The loss of any child from abortion is a tragedy, but we must ask: Why are minority children being aborted at such disproportionate rates?"

Patriarch Speaks at Synod on the Word of God

Pope Benedict XVI walks with Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople after a prayer service in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican Oct. 18. The patriarch delivered a speech during a session of the world Synod of Bishops.

Sitting below Michelangelo's massive fresco "The Last Judgment," the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople said divided Christians must be changed by God's word and must work harder to bring the joy of the Resurrection to all creation. "We must experience radical 'metanoia'—a conversion of attitudes, habits and practices—for ways that we have misused or abused God's word, God's gifts and God's creation," Patriarch Bartholomew told the Synod of Bishops on the Word of God. After the celebration of evening prayer Oct. 18 in the Sistine Chapel, Pope Benedict XVI invited the patriarch, who is the spiritual leader of Orthodox Christians, to address the synod. When Patriarch Bartholomew, the first ecumenical patriarch to address a session of the world Synod of Bishops, had finished his 25-minute speech, the pope noted that the church fathers quoted by the patriarch are recognized as great theologians in both the East and the West. "If we have fathers in common, how can we not be brothers?" Pope Benedict said. "This was a joyful experience of unity—perhaps not full, but true and deep."

Bishops Urge Dual Approach to Life Issues

Catholics are required to oppose abortion on demand and to provide help to mothers facing challenging pregnancies, the chairmen of two committees of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said in an Oct. 21 statement. Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia, chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities, and Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, N.Y., chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, also urged Catholics to study church teaching on matters pertaining to abortion rather than rely on statements and materials from outside organizations.

The prelates' statement was released in response to two arguments that have surfaced in the abortion debate during the run-up to the Nov. 4 election. The first maintains that the Catholic Church should accept the U.S. Supreme Court's decision on abortion in the 1973 Roe v. Wade case as a "permanent fixture of constitutional law" and that the only way to reduce abortions is through broader government support for social programs for pregnant women. The second holds that the church should focus solely on restoring recognition for unborn children's human rights and that proposals to provide life-affirming support for pregnant women distract from that effort.

"We want to be clear that neither argument is consistent with Catholic teaching," the prelates wrote. "Our faith requires us to oppose abortion on demand and to provide help to mothers facing challenging pregnancies."

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Print's Demise

'No one needs to be told that newspapers are nearing their end days.'

IN EARLY OCTOBER I found myself scurrying out the front door a little earlier than usual so I could retrieve a pair of plastic bags, one blue, the other yellow, from my front lawn. Contained within were two newspapers—The New York Times, in the blue bag, and my local paper, The Star-Ledger, in the yellow. Their front pages confirmed rumors I had heard that the world was falling apart, or at least the portion of the world that deals with derivatives and subprime mortgages.

Newspapers—the responsible broadsheets anyway—have always served as my guide through the brambles of trivia and sensationalism. If somebody on television uses the word "panic" or "catastrophe," I chalk it up to a bid for higher ratings and increased profitability. If a newspaper uses those words, I check to make sure I have duct tape, canned goods and bottled water in my basement.

As I tried to come to grips with the sober financial narratives spread out on my breakfast table, it occurred to me that I was engaged in an act that my children, or certainly their children, will have trouble understanding years from now. Why would anybody defy the predawn chill to fetch a sickly thin newspaper filled with accounts of events that were at least 10 or 12 hours old? Why not stay inside, flip on a handheld mobile device and find out what happened a minute ago? Pretty good question, I guess.

No civic-minded citizen needs to be told that newspapers are nearing their end days. All papers, great and small, are shedding jobs and cutting back coverage. My yellow-bag paper, The Star-Ledger, recently averted possible closure when hundreds of workers accepted modest buyout packages. The paper is expected to lose about $30 million this year, even though it is by far the largest and most important newspaper in one of the nation's wealthiest states, New Jersey. The blue bag paper, The Times, has just discontinued having separate sections devoted to metropolitan news and sports coverage.

While the impending demise of print news surely has been discussed and bemoaned for some time now, I wonder how many of us realize that newspapers will take with them to their graves the very framework, culture, ethics and standards that have regulated news-gathering since the beginnings of mass media. Some may welcome this development, persuaded as they seem to be that newspapers are intellectually corrupt institutions devoted to either the destruction of American values or the suppression of truth. Or both.

Such critics no doubt are looking forward to the day when the last print newspaper rolls off the last printing press, for many seem to believe that journalism will be better off without the conceits and biases of elite newspaper editors and reporters who have distorted or covered up the truth in order to promote their political views. I suspect they will live to regret their contempt for oh-so-20th-century newspaper reporters. For without them and their standards—their obsessive emphasis on objectivity, their dogged search for, yes, facts; their determination to bring to light stories that governments seek to hide—our political and civic culture will be gravely diminished.

A wise editor once told me that opinion was cheap, while reporting was expensive. In the 20th century, news organizations spent freely if not always lavishly to cover wars, political campaigns, natural disasters, international summit meetings, royal weddings and abuses of the public payroll. In the 21st century, however, the cheaper option has become the new paradigm. Opinion rules. Attitude prevails. Notions of objectivity, fairness, balance and even decency were beginning to fade in the 1980s and 90s, but with the coming of age of the blogger, it is clear that expensive fact-gathering and educated analysis has given way to the inexpensive, look-at-me world of opinion-peddling.

All of which suggests a question: When newspapers no longer litter the lawns and doorsteps of American households, where will our opinion leaders obtain the facts and knowledge required to form intelligent arguments?

Perhaps that is just the kind of question an old-fashioned, 20th-century media type could be expected to ask. But that doesn't make it less urgent, because if this year's presidential election has offered us a peek into a post-newspaper world of campaign coverage, even the fiercest newspaper critic will soon pine for the days of reliable sources.

This year the Internet proved to be a convenient vehicle for vicious rumormongering, outright lies and loads of self-righteous assertions. But it offered precious little in terms of independent, vetted, verifiable, old-fashioned reporting. Of course, I am not referring to Web sites operated by newspapers. I have in mind Web sites that specialize in posting unverified rumors and bogus claims that would never have seen their way into print back when newspapers mattered.

Some argue that the Web should be celebrated for expanding the definition of news and for pursuing stories the old media, particularly newspapers, ignored. There is merit in that argument. But then again, the unfiltered, unedited Web was responsible for promulgating a thousand lies during the 2008 campaign, beginning with the "story" of Barak Obama's secret life as a Muslim.

Obama's more rabid foes delighted in using the tools available to them to circulate this falsehood. They were happy to note that such charges would never have made their way into any respectable newspaper.

They were absolutely right. Keep that in mind as our financial meltdown gives way to a prolonged recession, which in turn finishes off the noble institution known as the newspaper.

Terry Golway

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

PHOTO: CNS/MIKE CRUPI, CATHOLIC COURIER

A voter leaves a polling site at St. Pius X Catholic Church in the town of Chili, N.Y., Feb. 5.

Parsing the U.S. Catholic vote

A Past Without a Future?

– BY MARK SILK AND ANDREW WALSH –

IN 2008, "THE CATHOLIC VOTE" looks just like the national electorate as a whole. It mirrored the electorate in the previous two national elections as well. In 2000 it split for Gore over Bush 50 to 47, just as the country as a whole divided evenly between the two. In 2004, Catholics chose Bush over Kerry by 52 to 47, while the country did the same by 51 to 48. (By contrast, mainline Protestants, the large religious grouping that next most closely mirrors the entire electorate, preferred Bush to Gore 53 to 43 and Bush to Kerry 55 to 45.) So the question remains: Is there a Catholic vote in the United States, or are there simply lots of voters who happen to be Catholic?

MARK SILK and **ANDREW WALSH** are, respectively, director and associate director of the Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life at Trinity College, Hartford, Conn. Their new book is *One Nation Divisible: How Regional Religious Differences Shape American Politics*.

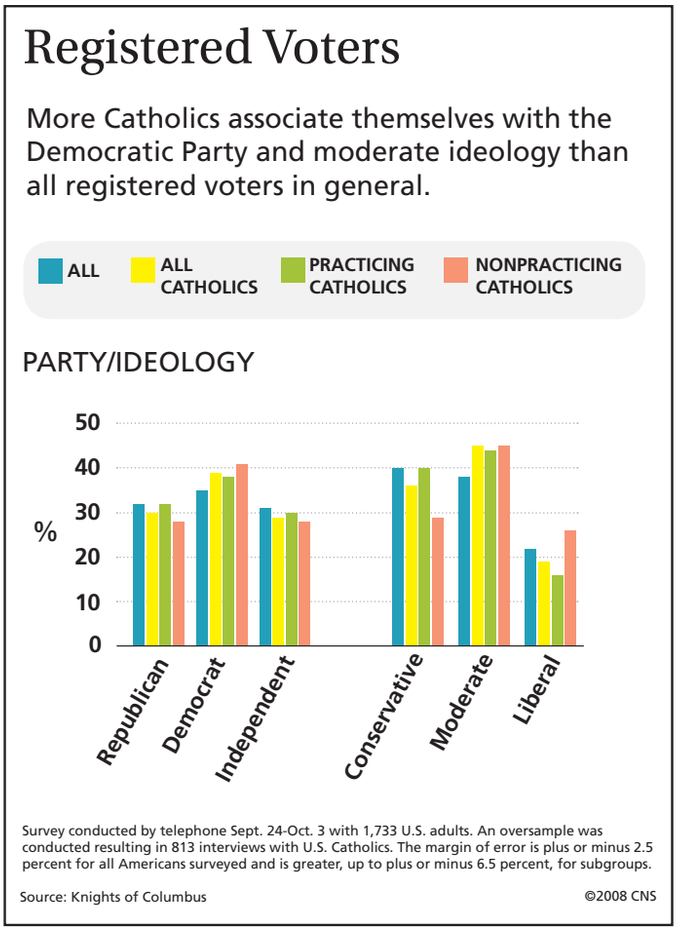
In the Beginning

The idea that there might be a Catholic vote to contend for did not occur to American politicians until 1832, when Andrew Jackson and Henry Clay Sr. competed to line up the modest number of Catholic voters then on offer in New York and Pennsylvania. Yet by the 1850s, massive immigration from Ireland and Germany was creating big blocs of new voters, particularly in the emerging industrial cities and towns of New England and the mid-Atlantic states. Many of these Catholic immigrants ended up forging a long-term identity as Democrats, perhaps less at first because of the pull of the Democratic Party than because of the active hostility of Protestant antagonists clustered in the Whig, Know Nothing and emerging Republican parties, which pushed immigrants toward the Democrats.

Nativists were deeply fearful of the impact of purportedly priest-ridden Catholic hordes. The first legislative proposal issued by William Minor, governor of Connecticut in 1855, was to extend the state's residency requirement for naturalization from five to 20 years—a gambit transparently intended to neutralize the voting power of immigrant Irish Catholics. American politics was powered by what political scientists call "negative reference": mutual mistrust.

The consolidation of Catholic and Democratic identity was accelerated by struggles for the vote and for public funding for Catholic schools, many of which were led by pugnacious Catholics like Archbishop John Hughes of New York, known as Dagger John, who in 1844, in the wake of riots in Philadelphia in which two Catholic churches were destroyed by arson, told city officials that "if a single Catholic church is burned in New York, the city will become a second Moscow." Napoleon had almost completely destroyed Moscow by fire in 1812.

While Catholic clergymen and the institutional church were frequently savaged during the mid-19th century by nativist complaints (like Thomas Nast's famous anti-Catholic cartoon, "The American River Ganges," which depicted vested Catholic bishops as crocodiles, their miters lined with flashing teeth, swimming ashore to devour American schoolchildren), these attacks usually focused on administrative rather than electoral politics, and especially on schooling. When it came to voting, the primary contemporary emphasis in politicking, journalism and scholarship tended to be on ethnicity, region and social class. Democrats were portrayed as poor Irish immigrants or Southern white males, more than as Catholics or Southern Baptists.



The Turn of the Century

Nonetheless, there was a Catholic vote in late 19th-century America. Studies published in the 1970s by Richard Jensen, Paul Kleppner and others asserted persuasively that in the presidential elections of the late 19th century, Catholics of Irish, German and French background voted for the Democratic candidate at rates of 75 percent and higher. Catholics also formed the voting base of the Democratic political machines emerging in cities like Boston, New York and Chicago.

In those days, however, Catholics did not stand out as a unique religious voting bloc, since the entire electorate was a complex mosaic of "ethno-religious" groups. Seventy-five percent or more of Northern Methodists, Congregationalists and Presbyterians just as reliably voted Republican, for example. There were also exceptions to the rule: Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul, Minn., was a vocal Republican, and the Republican urban machines of cities like Cincinnati and Philadelphia depended on Catholic votes.

But by the early 20th century, the concentration of Catholics in urban areas, the dynamic and mutually reinforcing effect of ethnic and religious identity, and the conscious Catholic practice of building a subculture supported by institutions positioned to insulate Catholics from an aggressive, Protestant culture all combined to nurture a distinctive and coherent Catholic vote. And a new factor

helped perpetuate and perhaps even intensify the Catholic preference for Democratic voting—an alliance between working-class (and particularly labor union) interests and evolving Catholic social and economic thought that helped produce the American welfare state.

Catholic voters were foundational partners in the New Deal coalition. Indeed, Franklin D. Roosevelt was quoting long passages from *Quadragesimo Anno* at Democratic rallies in 1934. The Catholic vote reached its all-time pinnacle of coherence in the 1960 election, when John F. Kennedy won more than 80 percent of Catholic votes.

That was something of a last hurrah. As Catholics moved quickly up the social scale and into the suburbs after World War II, many of the social bonds that held together the old urban Catholic subculture relaxed. Probably a majority of Catholics voted for Dwight D. Eisenhower in both 1952 and 1956, and widespread cold war suspicion of left-wing politics produced Catholic Republican elected officials like Senator Joseph McCarthy.

By the late 1960s, the old Catholic Democratic voter bloc was breaking up, following the dissolution of the old urban Catholic subculture. The Catholic working class was eroding under pressure and unhappy with the new social policies of both the church and the Democratic Party, a process accelerated by Roe v. Wade in 1973. White Catholics were now firmly entrenched in the American mainstream and spanned the entire social scale. And educated suburban Catholics, like their neighbors, were voting more often for Republican candidates and registering as Republicans or, more frequently, as independents. In many places, especially in the Midwest, even working-class Catholic voters could be swayed; and they moved to support Republican presidential candidates like Ronald Reagan. Catholics were plentiful in the leadership ranks of the Republican ascendancy that established itself in the 1980s and 1990s.

During these years, the voting patterns of Catholics grew still more complex because of a countertrend: a new round of mass immigration was transforming both the U.S. and Catholic populations after 1965. As they became citizens and voters, most of these immigrants, Latino Catholics primarily, tended to vote strongly Democratic. Since the 1970s, two pools of Catholic voters have evolved: one white and native born, the other immigrant and largely Latino.

The Catholic Vote Today

For their part, white Catholics have been much more evenly distributed between the two major parties than they were before 1970. They have been a key swing vote in presidential elections, supporting Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush in the 1980s, Bill Clinton in the 1990s, and George W.

Bush in 2000 and 2004. But even white Catholic voters are no monolith. From state to state, the vote differential among Catholics in the 2004 presidential election ranged from a 27-point margin for Bush in Virginia to a 25-point margin for Kerry in Washington State. If mostly white Catholic constituencies can vary by as much as 52 points from one state to another, there is a real question whether there even exists such a thing as a "white Catholic vote" in any meaningful sense.

Region counts for a lot here. Survey data show, for example, that white Catholics in the South are much more conservative than white Catholics in the Pacific Northwest. But even within regions, the white Catholic vote can vary a good deal. In Michigan, John Kerry carried Catholics by 1 percentage point whereas next door in Ohio, Bush carried them by 11 points. Why? Because white Catholics in Michigan include many Eastern Europeans with union backgrounds in the auto industry, whereas Catholics in Ohio include large numbers of conservative small-business types who trace their roots to Germany.

Over the past two decades, a significant split in the American electorate has developed between more and less observant Americans of all religious persuasions; that is true for Catholics as well. Those who attend Mass regularly vote Republican in considerably greater numbers than those who do not.

In a recent New Yorker article, Peter J. Boyer recounted how Karl Rove and Deal Hudson sought to capitalize on this phenomenon in 2004. According to Boyer, Rove and Hudson recognized that while there was no longer a generic Catholic vote, there was a traditional orthodox segment of the vote just waiting to be enlisted in the Republican cause. So they went out and mobilized traditionalist Catholics, turning the Catholic presidential vote from majority Gore in 2000 to majority Bush in 2004.

It made a good story, showing how those two boy geniuses managed to conjure up the long-awaited alliance of evangelicals and conservative Catholics. The only trouble is that it was not true. Bush won the Catholic vote in 2004 not by making inroads among traditionalist Catholics, but among less observant ones. Infrequent Mass-goers accounted for the lion's share of the difference, going from supporting Gore in 2000 by 50 to 46 to supporting Bush in 2004 by 51.4 to 48.6.

Central to much thinking about Catholic voting these days has been the partisan divide on abortion and life issues generally. By Democratic Party standards, Joe Biden is center-right on abortion. His NARAL Pro-Choice America rating is only 36 percent—a result of his opposition to public funding for abortions and his support of the ban on the partial-birth abortion procedure. Biden accepts as part of his faith his church's teaching that life begins at

conception, but strongly supports Roe v. Wade on the grounds that he does not want to impose his religious views on those who do not share them. That is to say, he declines to go along with the Catholic Church's position that, inasmuch as its position on abortion is derived from natural law rather than revelation, it may be imposed by law on non-Catholics.

Naturally, this position is beyond the pale for many, but among rank-and-file Catholics, it is a very common position. According to the American National Election Studies, 1980-2000, 42 percent of white Catholics are either completely pro-choice or believe that abortion should be permitted for reasons of rape, incest or danger to the woman's life, or if the need for it has been clearly established. Only 19 percent follow the church's teaching that abortion should never be permitted. Latino Catholics are more pro-life than white Catholics, but not by much.

What does this mean? In a recent study of the political behavior of white Catholics, the political scientist Stephen Mockabee, of the University of Cincinnati, controlling for such factors as age, income and education, discovered that the candidates' position on abortion had no statistically significant effect on the Catholic presidential vote choice in 2004. How could this be? One way to understand it is that while older white Catholics are much more pro-life than younger ones, they tend to be far more loyal Democratic voters. "Post Vatican II" Catholics—those born after 1960—have trended Republican, but only 7 percent share their church's position on abortion. When it came to the issues, what pushed white Catholics toward George Bush in 2004 was their support for capital punishment and their opposition to gay marriage; it was not John Kerry's support for abortion rights.

This time around, it is not the Republicans who are working hard for the Catholic vote, but the Democrats. Hillary Clinton's Catholic outreach was particularly effective during the primary season, putting together the networks of activists and the e-mail lists that enabled her to give Barack Obama more than a run for his money in states like Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Eric McFadden, who ran Catholic outreach for the Clinton campaign, believes that Obama, whose people are now working the Clinton networks, has a fighting chance to capture the white Catholic vote in November. While that may be overly optimistic, the Democratic candidate does seem poised to capture Catholics as a whole. A survey conducted in September for the organization Faith in Public Life found that Catholics 35 and older are evenly divided between Obama and McCain, but that younger Catholics preferred Obama 55 percent to 40 percent. As in the electorate as a whole, the young seem to be leading the way this year. A

Torturer's Apprentices

Learning to love, not hate, after 9/11

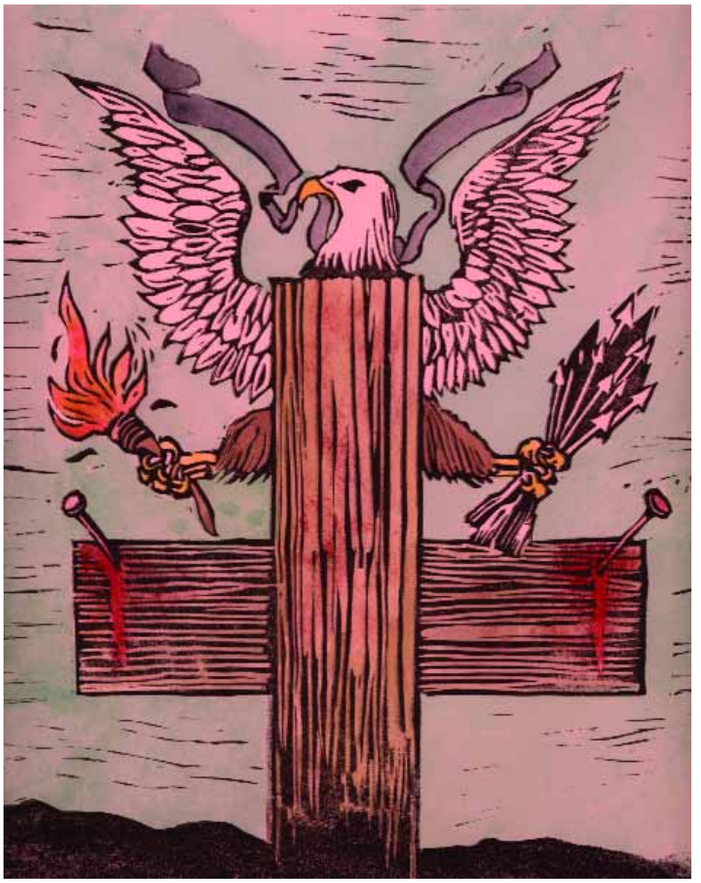
BY WILLIAM R. O'NEILL

A PRINCE, wrote Machiavelli, must be a great "feigner and dissembler," for subjects "are so simple and so ready to obey present necessities, that one who deceives will always find those who allow themselves to be deceived." Machiavelli's infamy, alas, is exceeded only by his emulation. For in the wake of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, we too have allowed ourselves to be deceived.

"We do not torture," President George W. Bush assures us. Yet mounting evidence from the Red Cross, Physicians for Human Rights and the U.S. Army's own investigators reveals executive branch complicity in what retired Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba calls a "systematic regime of torture." Deception and evasion are hallmarks of the president's brief for torture, abrogating the very human rights accords that provide our sole remaining *casus belli* in Iraq.

On the home front, immigration raids in the name of homeland security leave parents shackled, detained and threatened with deportation. Children born on U.S. soil are forcibly separated from their parents, whose greatest crime is their desire to work for their families at meager wages. Here too our readiness to be deceived belies our belief in family values and the sanctity of marriage.

We recognize, so we say, the rule of law; but we suspend its most basic provisions—the human rights of the deported and detained, for example—in the name of "present necessities." Only "supreme emergency," we say, warrants a suspension of the ethical. Only *in extremis* do we permit torture, renditions, detention of immigrant children and the like. But with postmodern terror, the extreme becomes quotidian, supreme emergency naturalized. Our Machiavellian logic is circumscribed within a moral world; to preserve this world we betray the very tenets that make it moral.



In the name of security, so different from the biblical promise of *shalom*, we moralize our evasions, persuaded that Americans value families and uphold the rule of law. We are not torturers, we do not detain or deport; but our ready obedience to "present necessities" makes us willing apprentices to those who would deceive. Laudably, our bishops have spoken on the questions of immigration and torture. As citizens, though, we do not seem unduly disturbed by what is done in our name. We like our heroes neat, our vengeance sweet. But victims become executioners—Machiavelli knew this—and there is a second act to the drama that began on 9/11, the one we are now living.

We have suffered, to be sure. And it is innocent suffering that rendered our anger righteous. At the heart of the Christian narrative, after all, is suffering innocence, crucified love. But to speak of lost innocence to justify torture or mass deportation is a fond illusion. That innocence, as H. Richard Niebuhr once wrote, was "slain from the foundations of the world." And if the cross speaks of innocent suffering, it does so without qualification; not only Americans figure in the calculus of innocence betrayed, but all those "crucified on many an obscure hill": the innocent Afghan and Iraqi civilians killed as "collateral damage," the immigrant children detained, the parents deported.

Our righteousness has deceived us, letting us become the very thing we abhor. Are we truly so simple and ready to obey present necessities? Citizens of faith cannot evade the Gospel's mandate. In St. Augustine's words, for those called Christian, "love of enemy admits of no exceptions," and those inflicting punishment in the name of law must "first overcome hate in their hearts." A hard lesson,

ART BY SEAN QUIRK

WILLIAM R. O'NEILL, S.J., is associate professor of social ethics at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif.

to be sure, after 9/11, but enmity cannot be a fitting memorial to our grief. Nature, graced even in tragedy, has equipped us with other, better weapons. If the 9/11 attacks have taught us anything, perhaps it is to allow the one we call Prince of Peace to undeceive us.

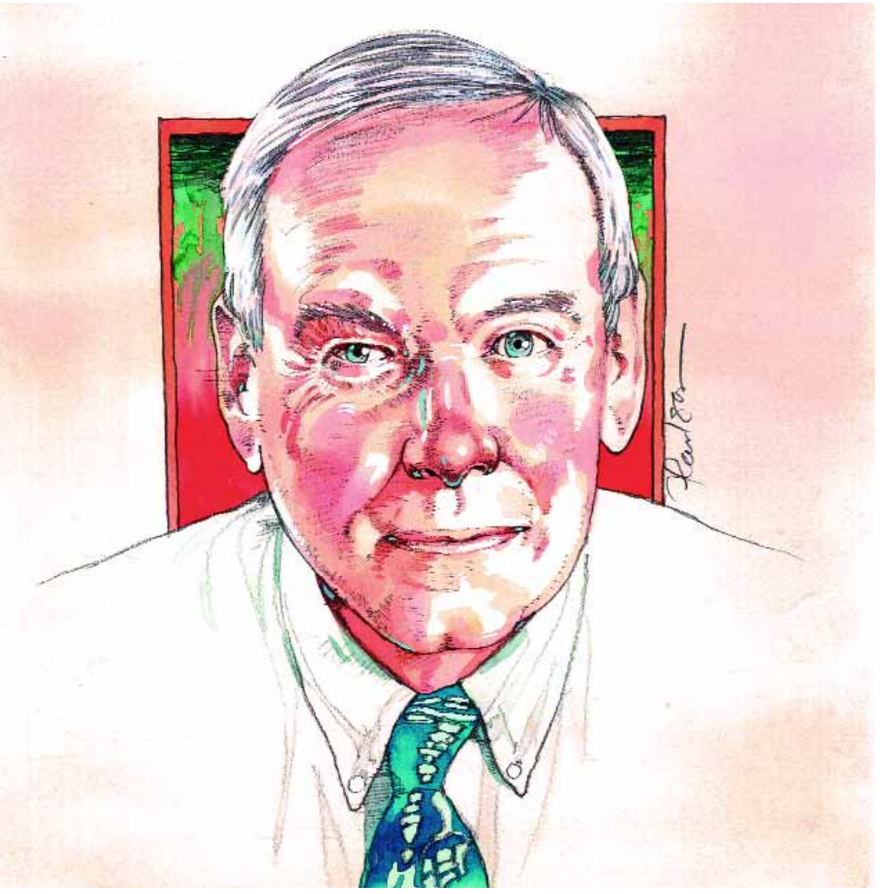
In the words of Dorothy Day, whom Machiavelli would have derided as an "unarmed prophet": "Yes, we go on talking about love. St. Paul writes about it…and there are Father Zossima's unforgettable words in *The Brothers Karamazov*, 'Love in practice is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love in dreams.' What does the modern world know of love, with its light touching of the surface of love? It has never reached down into the depths, to the misery and pain and glory of love which endures to death and beyond it. We have not yet begun to learn about love. Now is the time to begin, to start afresh, to use this divine weapon." A

William R. O'Neill, S.J., offers advice to perplexed voters, at americamagazine.org/connects.

The Last Catholic Novelist

The grace-filled fiction of Jon Hassler

BY ANDREW M. GREELEY



ART BY FREDERICK H. CARLSON

WHEN JON HASSLER DIED last spring at the age of 75, he was the last "Catholic novelist" in America. A long time ago a controversy raged in Catholic journals about whether a "Catholic novel" was possible. The "right" contended that a novel could be called "Catholic" if it presented orthodox Catholic teaching and edifying Catholic people (no "bad" priests) and was written by a "practicing" Catholic author. The "left" said that any quality novel was by definition "Catholic," like James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Most of the French "Catholic" writers were not Catholic enough by these standards—Francois Mauriac and Léon Bloy. Neither were their English counterparts—Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh. The rector of the major seminary I attended publicly denounced Greene. Sister Mariella Gable was banished from her monastery in Minnesota by the Bishop of St. Cloud for putting *Catcher in the Rye* on her reading list. The courses in "Catholic Fiction" disappeared from Catholic colleges and universities, even from Notre Dame, where some writers of allegedly Catholic fiction taught. I went through the catalogues of a few dozen such schools 20 years ago and found that even G. K. Chesterton's fiction had disappeared from public sight, as had that of Cardinal Francis Spellman and Cardinal John Henry Newman.

Those who argued for whatever reason that there could be no such thing as a Catholic novel carried the day. Hassler's books, in violation of the intellectual consensus in Catholic circles, managed to become both critical and popular successes. Handicapped in the later years of his life by a Parkinson's-like disease, he could sustain only three hours of work a day. Yet he produced at least a half dozen novels that would belong in any course on Catholic fiction, should that relic of the past ever emerge again at Catholic campuses. In fact, they may define the genre. Thus the work of many Catholic writers may win acceptance as Catholic works of art—folks like Hassler's good friends J. F. Powers and Betty Wahl, and John R. Powers, James Lee Burke, Alice McDermott, Edwin O'Connor, Flannery O'Connor, Louise Erdrich, William Kennedy, Thomas Flannigan and Cormac McCarthy among them.

Catholic Storytelling

The controversy of yesteryear might have taken a different turn if the Rev. David Tracy's theory of the analogical imagination had been available a half century ago. It would have been difficult to deny the inevitability of Catholic novels, some of them patently and blatantly

ANDREW M. GREELEY is professor of social sciences at the University of Arizona and a research associate with the National Opinion Research Center at the university. **JON HASSLER** was the 2008 recipient of **America**'s Campion Award.

Catholic even though the authors might have been unaware that they were writing Catholic fiction, like your man from Dublin (though I think he knew what he was doing).

In the arguments of yesteryear no one suggested that there might be a distinctive, if often implicit, Catholic imagination shaped by an analogical (or sacramental) perspective, which saw grace as available in human communities and neighborhoods, though many of those defending the possibility of Catholic fiction pointed to the pervasive impact of community in the stories the Catholic novelists wrote. One might argue that the Catholic storyteller, even if he is not aware of it, cannot escape the grace that seems to permeate his work—Albany for Bill Kennedy (St. Joseph providing a happy death for the Meryl Streep character in "Ironweed"), the South Side of Chicago for John Powers, Pluto, N.D., and its adjoining Chippewa reservation for Louise Erdrich, Cajun country for James Lee Burke, the environs of St. John's Abbey for J. F. Powers and Betty Wahl, the Long Island middle-class parish for Alice McDermott.

And Staggerford for Jon Hassler.

Hassler had the rare talent of seeing the absence of grace in human communities, from family on up, but also the capacity of forgiveness to flood a community with grace—even the grace of his heroine Agatha McGee to forgive her lifelong enemy Imogene Kite for stealing and then revealing her private and personal letters.

He could also see the presence of love in older people and the intensity of that love between elderly celibate lovers like Frank Healy and Libby Girard in his powerful *North of Hope* and Agatha McGee and James O'Hanlon in *Dear James*. Of all the novels that have flooded bookstores since it became legitimate for priests to fall in love, these two stories are the most sensitive and perceptive as well as the least bitter. Father Healy, who became a priest because of an apparent deathbed message from his mother, willingly forgives the woman who had brought the false message.

"Would it have made a difference? Would he have taken his life in a different direction? If so, it was much too late to imagine what that other direction might have been. We are what we are, he told himself. For better or worse I am a priest."

In his brief memoir, *Good People…From an Author's Life*, Hassler comments on the two priests of *North of Hope*:

> One way to take the measure of goodness is to look at the way various people handle their vocations.... While the elderly Adrian Lawrence leads his life of loving kindness, impervious to doubts and difficulties, Frank Healy goes about his duties despite suffering through a dark night of the soul. "I've sprung a very big leak and my spirit is draining away." Working under this strain, Frank Healy's service to others strikes me as the more heroic sort of goodness.

Very few men who have chosen to stay in the priesthood when severely tempted to leave would react in such a way. And few contemporary Catholic authors would approve of Father Healy's decision. A course on the fiction of Jon Hassler at a Catholic university in, say, 2015 might raise for young people some of the old questions, about which they ought to rethink the answers.

Hassler admitted that Agatha McGee, who is based in substantial part on his mother, simply denied the Second Vatican Council's changes and expressed his own sympathy for her position, though he eventually supported the council. From the perspective of the middle of the next decade, the impact of current attempts to undo the council might raise some questions about what happens when a church decides to change and then to change back.

He was a writer who liked his characters. He tells us that there are only four of his creatures that he dislikes and that he sometimes feels he has judged them too harshly because he had not worked hard enough to explain to himself why, like Imogene Kite, they have become so unattractive. Only a couple of his characters are thoroughly bad. A gentle man who suffered himself both physically and emotionally, Hassler defended his characters against his own rush to judgment.

He also was uneasy about the happy endings that appear in many of his stories, not perfectly happy, but at least happy

enough to sustain his people into old age. He does not accept the postmodern notion that an ending, any ending, is a fallacy. He wondered, however, if a writer who is driven to seek happy endings for his people might be deceiving his readers. All lives end unhappily because everyone dies. We crave happy endings in the stories we read or the films we view because we want to believe that death is not the end. Jon Hassler believed that, but he did not want to present it as an easily achieved assurance. Will Father Healy at the end of his life regret that he did not marry Libby Girard? And will they meet again in the world to come? All an author can do is say that such may be the happy ending of our lives. The data so far are inconclusive. The ending is a subject for a leap of faith.

The Role of Imagery

The appropriate response to the question of whether a novel can be called "Catholic"—as ought to have been evident before Tracy described the Catholic imagination—is whether a story could have been written by someone whose imagination had not been permeated with the rain forest of Catholic imagery. Thus, Dave Robicheaux, the recovering alcoholic Cajun detective in James Lee Burke's mysteries, is patently both a Catholic and a mirror of Catholic imagery. Similarly, the characters in Louise Erdrich's stories may be folk Catholics (as she may also be) but they are still irrevocably Catholic. And the scribe of Lake Wobegon may be a Lutheran, but he is a Catholic Lutheran.

I wonder sometimes if Tracy's work is known on Catholic university campuses. His theories about Catholic imagery and Catholic art are critically important to the definition of Catholic identity. I should like to think, however, a course on Catholic fiction would be an excellent opportunity to illuminate the pervasive impact of Catholic sacramentality on both theology and fiction. Even a review of four of Hassler's most important books—*Staggerford*, *North of Hope*, *A Green Journey* and *Dear James*—might have a critical impact on the self-understanding of Catholics of the importance of religious symbols (*sacramenta*) on Catholic life. Sometimes I think that the issue is not whether theology and fiction can be taught at the same time but whether it is

possible to teach them separately.

It may occur to the reader how many of the authors I have mentioned are products of the (German) Catholicism of Minnesota centered in St. John's Abbey (which includes such Celts as Coleman Barry and Eugene McCarthy). The Jesuit sociologist Joseph Fichter once remarked that the centers of creativity in American Catholicism seemed to be concentrated in a triangle that reached from St. John's to Chicago to Notre Dame. St. John's pervasive and unique influence on the church in this country, in particular, demands more intense study. The environs and culture of Staggerford, Rookery College, the Abbey Press, Bad Battle River, Pluto, Ostrogothinburg (St. Cloud?) the Clementine Fathers, Godfrey Diekmann and Lake Wobegon seem to demand more coordinated and more intense investigation. Perhaps they are also a challenge to Minnesota Catholicism to understand itself while there is still time. I have suggested on occasion to the monks of St. John's that they are far more important and indeed far better than they think they are.

It is this world that Jon Hassler knew so well, and in it he found not dogma about happy endings but merely hints of their possibility, many such hints. The Catholic imagination does not perceive certainty, but it does see grounds for hope, indeed solid grounds—after all is said and done there may be all manner of things that justify hope. Perhaps even a rain forest of hope in which love is as strong as death.

Hassler's work, I suspect, is not well known among Catholics, even Catholics who teach literature, because it is not grim enough. The proper model, the teachers might say for Catholic fiction, is Flannery O'Connor or Léon Bloy. Or, as I say to my friend John Shea, it is a story that is entirely dark until the strike of one bolt of lightning, which briefly and suddenly illuminates the sky and then permits the darkness to return. A reconciliation between lovers, tentative and problematic and of the sort that abound in Hassler's work, also is a sacrament of grace. As the country priest says at the end of George Bernanos's *Diary*, grace is everywhere. It was Jon Hassler's gift that he saw that presence of grace. A

Fall Books 2

Momentous Events

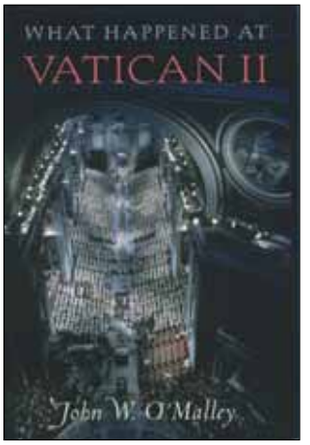
What Happened at Vatican II

By John W. O'Malley, S.J.
Belknap/Harvard Univ. Press. 400p $29.95
ISBN 9780674031692

The church historian John O'Malley does not reach the opening session of the Second Vatican Council until the third chapter of this relatively short book, but there is hardly a wasted word in his lengthy mise-en-scène. O'Malley uses this prologue to set the council in the context not only of Trent, as one might expect from an expert on that subject, but also within the wider framework of the other 19 ecumenical councils. In addition to delineating the conciliar background, he is especially good at sketching the ecclesial dimensions of the "long nineteenth century" that extended from the French Revolution to the eve of the council and had such a profound influence in shaping the thinking of the council fathers both negatively and positively.

Virtually every analysis of the council today is based on the now familiar categories of *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement*. O'Malley adds a third category, development, more exactly the development of doctrine, which John Courtney Murray, S.J., called "*the* issue under all the issues at the council." O'Malley notes that all three terms overlap in meaning and in an institution resistant to change often serve as "soft synonyms" for change and reform. For O'Malley, development and *ressourcement* are indispensable because they are crucial elements in shaping the corporate memory of the church and thus establishing its identity.

Like many other commentators on Vatican II, O'Malley notes the disproportionately large role played by the Belgians, both prelates and theological experts (think Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenens and Bishop Josef DeSmedt, Gérard Philips and Albert Prignon), which led more than one wag to say that the council should have been called Louvain I, not Vatican II. O'Malley also calls attention to the contribution of the 16 Melkite bishops from the Middle East, headed by the irrepressible Maximus IV Saigh, the Melkite patriarch of Antioch and clearly one of O'Malley's favorites, who always addressed the council in French, not Latin. Unlike the Westerners, the Melkites had no need for *ressourcement*, says O'Malley, because they had never lost contact with the patristic tradition.



Fortunately this is not history smothered by analysis. Once O'Malley reaches the opening of the council, he adopts a chronological approach and offers an often riveting account of the interplay between the majority and minority, labels that he prefers to progressive and conservative. Unlike the Alberigo-Komonchak five-volume *History of Vatican II*, however, O'Malley gives relatively little attention to the maneuvering that occurred during the three inter-sessions of the council, which Alberigo called "the invisible council." But Alberigo had 10 times as much space at his disposal as O'Malley.

Two of the fundamental flaws in the operation of the council were inadequate regulations and overlapping levels of leadership. The classical Roman genius for organization was not much in evidence at Vatican II. By contrast, says O'Malley, a child could have understood the clear rules of procedure at Trent. Except on one important occasion, Pope John XXIII gave the council a free hand, but Paul VI intervened frequently; and the murky procedural arrangements resulted in a constant stream of petitioners to the papal apartments. Uncomfortable with the concept of episcopal collegiality, by the fourth session, if not earlier, the fidgety and apprehensive pontiff was as anxious to send the bishops home as Louis XVI had once been to dismiss the Estates General before they morphed into the National Constituent Assembly.

At that point the bishops themselves were eager to go home, after listening to over 2,000 speeches. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that they talked too much. The wonder is that despite so many obstacles, the bishops achieved as much as they did, especially at the fourth and final session, when they sometimes spent weeks doing nothing but voting. O'Malley lists those achievements in such detail that no one can doubt that the council was the most important event in the history of the church in the 20th century.

O'Malley summarizes the deeper sig-

Listen to an interview with John W. O'Malley, S.J., at americamagazine.org/podcast.

The Reviewers

Thomas J. Shelley, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, is professor of church history at Fordham University in New York City.

Denise Lardner Carmody is a professor in the religious studies department at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, Calif.

James T. Keane, S.J., is an associate editor of **America**.

Thomas Massaro, S.J., is a professor of moral theology at Boston College School of Theology, Chestnut Hill, Mass.

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

nificance of the council by identifying three "issues-under-the-issues." The first was how the church was to cope with change. The second was collegiality, or what the relationship was to be between the center and the periphery. The third was the elusive but critically important issue of the "style" with which the church was to operate and address the world. The Roman Synod of 1960, considered by many as a dress rehearsal for the council, issued 755 canons; five years later Vatican II issued none, opting for dialogue and persuasion rather than coercion and condemnation.

The highest accolade that the late John Tracy Ellis could pay a historian was to say that he had written a "rich" book. There is little doubt that he would have been ready to pronounce that judgment on this book because of O'Malley's thorough research, lucid presentation, balanced judgments, shrewd insights and elegant style. If you want to know what happened at Vatican II, begin with O'Malley for an appetizer and go on to Alberigo-Komonchak for a hefty entrée. The chances are that you will be happy to return to O'Malley for a satisfying dessert and *digestif* that bring it all together.

Thomas J. Shelley

Not an Oxymoron

Catholic and Feminist

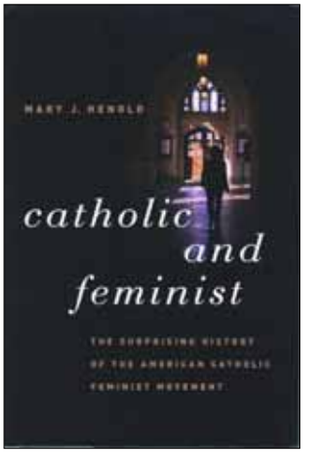
The Surprising History of the American Catholic Feminist Movement

By Mary J. Henold
Univ of North Carolina Press. 304p $32
ISBN 9780807832240

Reading *Catholic and Feminist* has been a strange experience. The book centers on the years between 1960 and 1980, a two-decade slice of American Catholicism as lived by women (and a few men) trying to be true to their faith and their feminism. The strangeness I felt stems from my coming of age during these years, following a similar life trajectory, and now reading about it.

The book has eight chapters, an introduction, epilogue and extensive footnotes.

There are lists of oral history interviews, primary and secondary sources and archival materials. Perhaps most intriguing are the many pictures scattered throughout the text that give it the feel of a family photo album. While these features are helpful to any reader, they are invaluable if the book is adopted for courses, study groups or book clubs.



Catholic and Feminist is an example of feminist scholarship that deserves the name: professional yet personal, documenting assertions without hedging and offering a vision that balances the real and the ideal. The author, Mary J. Henold, is an assistant professor of history at Roanoke College; her scholarship is careful, her writing style clean.

Refuting the possibility that Catholic feminism is an oxymoron, Henold as a historian simply lays out the record of its origins, development, major participants and significance. She marks the year 1963—when a number of Catholic women published articles that clearly expressed feminist sentiments—as the beginning of "second-wave" Catholic feminism. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and the civil rights movement were capturing attention. Still, Henold shows that neither was the primary impetus for the Catholic feminist movement. That distinction belongs to the Second Vatican Council.

The irony of Catholic feminism's origin is both appropriate and painful to feminists of faith: the movement was not merely an "add-on" to the culture; it was internally generated by the promise of the church to be the "people of God." The council gave Catholics hope that the church could and would change: become responsive to local and national concerns, embrace collegiality and welcome the laity—especially women—into its sanctuary. When that promise went unfulfilled, the faith of feminists was shaken and many felt betrayed.

Chapter 1, "Origins," reviews the works of two earlier "Catholic Action" organizations (founded in the 1940s). These are The Grail, which groomed single women as "lay apostles," and the Christian Family Movement, which urged middle-class married couples to commit their families and communities to Christ. Both continue to foster lay leadership and spiritual growth, though neither was feminist initially. A more direct feminist connection is found in the Sister Formation Conference, established in 1954 to promote the education and professional status of women religious. These "new nuns" were highly influential in Catholic feminist circles. Identified or not, the enemy that both lay and religious women faced was the entrenched image of the Eternal Woman, the portrayal of women's nature as pious, pure, self-sacrificing, submissive to (male) authority and focused on motherhood (real or spiritual). The model was Mary, virgin and mother.

Chapter 2, "Demythologizing Ourselves," cites the writings of more than three dozen Catholic women who debunk the myth of the Eternal Woman. Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Reuther and Sidney Callahan are highlighted. Common themes include an insistence in their writings on women as unique, self-critical and searching; the same requirement for both sexes to become mature Christians; and the need for the church to abandon its misogyny. Catholic feminists linked feminism to church renewal; their feminism was an expression of a faith that does justice. Another painful irony: 1968 saw the publication of both Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex* and Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae*.

Chapters 3 and 4 are paired, exploring different ideological approaches. The first, titled "No Cakes in Hands Unless Ideas in Heads," deals with radical feminism, whose leaders brought the organization much creative energy but who were unwilling to work within an institutional church they felt was irredeemably sexist. By the mid-70s they had left. "The Spirit Moving" captures the stories of women who declared, "We are feminists BECAUSE we are Catholic." Lay and religious, they rooted their feminism in Catholic social justice teachings and a sacramentally celebrated spirituality.

The four chapters that follow enact the morality/passion play that still continues. Chapter 5, "The Love of Christ Leaves Us No Choice," focuses on the first national Women's Ordination Conference (1975). Chapters 6 and 7 pursue the strategies that marked the movement in the mid- to late 70s. Their titles encapsulate their content: "Making Feminism Holy"—using liturgy to heal personally and communally—and "A Matter of Conversion"—using dialogue, especially with local bishops, to renew (and reform) the church. Despite these strategies, in 1978 the occasion of the second Women's Ordination Conference revealed divisions within the movement. Chapter 8, "Sustained Ambivalence," treats respectfully the various choices Catholic feminists faced (and face). Here, perhaps, the choices are epitomized by two women. Theresa Kane was the nun whose public words to Pope John Paul II in 1979 registered the loyal opposition's speaking the truth to the pope. A short time later Rosalie Muschal-Reinhardt, a leader long committed to dialogue and church renewal, decided she would no longer struggle with the institution, choosing instead to work for change from the margins. The examples of both women should strengthen Catholic feminists whose sustained ambivalence may yet save our sinful church.

Denise Lardner Carmody

Faith and Family

Home

A Novel

By Marilynne Robinson

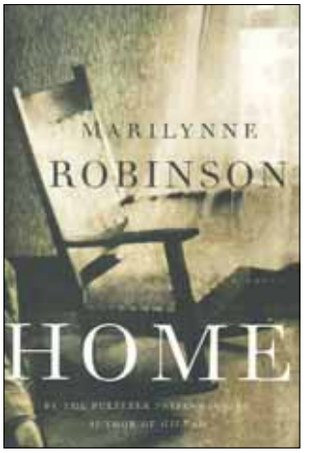
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 336p $25
ISBN 9780374299101

Small-town America does not enjoy the pride of place it once did in American fiction, when spinning yarns about the sleepy environs and predictable residents of semirural life seemed a preferable artistic choice to recounting the frenetic and angst-driven existence of urban dwellers forever on the brink of catastrophe. Storylines and characters these days rarely

develop in bucolic settings like that which Harper Lee once described in *To Kill A Mockingbird*: "There was no hurry, for there was nowhere to go, nothing to buy and no money to buy it with."

The appearance of Marilynne Robinson's bestselling novel *Gilead* in 2004 was a compelling return to such locales of so much American storytelling, places where family, tradition and religion intersect with characters' lives in profound ways. Robinson won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for *Gilead*, her second novel, which presented in almost diary form the ruminations and memories of John Ames, an aged Congregationalist pastor living out his final days in the small town of Gilead, Iowa. There he faces a failing heart and decides to put his thoughts to paper for the benefit of his wife and 7-year-old son, who brought unexpected joy to his old age.

The sleepy town of Gilead is also the setting of *Home*, Robinson's follow-up effort published this fall. While the Ames family returns in this novel (which takes place in roughly the same time frame as *Gilead*), the main focus is the household of Ames's lifelong friend and fellow pastor, the retired Presbyterian minister Robert Boughton. A widower for a decade and now facing the indignities of failing health (sound familiar?), Boughton needs the help of his far-flung family to manage his daily affairs, and his loyal 38-year-old daughter Glory surrenders her independence to return to Gilead and care for him. She finds Gilead a humdrum town and her childhood home a garish museum of knick-knacks, and harbors some resentment toward her many siblings for allowing her to be the only one to care for their father, but gracefully fulfills her new role as caretaker in his final months.



Trouble comes to this quotidian existence with the appearance on the back porch of a well-worn man in a well-worn suit: Jack Boughton, Robert Boughton's troubled son, "the black sheep, the ne'er-do-well, unremarkable in photographs," who has been gone for two decades after scandalizing his family and the town but has always remained his father's greatest concern in life. Could Boughton have saved Jack from his own demons? Can he save him now? Or will Jack disappear into the night once again, leaving his father heartbroken on his deathbed?

Over the course of the novel one discovers that while Jack, an alcoholic thief with a long history of jail time, has many secrets (including a mystery lover in St. Louis), he is not the only Boughton with a checkered past. Glory, too, has a closet of some significant skeletons, and both try to keep from their increasingly feeble *paterfamilias* any information that might cause him further heartache. Meanwhile, Jack's struggles with his personal demons parallel his and his father's awkward attempts to reconnect and understand each other. Jack seeks his father's forgiveness, understanding only slowly that they have such radically different mental approaches to the universe that more often than not they simply speak

past one another. Even watching the evening news becomes an emotionally precarious enterprise for the family, and both men suffer unexpected setbacks during their extended, fumbling reunion. Glory suffers as well, recognizing only late that she has fallen for her "old illusion that she could help her father with the grief Jack caused, the grief Jack was, when it was as far beyond her power to soothe or to mitigate as the betrayal of Judas Iscariot."

Robinson's prose is almost poetic when she describes the hearth and home—the smells and taste of homemade cooking, the earthy joys of gardening, the way light and heat shine through the windows of a home worn out from harboring the joys and sorrows of five decades of family life. Like *Gilead* before it, *Home* also unfolds at a leisurely pace that allows appreciation of even the smallest of these details, forsaking action and tension for the languid unfolding of multiple lives and complex human realities.

However, *Gilead* it is not. One of *Gilead*'s charms was how thoroughly Robinson probed Ames's personality, which over the course of that first-person novel was presented in such candid language and profound insight that the author seemed to have channeled the internal life of an elderly pastor. In *Home*, however, Jack comes across as less of a full-fledged character than his godfather and namesake; perhaps Robinson wanted to present him as an unfolding mystery? The same is true of Boughton, whose internal longings and misgivings are expressed less through exposition or dialogue than through the lens of Glory's external observations. He seems to spend most of the book being helped to his bed and propped up at the dinner table, muttering the oddly cryptic phrase in between.

These limiting factors are in part the inevitable consequence of choosing one particular voice and point of view, of course, but they also result in a novel somehow less emotionally satisfying than *Gilead*. We do not know the heart of Glory, Boughton or Jack; and even Ames's periodic appearances force the reader to guess at the motives for his sometimes surprising actions.

In *Home*, Robinson explores many of the themes that made *Gilead* a powerful work of art, including the interweaving of faith and doubt in the lives of deeply religious people and the admixture of pride and worry that confronts someone facing death. For readers seeking a return to these weighty tropes couched in the evocative sketches at which Robinson excels, *Home* has much to offer, though it is less rewarding than her earlier tale of another pastor's family down the street.

James T. Keane

Explaining Our World

Sovereignty

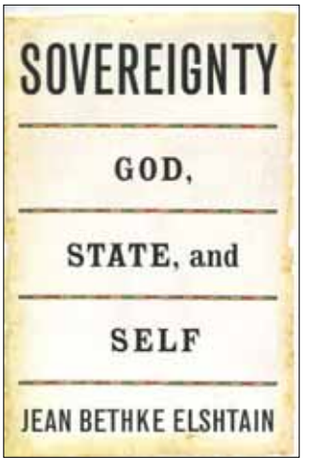
God, State, and Self

By Jean Bethke Elshtain

Basic Books. 480p $35

ISBN 9780465037599

Sovereignty is one of the most contested and yet indeterminate concepts in the field of political science. The casual observer will know that it has something to do with "unity of power," "legitimate right to govern" and "absolute control of territory," but may stammer a bit when pressed for greater precision. Not only is this concept hard to pin down in contemporary conversations, but the underpinnings of modern notions of sovereignty in ancient and medieval thought are complex beyond all telling.



Into the fray steps Jean Bethke Elshtain, a prominent public intellectual who teaches social ethics to divinity and political philosophy students at the University of Chicago. In this, a follow-up volume to her 2005-06 Gifford Lectures on the subject, Elshtain takes up the origin and meaning of sovereignty in a remarkably comprehensive way. Central to her argument is the reminder that although sovereignty as a term originated in the political realm, specifically as a quality of the nation-states that grew up in the early modern era, the concept possesses precursors as well as latter-day extensions that spread its semantic field considerably.

Before there were true states with aspirations to sovereign power there was God, of whom all sincere believers are obliged to predicate something very much like sovereignty. Of course, Christians are not the only ones to express the sentiment "for Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory now and forever." But it was within the Christian West that notions of sovereignty, hitherto attributed exclusively to God, came to seep into theories regarding secular authorities and the resultant prerogatives of political entities like empires and nation-states.

The middle chapters of this book provide an insightful and quite reliable guide to the historical events (including the Augsburg and Westphalia settlements) and the intellectual developments that produced the political world as we know it today, where geographically defined national entities proceed as the major players on the world stage, based on claims of legitimate territorial rule.

Elshtain has rounded up all the right figures in her explanation of how Western political thought groped its way toward a complete picture of sovereign power. Looming large in the history of ideas she develops are Augustine and Aquinas, Scotus and Ockham, Luther and Calvin, Hobbes and Locke, Machiavelli and Rousseau. Beyond these usual suspects, however, Elshtain is not afraid to engage the contributions of lesser-known commentators on such topics as natural law, the "two swords doctrine" and the nature of political authority: John of Salisbury, Marsilius of Padua, Richard Hooker and Robert Filmer.

As with "director's cuts" on film DVD's, the reader receives some bonus material near the middle of the book. We get a fine reassessment of certain aspects of the French Revolution as well as Hegel's take on state power. Even some figures remembered today almost exclusively for their literary contributions, like Dante and Shakespeare, are shown by Elshtain to have contributed in significant ways to the discourse on sovereignty and rightful kingly power. One might quibble

that the author gives surprisingly short shrift to the texts of Jean Bodin, who is generally acknowledged to have taken the term sovereignty from an obscure term coined in the 13th century by French jurists and fashioned it into a full-blown doctrine of support for royal power and legitimacy.

Somewhat less satisfying is the final third of the book, where Elshtain attempts to trace the extension of the notion of sovereignty to modern selfhood. The key claims here seem to be these: 1) the individual will to power has lately run amok; 2) exaggerated notions of a sovereign and inviolable self are key culprits; and 3) the modern sovereign self is modeled on the territorial state and its strong claims of sovereignty. The author's effort to link statecraft to soulcraft starts out well enough, with apt analysis of the influence of Descartes and Kant, but we soon find ourselves on shaky ground. Elshtain's forays into cultural criticism are not nearly as convincing as her explication of philosophical texts and ideas. Her selection of evidence (largely from recent novels, poetry, film and jurisprudence) to establish her claims seems highly idiosyncratic, even to the sympathetic reader. Still, it is easy to agree with many of the arguments of the book's final chapters, especially regarding the horrors (including liberal abortion regimes and the disturbing movement toward eugenics) resulting from certain contemporary approaches to issues regarding the sovereign physical body, an area where the will to power has proved triumphant.

Overall, Elshtain is quite successful in establishing her argument that the concept of sovereignty does indeed cut across many disciplines and applies richly to fields as diverse as law, political philosophy, theology and psychology. She argues persuasively against "monistic understandings of the sovereignty of God, states and selves." Reprising the message of several of her most valuable previous works, she demonstrates with great erudition the absence of bright lines separating religion and politics, the personal and the political, the public and the private. And she makes a much-needed appeal for firmer limits to exaggerated claims of autonomy.

One unfinished strand of this volume concerns the relation between theists (who hasten to recognize a vertical dimension of sovereignty) and atheists (who would resist any references to transcendence, at least in public institutions). I wish Elshtain had addressed some of these tensions regarding political authority, which have hung in the air since at least the decades when Jacques Maritain proposed a "Christianly inspired civilization" without offering a convincing explanation of where non-Christians and unbelievers would find a place in this otherwise appealing political order. If anyone is qualified to make constructive suggestions along these lines, it is Elshtain, whose work so often touches upon these issues.

Although it proves hard to support all of Elshtain's work as a public intellectual (her support for the war in Iraq and an extremely muscular version of the war on terrorism is well known), it is easy to admire her efforts to identify and even to build bridges between theological and political concepts. This volume provides a fine treatment of the notion of sovereignty—an important point where these two worlds of discourse intersect.

Thomas Massaro

A Plague on All Their Houses

The Forever War

By Dexter Filkins
Knopf. 384p $25
ISBN 9780307266392

As the horrors in Afghanistan and Iraq have rolled across our field of vision, swathed in the smoke of lies, propaganda and naïve ignorance, over the last five years American readers have been given much clarification, if not consolation, by some remarkable books: They include Karl Meyer's *The Dust of Empire*, Thomas Ricks's *Fiasco*, Lawrence Wright's *The Looming Tower*, George Packer's *The Assassins' Gate*, Rajiv Chandrasekaran's *Imperial Life in the Emerald City* and now Dexter Filkins's *The Forever War*. But whereas those earlier accounts provided a more or less broad historical and political background, this one gives us a tormented worm's eye view of a world racked by nonstop violence, fanatical hatred and lethal stupidity, with only random flashes of kindness and self-sacrifice.

Filkins, who visited Afghanistan both before and after 9/11, and who reported from Iraq for The New York Times from 2003 through 2006, understands the ideological motivations of all the various killers; but as he keeps dodging their bullets and RPG's and noting the dead and wounded all around him, his main focus is the sheer moment-to-moment terror, agony and revulsion that has engulfed him. War, to splice John Keats with Philip Henry Sheridan, is all we know of hell on earth, and all we need to know.

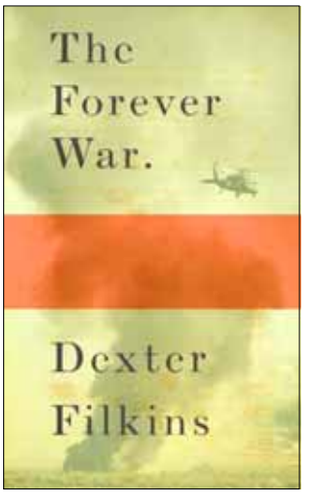
The book opens with the Taliban chopping the hand off a thief and the head off a murderer at a packed soccer stadium in Kabul. ("There was a special section for the handicapped on the far side, a section for women. The orphans were walking up and down the bleachers on my side selling candy and cigarettes. A couple of older men carried whips. They wore grenade launchers on their backs.") It is 1998, and the war has barely begun—if you ignore the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the counterattacks by the mujahideen. Segue to the Twin Towers (Filkins was there) and the Northern Alliance-U.S. campaign against Mullah Omar & Co.

All this is bad enough, but the time in Iraq will prove to be far worse. Filkins lived through the apocalyptic second battle of Fallujah in 2004, including an episode when he and an Australian photographer went to check out a sniper in a minaret. A Marine corporal told them to wait while he went up the stairs to see if it was safe, only to be instantly blasted by the sniper ("his face was opened in a large V, split like meat, fish maybe, with the two sides jiggling").

And so it goes, page after page. Iraqi sectarian fury and madness seem to know no bounds. At one point, Filkins looks away from the shattered corpses to list the groups that claimed responsibility for attacks on Americans and Iraqis from May to October 2005. There are no fewer than 103 such zealous bands, and the fact that stateside Americans have never heard of the Al-Farouq Brigade or the Al-Furqan Battalion does not mean that they weren't doing some highly effective butchery.

Meanwhile, the world's best-equipped army can barely control the chaos. The cluelessness of L. Paul

Bremer and his staff in the first stages of the occupation has been documented over and over; but even after the American learning curve shot up, there was (and is) no satisfactory way to manage a centrifugal country, where most of the occupied population—once Saddam was removed—hate your presence, and where you cannot tell friend from foe. From "surgical strikes" gone awry to Abu Ghraib and beyond, even the most bellicose Cheneyites would have to admit that grievous mistakes were made. And the survivors of such mistakes do not tend to forgive and forget. In the summer of 2005 the most popular videos in Iraq showed things like the bombing of the Palestine and Sheraton hotels and the beheading of Nicholas Berg. And we have all seen the crowds celebrating over the charred bodies of American contractors dangling from the bridge over the Euphrates.



But the larger truth that Filkins illuminates is the writhing snake-pit of vengeance into which the Americans heedlessly stumbled—and which they disastrously stirred up. He cites the case of Abu Marwa, an insurgent from the Islamic Army of Iraq (Group No. 81), whose uncle, a Shiite, was tortured with electric power tools, beaten, burned and killed by some Syrian (Sunni) members of Al Qaeda. Abu Marwa and his men had tracked the Syrians down, finished them off, and then presented their keffiyehs to his grieving aunt—along with a vial of the murderers' blood, which she drank. When it comes to pure animosity, their civil war makes ours look tame.

One of the truisms of war reporting is that a soldier's ultimate loyalty is to his buddies; and Filkins confirms that whenever he talks about his translators, drivers, Iraqi friends and colleagues at The Times. As for the troops he is embedded with, he is too old (now 47), too educated and too liberal to be their buddy. But there is nothing like sharing mortal danger and repeated heartbreak to forge bonds; so when he returns to the United States, Filkins makes a point of visiting some of the infantrymen—or, if they had died, their parents.

He feels relief to be out of harm's way, of course; but his final state of mind is a sort of permanent isolation.

> When I was in Iraq, I might as well have been circling the earth from a space capsule.... Like Laika in Sputnik. A dog in space. Sending signals back to base, unmoored and weightless, and no longer keeping time. Home was far away, a distant place that gobbled up what I sent back, ignorant and happy but touchingly eager to know.

Now that he is home, Filkins says he still feels like Laika, the Russian space dog, looking back up at the ship he once sailed in, but floating "through the regular people in the regular world." War will do that to you.

Peter Heinegg

Classified

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Translator

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

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Letters

Historical Precedents

In his guest editorial, "Racism and the Election" (10/27), Bishop Blase Cupich was correct to remind us of Archbishop Joseph Rummel, the courageous archbishop of New Orleans who in 1962 publicly excommunicated three Catholics, including a politician, for supporting the intrinsic evil of racism. Rummel is certainly a bishop to be proud of in our church's history in this country.

I have been wondering when we will have brave bishops in this era who are willing publicly to excommunicate Catholic politicians who support the intrinsic evil of abortion.

Stephen M. Koeth, C.S.C.
Portland, Ore.

About Time

It is about time someone addressed the issue of racism in our national politics. In "Racism and the Election," Bishop Blase Cupich has given us an article that should be read in all parishes. For those of us who have not always been happy with the church's political positions and its occasional Neanderthal tendencies (think of the truly enlightened theologians who have been unjustly censored or silenced), it is simply fantastic to read this article.

Where were all the thoughtful political reflections and considerations from sincere, well-meaning bishops four years ago?

A. J. Carlos, M.D.
Clifton Park, N.Y.

Clarity and Vision

Re the guest editorial by Bishop Blase Cupich, "Racism and the Election" (10/27): It is refreshing to read episcopal advice that is not threatening or focused on abortion only. Bishop Cupich has rightly conveyed a sense of trust in the voting decisions of the electorate. Presidential elections are always a time of uncertainty, with a great need for clarity and vision, especially for Catholics who view elections and voting in a moral context based on church social teaching principles.

Bishop Cupich and the other bishops who have written on the 2008 presidential election do so in part from a loving obligation to teach and guide their flocks. We voters, armed with our bishops' words and the guidance contained in their document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, as well as the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are individually answerable for our decisions.

I do not believe that my priest or my bishop is responsible for my vote, or for anyone's individual decisions or actions, so long as they have made a prayerful effort to teach and we have made a similar effort to form our consciences through prayer, study and reflection on church teaching.

I fill out my ballot with a sense of hope and a fierce love of my church and my country, knowing that both fall short of God's expectations. May God bless our clergy, our candidates and our nation.

Todd Phillipe
Buena Vista, Colo.

Playing It Safe

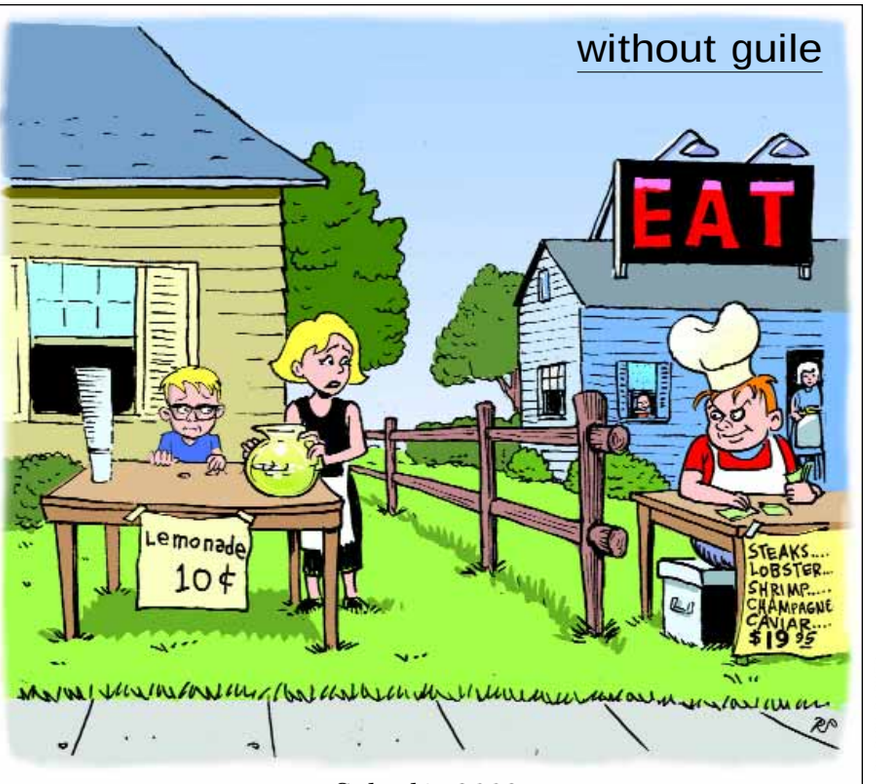
Re your editorial on "Voting One's Conscience" (10/27): It seems to me that a Catholic who is concerned with following all of the church's instructions on how to vote would have no choice but to abstain from voting for either presidential candidate. Or perhaps one could write in the name of, say, one's bishop? That would seem to be the only safe route to pursue!

Skip Mendler
Honesdale, Pa.

Grave Matter

I completely disagree with what **America**'s editors are attempting in "Voting One's Conscience" (editorial, 10/27). You are trying to take our focus off the primary issue of abortion in order to justify a vote for the most pro-abortion

To send a letter to the editor we recommend using the link that appears below articles on **America**'s Web site, www.americamagazine.org. This allows us to consider your letter for publication in both print and online versions of the magazine. Letters may also be sent to **America**'s editorial office (address on page 2) or by e-mail to: letters@americamagazine.org. They should be brief and include the writer's name, postal address and daytime phone number. Letters may be editied for length and clarity.



Suburbia 2009

CARTOON BY RICK PARKER

candidate ever to run for office. As *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* points out, a number of other political issues are important, but they involve prudential judgments. With abortion, we are dealing with an intrinsic evil that cannot be supported regardless of a candidate's position on other issues when there is another candidate available who does not support abortion. This is why so many of the bishops across the nation are speaking out against people who are trying to misconstrue the intent of *Forming Consciences*.

Stop trying to lead people into grave sin with the illogical reasoning you used here.

Mike Nygra
Indianapolis, Ind.

Preaching to the Choir

The editors' remarks in "Voting One's Conscience" are all well and good. But this is not the reasoning that gets the attention of the people in the pews.

Instead, newspaper headlines feature bishops calling for refusal of the Eucharist to those politicians who do not decry abortion. Other issues that might be addressed are virtually ignored.

It appears quite often that the church considers life to begin at conception and end at birth.

Robert Gordon
Ewing, N.J.

A Conscientious Objector

Re your editorial "Voting One's Conscience": It is necessary for Catholics to allow the church to form our conscience. Conscience formation includes not only reading the bishops' important document on faithful citizenship and forming one's conscience but also listening to the bishops as they continue to address us on these issues and expand on this document in their letters, homilies, speeches and other addresses.

The bishops have made it abundantly clear that Catholics have a moral responsibility to recognize the overwhelming weight of abortion in this election, as compared to debatable issues such as who has the best health care plan, who is best for the economy and who will end the war in Iraq sooner.

Catholics must not allow themselves to be deceived into thinking that there are anything even close to proportionate reasons that would override Barack Obama's radical views on abortion. I am not thrilled about John McCain, but there is simply no conscionable way for a Catholic to vote for Obama.

Michael Hallman
Villanova, Pa.

Intrinsically Disordered

"Intrinsic Evil and Political Responsibility," by M. Cathleen Kaveny (10/27), was well written and pertinent, but I think the argument could have been made stronger. Rather than using veiled and oblique references to the war in Iraq, Kaveny could have included examples of "intrinsic evils" that are ignored in the current discourse of those who favor this term.

The U.S. bishops have identified both racism and torture as intrinsic evils; but both exist in our nation today, and one of them, the use of torture, has been an explicit policy of the federal government. But I have never heard a "pro-life" voter argue that I should oppose a candidate on those grounds.

If it is immoral to vote for a presidential candidate who supports an intrinsic evil, then anyone who voted for George W. Bush in 2004 was guilty of an immoral act. I suspect, however, that if I were to press this argument, discussions of prudential judgment that are not allowed when discussing abortion would suddenly be considered legitimate.

David Cruz-Uribe, S.F.O.
West Hartford, Conn.

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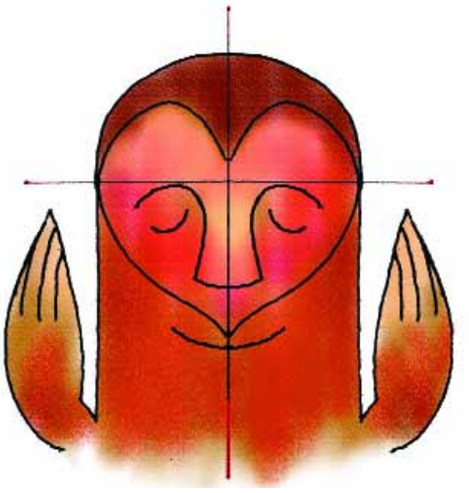
The Word

The Holy Dwelling of the Most High



Dedication of St. John Lateran, Nov. 9, 2008

Readings: Ez 47:1-2, 8-9, 12; Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9; 1 Cor 3:9-11, 16-17; Jn 2:13-22

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3:16)

TODAY THE READINGS for the Feast of the Dedication of the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome supersede those assigned for the Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time. Built in the fourth century, this church remains a magnificent and lively place of worship today. It is the cathedral church of the bishop of Rome (the pope). The various Scripture readings revolve around the theme of the "temple" and illustrate the different ways in which that motif appears in the Bible: the Jerusalem Temple, the ideal temple, the person of Jesus and individual Christians.

The archaeological evidence for temples in the ancient world goes back many thousands of years. A temple was a place where a god was believed to be present in a special way, and where rituals honoring the god (especially sacrifices) were conducted. For a large part of ancient Israel's history from Solomon onward, the Jerusalem Temple was the people's central shrine and the only place where sacrifices were to be offered to Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Many of the Old Testament psalms celebrate the presence of Yahweh in the Jerusalem Temple. Indeed, the Book of Psalms is sometimes called the hymnbook of the Jerusalem Temple. We get a glimpse of how much the Temple meant to ancient Israel in today's excerpts from Psalm 46. There the psalmist describes the Temple as "the holy dwelling of the Most High" and as Israel's "stronghold," its source of security, safety and hope because of Yahweh's special presence there.

Nevertheless, the Temple built by King Solomon was destroyed in 587 B.C., along with the city of Jerusalem. The prophet Ezekiel was among the exiles in Babylon, and there he reflected on how such a catastrophe could have happened. While his book is full of denunciations and warnings, it ends on a note of hope when in Chapters 40 to 48 it provides a detailed verbal picture of the ideal New Jerusalem and its rebuilt Temple. The imagery of water in both Psalm 46 and Ezekiel 47 allude to its life-giving and life-sustaining power and its healing properties. Even after the Second Temple was built in the late sixth century B.C. and rebuilt in grand style under Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.), many early Jewish writers kept alive and embellished Ezekiel's hope for a new and better Temple. The Qumran New Jerusalem texts and the Temple Scroll, as well as the New Testament Book of Revelation, are good examples of these hopes.

The Jerusalem Temple to which Jesus came, according to John 2, was a large complex of buildings whose Herodian refurbishing had been in progress for 46 years. We ought to envision the Temple not as one huge church building (like St. John Lateran or St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York) but as a campus with many buildings and installations. By Jesus' time, the Temple had become the major industry of Jerusalem. It employed construction workers and an administrative staff, and innkeepers and other service-providers profited from crowds of pilgrims coming regularly into the city.

In this historical context the symbolic demonstration by Jesus the Galilean prophet of God's kingdom against the excessive commercialization of the Jerusalem Temple complex is understandable both in Jesus' program and in the effect it had on the local Jewish and Roman leaders. In John's account Jesus raises the stakes further by referring to the Temple as "my Father's house" and proclaiming himself as the locus of God's presence ("this temple"). As readers of John's Gospel, we already know that Jesus is the Word of God who has become flesh and made his dwelling among us.

As followers of Jesus and so members of the body of Christ, we as individuals have become "the temple of God" through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Through our faith in Christ and baptism, we have been made into places where God is now present in a special way. Of course, we still need buildings where we may worship God in community and express our shared identity and dignity. Yet we do so convinced that Christ is the reality to which all earthly temples, shrines and churches point, and that through Christ God dwells in us and makes us holy through the Spirit. As God's people in Christ, we are now dwelling places of the Most High. ***Daniel J. Harrington***

Praying With Scripture

- How could Jesus, according to John, identify himself as the temple of God?
- Do you ever think of yourself as a temple of God? How might such a concept affect your actions?
- Why do you go to your local church? What do you hope to find there?

ART BY TAD DUNNE

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