America

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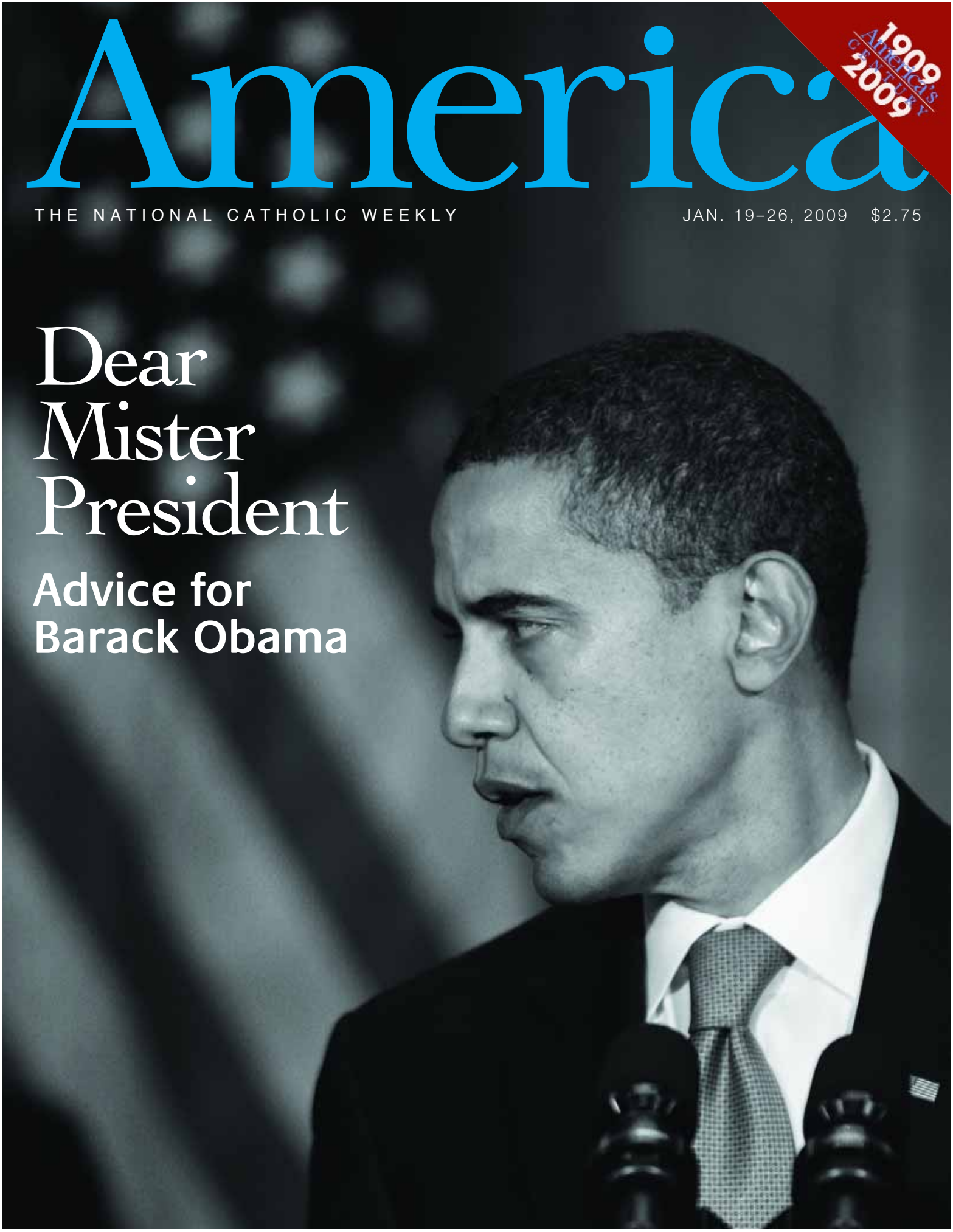
Dear Mister President

Advice for Barack Obama



OF MANY THINGS

Snapshots of family and friends taken over the decades, some dating back to the 1960s, lie in small packets in my desk drawer. From time to time I take them from their envelope to look again at those familiar faces. Most are smiling, and you can almost hear them responding to the command, "Say cheese!" About half, though, are no longer physically present in this world, and so I like to see them in my mind's eye as smiling in the presence of the God who has received them.

Among the oldest of the snapshots are two of my parents, taken when they visited me at the Jesuit novitiate in Wernersville, Pa. We made an afternoon excursion to nearby Hawk Mountain, where each fall thousands of hawks circle high in the currents of air as they begin their annual migration southward. Binoculars over her shoulder, my mother stands looking directly at my camera. My father stands apart, adjusting his own binoculars, while other visitors nearby gaze upward at the dozens of gliding hawks. Behind the group rises a grove of trees whose golden leaves still stand out even in the now-faded color of the snapshot.

The modest collection is divided not only chronologically, but also according to places where I have worked as a Jesuit. Some photos show people met during my assignment at St. Aloysius parish in Washington, D.C. The surrounding neighborhood includes a low-income housing development called Sursum Corda ("Lift up your hearts"), words from the opening dialogue of the preface of the Latin Mass. It was bestowed on the development partly because of the involvement in its creation of Horace McKenna, a Jesuit whose ministry among the poor has led to his reputation as a saint.

One St. Aloysius snapshot shows Pauline Belt, an African-American resident at Sursum Corda, seated in the church's little social hall.

The photo is in a glass display case there, near a hand-drawn crayon picture of Horace done by one of the homeless men he served. Pauline was old then, and now is with God. Sursum Corda, designed as a model inner-city village with trees, open spaces and units with five bedrooms for large families, is facing its own death as real estate developers close in with plans that have already displaced many low-income residents.

Other social hall snapshots show two African-American men nattily dressed for the Easter Vigil. A nun who worked at a facility for persons with AIDS had brought them to St. Aloysius that evening. The date on the back is 1991, and the inscription also notes that these two men died soon afterward. An earlier picture shows the sister, Lenore Benda, S.S.J., with two other men for whom she was also a source of support and encouragement.

But not all these small photos are in the social hall or my desk drawer. Some I keep before me, in a frame propped against a plant by the window to the left of the computer where I sit typing these words in my office at America House. One shows two of my dearest friends, both members of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, taken during a trip to the order's retirement home in Albany, N.Y. The older, then in her 80s, sits in an easy chair. The much younger sister stands beside her. And yet it was the younger who died first, of cancer, not yet 50 years old. I feel that although physically gone, they are with me still as they look out from the snapshot meeting my every glance.

And so it is with the increasing number of pictures of loved friends who are now alive with God.

GEORGE M. ANDERSON, S.J.

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After Gaza

Gaza has been Israel's tar-pit, a quagmire from which it extracts itself only to be pulled back in. It never seems to learn. In 1993, under the Oslo Accords with the Palestine Liberation Organization, Gaza and Jericho were the first territories handed over to Palestinian control. Following the Al Aqsa intifada in 2000, Israel re-occupied Gaza and then in 2005 withdrew unilaterally. After each of its departures, it obstructed economic development and even emergency relief. Now, once again, the Israeli military is back, following a bruising air assault on the Gaza Strip. The objective of Israel's latest effort is to end terrorizing rocket attacks on the cities of southern Israel, like Sderot, Ashkelon and Beersheva. To do so, however, requires "breaking the will" of Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement). Most experts believe that Hamas will not be broken. As the Washington Post columnist David Ignatius has written, "If there is one lesson in this conflict, it's that efforts to 'break the will' of the other side almost always fail." Instead, the long-term results will be a revival of support for Hamas among Palestinians and greater hostility to Israel across the Arab world. How will Israel escape the quagmire? How will it break out of the violent illogic of war, repression and resistance?

A fresh beginning requires that Israel acknowledge that in any negotiation it holds most of the cards and therefore must make most of the concessions. Palestinian resistance continues because Israel has repeatedly refused to allow its whip-hand to go slack. In every cycle of peacemaking, it has retained control of commerce, of security, of tax receipts, of water. Resistance—and with it Hamas—will wither only when Israel is ready to make a peace that relinquishes the upper hand over Palestinian life.

Kony's Ravages Continue

The self-styled messianic rebel leader in Uganda, Joseph Kony, head of the brutal Lord's Resistance Army, continues to wreak death and destruction through a wide swath of territory in central Africa. Having escaped a multinational military offensive that targeted his jungle hideout in the Democratic Republic of Congo, most of his armed followers fled in late December to the D.R.C.'s northeastern corner. There, according to the United Nations, they massacred over 200 people and kidnapped at least 20 children from villages over a three-day period.

The L.R.A.'s two decades of violence have caused the displacement of an estimated two million people in Northern Uganda and the deaths of tens of thousands. The L.R.A. has abducted an estimated 20,000 children, forcing boys to fight as soldiers and girls to serve as sex-slave "wives." In 2005 the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Kony and his top leaders, charging them with crimes against humanity. On Nov. 29 he was to have signed a peace agreement that had been reached last April in Juba, Sudan. The agreement included disarmament of his army and reintegration of troops into civilian life. The U.N. special envoy, Joaquim Chissano (former president of Mozambique), waited for him at the border between Sudan and the D.R.C., but Kony never appeared. Now, with Kony having eluded the military operation, carried out by combined Uganda, Congo, southern Sudan and U.N. forces, the eventual outcome remains unclear. The L.R.A.'s violence continues as part of one of Africa's longest-running wars. The combined multinational forces must find and capture Kony, so that he and his followers may be held accountable for the deadly havoc for which they bear primary responsibility.

Lives of Gays and Lesbians

On Dec. 19, the U.N. General Assembly voted on a nonbinding resolution aimed at "decriminalizing" homosexuality. The measure was directed at countries where homosexuals can be executed for sexual relations. As Human Rights Watch notes, "over 85 countries criminalize consensual homosexual conduct." In some countries, including Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen, it is punishable by death.

The Holy See condemned "all forms of violence against homosexual persons" and urged countries to "put an end to all forms of criminal penalties against them." Nonetheless, along with 68 other countries, it rejected the resolution, preferring to hold out for a more clearly worded document. The Holy See feared "uncertainty in the law," which might lead to the marginalization of heterosexual marriages. Cardinal Renato Martino, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, also feared that this resolution could limit the freedom of the church to teach that homosexual acts are immoral.

Though the Holy See last year endorsed a similar but more carefully worded document, these distinctions may provide little comfort to those who pray for the church's support in places where violence against gays and lesbians still occurs. Last year, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, hate crimes in this country against gays and lesbians rose by 6 percent, while crimes against almost every other group fell. Stronger public steps are necessary to oppose the execution and murder of gays and lesbians.

EDITORIAL

The Roots of Terrorism

Among the array of challenges facing Barack Obama in his first year in office will be the ongoing struggle against terrorism, both at home and abroad. As the vicious terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November and the recent Hamas rocket attacks against Israel made clear, no nation involved in international politics and commerce is free from the threat of political violence. The past few years have shown that civilization rests on a much more precarious footing than we might have believed even a decade ago.

But who is the real enemy in the global fight against terrorism? Even to call this conflict a "war on terror" is misleading, given that our enemies are of such disparate origins and intentions. Sweeping generalizations—that our enemy is the Islamofascist, the Muslim fanatic, the anarchist, the ignorant youth—are often harmful in the formation of any effective response to terrorism.

A sincere yet harmful truism is that our real enemy is ignorance, that if our opponents could be freed of propaganda and false conceptions, their rage against Euro-American civilization would abate. But any truthful analysis of terrorist motives requires the concession that the real root cause of their actions is resentment. Often enough, education actually leads not to greater appreciation for Western culture, but to even deeper antipathy. The hijackers of Sept. 11, 2001, are a case in point. Many of the attackers had achieved high levels of education as engineers, scientists and academics. Many studied abroad, and several—ringleader Mohammad Atta among them—would fit the definition of upwardly mobile young professionals. Nevertheless, they were seduced by an ideology that convinced them that their death, and the deaths of thousands of innocents, was the appropriate response to their condition.

While scholars like Lawrence Wright, author of *The Looming Tower*, the best-selling study of Islamic terrorism, have shown the powerful influence of fundamentalist religious beliefs in terrorist recruitment, groups like Al Qaeda gain from the religious and from the resentful, drawing devotees from those who find that the adoption of Western economic and social practices does not always translate into economic opportunity or social progress. Oftentimes the very technological advances that should have led to greater upward mobility—the Internet and global communications among them—have provided terrorist groups with the means to link up previously isolated cells. Access to the media has two ill effects, offering greater awareness of severe economic disparities and an introduction to a global entertainment environment profoundly at odds with the religious and cultural sensibilities of many peoples.

Another alarming portent of future terror is the real possibility of widespread state failure. In its most recent analysis of global trends, the National Intelligence Council suggested that by 2025, as many as 36 nations (with a total population of 1.4 billion) will face shortages of fresh water and sustainable food supplies. A number of these nations, which are overwhelmingly in Africa and the Middle East, are already unable to provide consistent law and order. These same countries are also experiencing a "youth bulge" of young men and women now entering adulthood.

State failure also represents a failure of compassion on the part of the wealthy and stable nations of the world. Imperiled nations support exactly the populations among whom resentment will be strongest if the world community fails them, if instead of jobs and security they find chaos, disease and suffering. In the past, the international community has failed to intervene effectively when neglected situations became humanitarian catastrophes, with Zimbabwe and Somalia as prime examples. As Pope Benedict XVI noted in his visit to the United Nations last year, the "duty to protect" is not just an internal matter for nations, but an international duty.

It is crucial that the United States abandon the rhetoric that casts the international struggle against terrorism exclusively in terms of a crusade against religious fanaticism. The anger that accompanies the ongoing and worsening social ills among the world's poorest populations also contributes mightily to terror's allure. Remedying such widespread resentment will not be easy, and cannot be done alone. A reasonable beginning would include greater international cooperation on sustainable development, renegotiation of lopsided trade agreements, a rethinking of the economics of globalization and an end to military and political unilateralism on the part of the United States. All this will, of course, require money—but far less than the world will spend combating the terror and violence that will otherwise flourish amid the ruins.

GAZA

Christians Pray, Plead for Peace

St. Catherine's Church in Bethlehem, West Bank

Msgr. Manuel Musallam, pastor of Holy Family Parish in Gaza City, says Gaza is "drowning in blood" as its hospitals overflow with patients. In a message to participants read during a special Mass for peace at St. Stephen's Church in Jerusalem on Jan. 4, Musallam wrote: "What you see on television cannot be compared to what is happening. The word love is choking in my throat.... We are living like animals in Gaza. We cry and nobody hears us. I am asking God for mercy and pray that the light of Christianity continues to shine in Gaza."

Israel launched a ground attack in Gaza on Jan. 3 after several days of airstrikes to stop the Palestinian militant group Hamas from launching rockets into Israel. As of Jan. 8, at least four Israelis and more than 500 Palestinians, including 100 civilians, had been killed.

Church leaders from the Holy Land attended the Mass at St. Stephen's while local and international Christians gathered elsewhere in Israel and the West Bank to pray for a halt to the violence in Gaza. At St. Stephen's the retired Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah, said the Israeli incursion into the Gaza Strip means death for both sides. "What is happening now is death for Palestinians as well as Israelis," Patriarch Sabbah said at the Mass. "What is happening in Gaza

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Couple Questions Vatican Instruction

As committed Catholics, Timothy and Dawn Smith of Fitzwilliam, N.H., respect Vatican pronouncements, but recent statements by church officials regarding frozen embryo adoption have bewildered these parents of three children who came into the world through this process. "If the church did come out and say you can't adopt frozen embryos, we wouldn't openly challenge church teachings," said Timothy Smith, 44, in an interview with Catholic News Service. His wife, Dawn, 40, has given birth to three children who were adopted as frozen embryos and believes their road to parenthood was morally righteous. "But, the door is still open a crack here. Until that is shut, we would like to say we think this is a very good thing to do."

In the document *Dignitas Personae* (*The Dignity of a Person*)—released at the Vatican on Dec. 12—church leaders did not condemn frozen embryo adoption, the procedure through which couples may adopt embryos that are not used during in vitro fertilization, but said the practice raises serious ethical concerns. Vatican officials insist no fully moral solution exists for dealing with frozen embryos, not even the idea of adopting or "rescuing" abandoned embryos to bring them to full development and birth.

When the Smiths married in 1991 they knew they wanted three or four children, but learned in 1997 they were infertile. As they researched their options, the couple—who were living in Delaware at the time—discovered that people who go through in vitro procedures sometimes donate their excess frozen embryos to others who cannot conceive children through marital sexual intercourse, and decided this was the

has made us all come to pray and join in a prayer that says stop the massacre."

Earlier in the day at St. Catherine's Church, adjacent to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, West Bank, Christians also attended a special Mass. "This is genocide," said one Bethlehem resident, Adel Sahouri, 70, who attended the Mass. "Israel is so strong and has all the weapons the world can afford. What does Hamas have? Just rockets, nothing." Another told Catholic News Service after Mass he was praying "not just for the people in Gaza but also for those in Tel Aviv. Every [Israeli] soldier going into Gaza now has a mother who is sitting glued to the television with her heart in her throat. He who truly has God in his heart loves everybody."

This parishioner said he did not understand the purpose of Hamas's rockets, given their inaccuracy, and he emphasized the fact that there is only one Palestinian government, headed by Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas. In June 2007, Hamas split with Abbas's Fatah movement and took control of the Gaza Strip. Abbas's government still controls the West Bank. "What are we fighting over—for a piece of land? Take the land. In the end the land will swallow us all," he said, noting that, given the situation, he was not able to speak so freely with many of his friends and acquaintances.

After the Mass in Bethlehem more than 50 worshippers—carrying a flower wreath, placards calling for peace and black and Palestinian flags—processed around Manger Square reciting Psalm 50, traditionally said at funerals. "What is going on is war and I am praying to stop it. I am not waiting for people to hear [my prayer]. I am waiting for God; and whatever God's plan is, we will follow," said Rosemarie Nasser, 55. "No one understands that God has his own time. So many times in our lives God uses the bad for good."

course they wanted to take.

Though they subscribe to church teachings that artificial methods of procreation, such as in vitro fertilization, are immoral, the Smiths believe they protected the lives of their three children by adopting them as frozen embryos and providing Dawn's womb as a nurturing place for them to grow.

They say they were surprised at the contents of the bioethics document released by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. "I would have thought that, after some reflection on the matter, they would have leaned a little more" in favor of the practice, Smith said. "It doesn't read like they talked to people—especially Catholics—who had gone through this and weighed the moral issues involved."

The only completely moral way of acting is to stop creating and freezing embryos, which possess the dignity of all human beings, the document said.

Speaking at the Dec. 12 Vatican press conference to explain the document, Bishop Elio Sgreccia—former president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, who helped prepare the Vatican's new bioethics document—told reporters: "The basic advice, explicitly stated in the document, is that embryos must not be frozen. It is one of those actions that has no remedy. Once it is done, correcting it implies committing another error."

From CNS and other sources. CNS photos.

Erin Smith and her twin brothers, Conrad, left, and Dominic

U.S. Bishops Applaud Conscience Regulations

The U.S. bishops' pro-life spokeswoman welcomed a final regulation issued on Dec. 18 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that protects the conscience rights of health care providers. Deirdre McQuade, assistant director for policy and communications, said the regulation is a way to protect medical personnel from "being coerced" to violate their consciences in federally funded programs. The new regulation clarifies and implements existing federal statutes enacted by Congress over the last several years, most recently in 2004. "Individuals and institutions committed to healing should not be required to take the very human life that they are dedicated to protecting," McQuade said in a statement. "The enforcement of federal laws to protect their freedom of conscience is long overdue." She said, "Catholic health care providers will especially welcome this mark of respect for the excellent life-affirming care they provide to all in need."

NEWS BRIEFS

Dietrich Reinhart

Eugene Fisher, a retired official at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has been honored by two organizations for his work in promoting understanding between Catholic and Jewish communities. ✦ Archbishop **Allen H. Vigneron** of Oakland was named archbishop of Detroit on Jan. 5 ✦ **A new online survey** conducted for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops found that 78 percent favored requiring that abortions be performed only by licensed physicians and that 72 percent favor requiring that women who are seeking abortions be told of the potential physical and psychological risks. ✦ The president of **Caritas Internationalis** called for an immediate cease-fire in the Gaza Strip to allow the wounded and their physicians to reach the region's hospitals. ✦ Despite the bombings in the Gaza Strip, the six **Missionaries of Charity** working there say life has some normalcy and they plan to remain. ✦ Benedictine Brother **Dietrich Reinhart**, former president of St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., died Dec. 29 at age 59. ✦ Catholic bishops in southern Africa paid tribute to the anti-apartheid campaigner **Helen Suzman**, who died on Jan. 1 in Johannesburg at age 91.

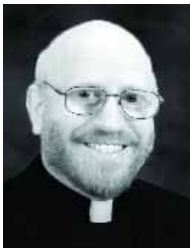
Ugandan Rebels Killing Congolese Civilians

A Catholic Church official said the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army is killing Congolese civilians to avenge military attacks by the Congolese army. "It is the civilian population who are paying the price of this violence," said Marie-Bernard Alima, a St. Joseph Sister who is executive secretary of the Congolese bishops' justice and peace commission. Sister Marie-Bernard told Catholic News Service on Dec. 29 that 50 bodies were found in the courtyard of a Catholic church in Doruma Christmas morning. The L.R.A., a Ugandan rebel group, has been blamed for the church massacre as well as continued tensions in northeastern Congo. In early December, Ugandan, Congolese and southern Sudanese forces launched an offensive against the group. Sister Marie-Bernard said the local justice and peace commission currently is taking scores of people to the local hospital.

Number of Catholics in Congress Grows

The number of Catholic members of Congress is slowly growing and the Catholic contingent, like the full Congress itself, has taken a decided turn toward the Democratic Party. When the 111th Congress is sworn in on Jan. 6, more than a quarter of its members will be Catholics, roughly matching the percentage of Catholics in the U.S. population and consistent with the statistical trends of the past decade. Four years ago, when the 109th Congress convened, it included 153 Catholics. Two years later there were 155 Catholics in the 110th Congress. The new group of senators and representatives has 162 members who identify themselves as Catholics. With nearly all the 2008 electoral battles settled by early December and the Senate seat of President-elect Barack Obama still not filled, the Catholic delegation includes 17 Democrats and nine Republicans in the Senate and 98 Democrats and 38 Republicans in the House.

THOMAS MASSARO



Blessed Are the Poor

The best homiletic advice I ever received was to remember always that I am a fellow pilgrim sharing the path of discovery with a congregation. As a new regular voice at this magazine, I will do my best to bring this call to intellectual humility to my columns. Fellow travelers are more likeable than self-appointed gurus, after all.

Keeping my pledge to avoid "know-it-all-dom" will come easily enough in this initial column, because I will share some tentative thoughts on a pressing topic on which nobody can speak with final authority: how to respond to the current economic downturn in a way that is true to the Gospel and Christian ethics.

To employ a medical metaphor, one could say that economists by now generally agree on a basic diagnosis of what went wrong to precipitate this crisis, and they can discern a reasonably clear prescription to foster recovery (bailouts, stimulus packages and new regulatory oversight). They might even come up with a reliable prognosis and timeline for crawling out of this, the sharpest recession in decades.

But a distinct set of challenges arises when we turn our attention to the personal level. How should we think about what is happening "at street level," to actual people and the budgets of their hard-pressed families? Some of the challenges I have in mind regard how best to describe the effects of the recession, while others pertain to the shape of the proper moral response to these hard times.

Poverty—there is a word we have heard too seldom since the financial dominoes started tumbling last fall. Financial crises and the recessions that follow cause poverty rates to soar. Jobs are lost, incomes decline, investments shrink, savings are tapped out, health care coverage expires, foreclosures strike, and retirement plans are scuttled. No household is completely immune from the threat of insecurity. Correlated with declining income are a host of personal hardships, from marital strain to drug use to declining health, even suicide. These spreading ripples, worthy of deep concern, often originate in the stubborn reality of material deprivation.

What is the proper moral response to these hard times?

Downward mobility—another stark term that demands our attention. For some it means a modest scaling back of expenses and expectations, for others the alarming prospect of an increasingly desperate struggle for survival. As maddeningly imprecise as this term is, it always involves the "bite" of dashed aspirations and the loss of social status. Families confronted with involuntary downward mobility are generally not different from their neighbors; they simply find themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time.

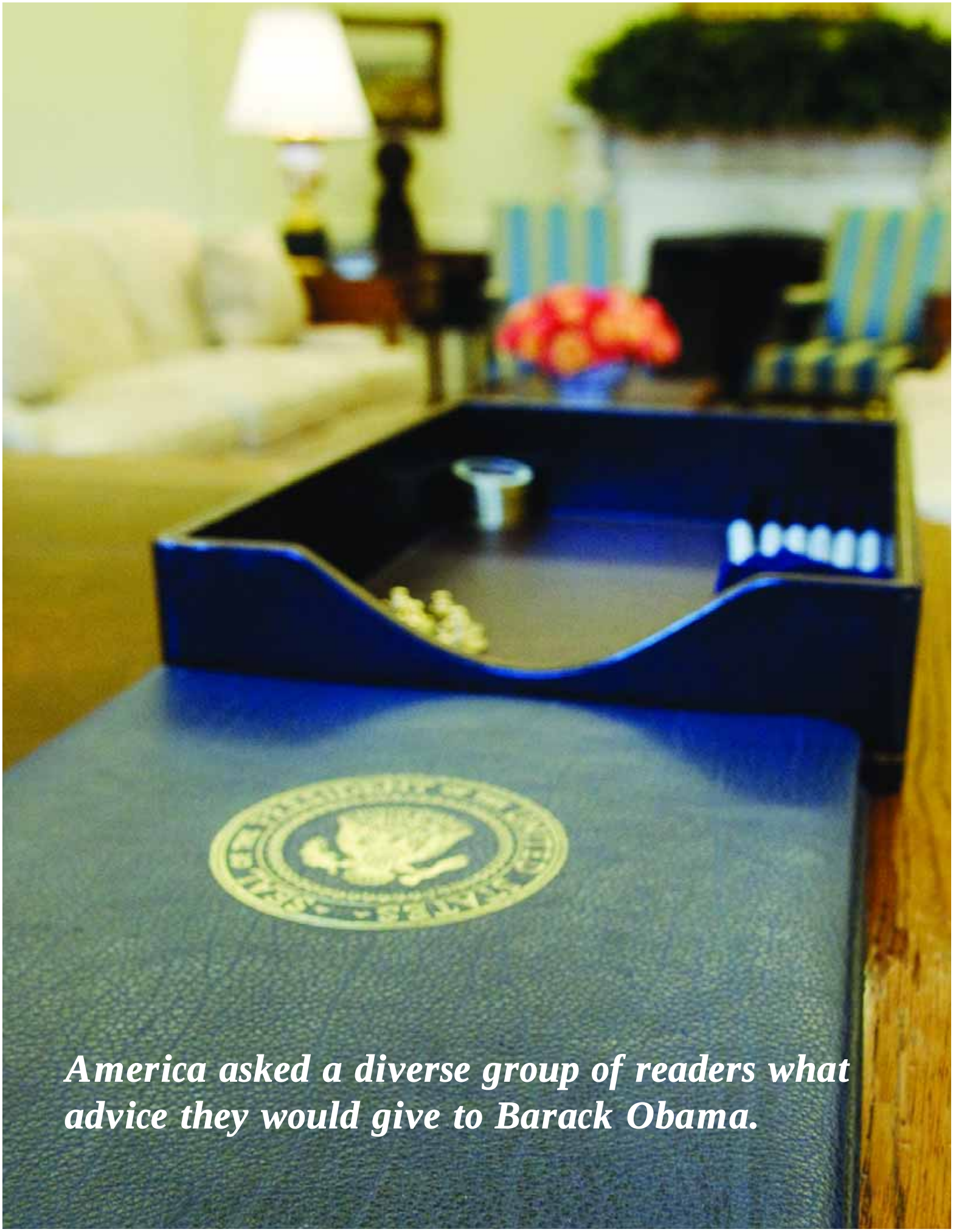
Pope John Paul II challenged the world to grow in the virtue of social solidarity. What does it mean to be in solidarity with those affected most acutely by this recession? The answer to this question turns out to be quite individual, with no one-size-fits-all response. At the very least, it entails avoiding those "Marie Antoinette moments" that reveal ignorance of the less fortunate and insensitivity toward them. While some point to the New York Yankees' recent spending spree on free agents and new stadium amenities as an unconscionable display of callousness, we all need to reassess our priorities.

Notice that phrase just above: "the less fortunate." The lessons available from observing the roller coaster of recent business cycles must include an appreciation for the limits of self-reliance amid unstable modern economies. "There but for the grace of God (or the burst of the bubble) go I!"

For those who persist in a blanket policy of blaming the poor for their poverty, John Paul offered this challenge in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (1991): "But it will be necessary above all to abandon a mentality in which the poor—as individuals and as peoples—are considered a burden, irksome intruders trying to consume what others have produced."

If any good comes of this recession, it may just consist in a more honest and nuanced view of the true causes of poverty and greater fellow-feeling with those suffering its effects. While hard times do not automatically settle disagreements on policy issues, like the proper extent of social safety nets, the recession does present a privileged opportunity to reassess certain moral dimensions of our economy and to discern our own "option for the poor."

THOMAS MASSARO, S.J., *teaches social ethics at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Chestnut Hill, Mass.*



America asked a diverse group of readers what advice they would give to Barack Obama.

LETTERS AND MEMOS
TO THE INCOMING EXECUTIVE

Mister President:

Here in Kenya, your ancestral land, we claim you as a true son of Africa. Your name, Baraka, means blessing. You assume the leadership of the United States at a time when Americans groan in the throes of economic woes. A man whose house is on fire does not care about his neighbor's dying ox. Understandably, you will focus your energy on extinguishing the fire of economic recession currently menacing Americans. This may sound nepotistic, but in Africa we say that a person whose relative sits on top of a mango tree always eats ripe and delicious mangoes. Africa expects many blessings from you, as our relative, in your exalted position as president. Yes, you can bless Africa by leading the international community to bring peace to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Darfur; political stability to Zimbabwe and economic development in trade and aid to Africa.

For too long we have heard lofty rhetoric from world leaders, including your predecessor, that Africa matters—rhetoric that rarely translated into reality. You stand on the cusp between despair and hope for America. Change has come to America, you once said. Africa also pleads for change, and you can help bring it about on our continent. The power you wield is to kindle hope, create opportunity and generate change in America and the world. For no matter how powerful a man, he cannot make the rains fall on his farm alone. God bless you, Baraka!

AGBONKHIANMEGHE E. OROBATOR, S.J., *is a lecturer in theology at Hekima College Jesuit School of Theology in Nairobi, Kenya, and rector of the college's Jesuit community.*

You set out to assemble a cabinet and group of advisors much like a liberal arts university would select its faculty. Your "team of rivals," as they are called, allows you to be the professor in chief, welcoming ideas from myriad political experiences. Presumably this is no accident. You have attended highly regarded institutions of higher education and were once a professor of law. Now you have taken a model inspired by American universities and applied it to your nascent presidency, at least in part to provoke the type of debate and perspective that stimulates revolutionary thinking. You have said on many occasions that if it were not for your education, you would not be where you are today.

Unfortunately, the cost of higher education is already increasing at a greater

rate than middle- and lower-class families can afford. According to a biannual report by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, "College tuition continues to outpace family income and the price of other necessities, such as medical care, food, and housing.... Whatever the causes of these tuition increases, the continuation of trends of the last quarter century would place higher education beyond the reach of most Americans and would greatly exacerbate the debt burdens of those who do enroll."

There will be no bailout for families who have already taken on sizeable debt to pay for education, but since the economy you inherited will need time to rebound, this situation can only be projected to continue. While America limps, it is the obligation of all levels of government not to lose sight of its future. Education cannot simply be put on hold while solutions are sought for failed banks and auto companies.

President Obama, the opportunities you had to advance your education still influence you today, but if proper attention is not given to reducing the cost of a university degree, these experiences may not be possible for all segments of America. Good luck!

MATTHEW P. MOLL, *a 2003 graduate of Marquette University, served in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps and is studying new media at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.*

I have not had higher hopes or greater expectations for any president since John F. Kennedy. You are every bit as intelligent, articulate and capable as he was. You seem wonderfully agreeable and genuinely decent. Your call for a new era of bipartisanship is admirable.

You have set out an ambitious agenda that includes rescuing the economy, undoing the free-market idolatry that resulted in ruinous deregulation, reversing arrogant and self-defeating unilateralism in the conduct of foreign affairs, repairing the decades-long neglect of our infrastructure, instituting sane, long-range environmental protections and achieving universal health care.

But do not be deceived. Great presidents must take on powerful enemies as well as tackle great crises. Lincoln had the Copperheads. Franklin D. Roosevelt had the "economic royalists." You will have yours, too. Sooner or later, as day follows night, the diehards will set out to frustrate any process of significant change.

Be resolute. Be tough. Stick to your beliefs. Markets were made for man, not the other way around. Free enterprise is a guide, not a god. The world is now and forever interdependent. No country or society can go it alone. The environment is our home; it is not for sale. The poor will be with us always; and as always, the poorest and most vulnerable will need our help.

With malice toward none, Mr. President, but with firmness to do what is right, remember you cannot make everyone a friend. Partisanship is not pleasant. But there are times when it is necessary. Sometimes a measure of a president's success is the vehemence of the enemies he makes.

PETER QUINN, *a novelist and essayist, was the speechwriter for two New York governors. His latest book is* Looking for Jimmy: In Search of Irish America *(Overlook Press, 2007).*

There is a psalm in the Bible that says, "Truth springs up from the ground." The ground is where ordinary people live, the people you addressed most frequently during your campaign. But I want to direct your eyes and your heart to brothers and sisters who live below the ground, Mr. President, those deemed so unredeemable that they have been condemned to die.

For 20 years now I have accompanied the condemned to their deaths and have been there for them at the end so they could see the face of someone who respects their dignity. I have seen state killing close up, seen with my own eyes the agony, the torture of human beings anticipating death, trying to bolster courage to walk to the killing chamber. They plead with me, "Please pray that God holds up my legs."

Is it possible, Mr. President, that as a country we are in moral trouble for sanctioning torture of suspected terrorists in Guantánamo because we already practice torture in death chambers across the land? There men and women, bound hand and foot, are forced down onto gurneys and killed—often with family members watching, their own mothers bearing mute witness to their deaths.

You have ushered in hope for a new America, President Obama. Join me in the hope that we will soon shut down not only Guantánamo, but our own killing chambers as well. Only then can we stand tall alongside the vast majority of countries around the globe that have embraced human rights by no longer killing their citizens.

I pray, I work for this new America.

HELEN PREJEAN, C.S.J., *is the author of* Dead Man Walking *and* The Death of Innocents.

While I speak only for myself with this advice, I am fortunate to be a participant in the extraordinary phenomenon of Silicon Valley, a culture and business model that I would boldly argue has been a source of substantial good as well as economic growth, not just for our country but for the world. We have seen unprecedented progress in information technology, health care and

PREVIOUS PAGE: REUTERS/JONATHAN ERNST

emerging clean technologies. So please, Mr. Obama:

• Champion entrepreneurism, risk-taking and innovation with your words, legislation and regulation. Allow failure. Do not make business failure illegal.

• Do not overreach with regulatory and legislative "fixes" for the current economic crisis. While many proposals may be crowd pleasers, consider the impact on future entrepreneurs and the capital formation they need to pursue their dreams. Consider the moral hazard created with many well-meaning ideas to soften blows. Help rebuild an environment where initial public offerings are possible and small public companies can afford to exist.

• Given our recent economic interventions, push back against the inevitable pressures to politicize the government's new investments in private companies. We do not need new Fannie Maes and Freddie Macs. As soon as our stabilization objectives have been achieved, sell these positions back to the private sector.

• Make science and engineering education a national priority. Challenge the resistance to change in our calcified education bureaucracy. Use your ability to communicate and connect with young people to make the case that science and engineering are "cool" and noble professions that can make the world a better place. Encourage immigration, especially among scientists and engineers.

• Although the benefits of free trade may not be perfectly distributed, you do know that the benefits to our country and our trading partners are overwhelming. Do not pander to fears of free trade for short-term political advantage.

• Finally, do not seduce Silicon Valley with the narcotics of subsidies, protections and bailouts, making us just another pig at the trough of the federal government. May we have the courage and intellectual honesty to resist these temptations.

BOB FINOCCHIO JR. *is a corporate director, private investor, part-time professor and consultant.*

First and foremost, I would suggest that you find ways that help you to remain centered and grounded, in order to meet the new demands of your daily life and the well-being of your family. I would recommend that your work as president of the United States focus on cultivating the common good and promoting the dignity of every human person, both for the family of nations and our own national community. Restoring good international relationships based on mutual respect and equal regard is important for bringing about genuine peace and justice. Since you are coming into office in this difficult time globally and nationally, I would suggest that you focus on issues that are related to the dignity of the human person, and that you make it a priority to address the wars in the Middle East and other parts of the world that have torn apart our family of nations.

There are other related concerns that rob people of dignity, such as the food crisis, trafficking of human persons and genocide. Nationally, it should be your priority to restore those systems that affect the most vulnerable in our midst: education, health care, immigration, housing and employment. I would also encourage you to reconsider your pledge to sign the Freedom of Choice Act in light of the far-reaching and devastating effects its implementation will have on so many.

GABINO ZAVALA *is auxiliary bishop for the San Gabriel Region, Diocese of Los Angeles.*

Healing the wounds of division was an important part of your campaign message, and I hope this task remains in the foreground of your presidential agenda. We are in dire need of the height, depth and breadth of a vision in which we recognize our common humanity and so can reach across divisions of every sort to care for one another as brothers and sisters.

Undoubtedly, one of the festering wounds is discord over abortion law and policy. Is there any hope for healing this wound? Openly acknowledging that abortion is not a triumph for anyone, expressing appreciation for how many efforts to reduce abortion may be deeply attuned with the goal of social justice, and demonstrating in domestic and international policy agendas a commitment to work toward a society in which abortion is rare would all be steps in this direction. These efforts could also help to set the tone for a robust bipartisan national conversation on how to eliminate all forms of brutality—including torture and the death penalty—and respond to the needs of all of the poor and most vulnerable in our own communities and throughout the world.

In all that you do, help us to move beyond the narrow and rigid confines of individualistic rhetoric toward a vision that inspires a true sense of solidarity and the sacrifices this might entail. In this lies our identity, our dignity, our future as a people and the positive contribution we can make to our increasingly interdependent world.

AMY UELMEN *is director of the Institute on Religion, Law & Lawyer's Work at Fordham University School of Law in New York City.*

Memos to the President

I propose that President Obama take back his pledge to lower taxes, and instead persuade Congress to raise them. Amid the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, our many

infrastructure needs, universal health care and the costs of the economic bailout, the government needs more money.

The American middle class, the target beneficiary of the cuts, is not suffering from any serious shortage of consumer goods. It gained them by going down the primrose path of credit card debts, bad mortgages and no savings. It was seduced without much difficulty by an excessively deadly consumerist culture—more and more of everything that suits one's fancy.

The middle class now needs government help in creating new jobs and relieving people of some of their debts, even if foolishly incurred; and a tax cut will be of little help to them. A government stimulus package oriented toward infrastructure needs and improved education would help the middle class more in the long run. It could surely help to put in place a budget-increasing universal health care program.

Democrats have themselves been seduced by a Republican, conservative-driven ideology, always wanting to put more money into private pockets. We have been there, done that. If any change is most needed, a rejection of that ideology should be near the top of the list. Raising taxes would be a good start.

DANIEL CALLAHAN *is a senior research scholar and president emeritus of The Hastings Center.*

The Arab world celebrated Barack Obama's victory because many understood the historic significance of an African-American becoming president of the United States. Given the toll taken by eight years of the Bush administration's policies, Arabs, too, longed for "change we could believe in." Having just returned from the region, I know that expectations for the Obama administration will be hard to meet. This could prove dangerous, because even a small disappointment could bring a negative mood swing that would spell trouble for the United States and embolden extremists.

Since resolution of the "big issues" (like the establishment of a Palestinian state or ending the "occupation" of Iraq) will not happen quickly, President Obama must look for "bite-sized" early actions to sustain the hope that he will open a new chapter in U.S.-Arab relations, giving him time to address more fundamental concerns. The speech he has promised to deliver to the world's Muslims within his first 100 days in office is an important start. Appointing Arab-Americans to meaningful roles in his Middle East peacemaking team could also send an important early signal of balance to Arabs.

ON THE WEB
Video messages for the new president, americamagazine.org/video

Obama's pledge to work to open a dialogue with Iran and Syria should not be seen as coming at the expense of the Arab allies whose friendship with the United States has cost them. An early meeting with the leaders of the Persian Gulf States, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority would make it clear that U.S. dialogue with Iran and Syria will be done with and in support of our friends. Finally, because close attention will be paid to every word President Obama will say about the Arab-Israel conflict, he must be balanced and instill confidence. If Palestinians are going to be asked to wait yet again, the new U.S. president cannot be seen "giving away the store" or letting Israel continue to take what it wants while the Palestinians suffer under a harsh occupation.

JAMES J. ZOGBY *is president and founder of the Arab American Institute in Washington, D.C.*

As Barack Obama steps forward to take the oath of office, he will be taking that next step in the journey through the paddy fields of Java and on the dusty roads of Kenya, finding himself and asserting his identity as an inclusive leader. On election night, he stood in Grant Park in Chicago proclaiming to the world, "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible, tonight is your answer." At his inauguration, he will look down the Mall, knowing that at the other end stood another African-American in 1963, proclaiming "I have a dream." While pledging health care and good economic management at home, he has the opportunity to pledge his country's support for those who work for peace and prosperity in all those paddy fields and on all those dusty roads where human flourishing remains but a dream. The wealth and power of his nation will yield more internationally if he works inclusively with other governments, respecting the culture of the Javanese rice farmer and acknowledging the aspirations of the Kenyan trader.

Gone are the days when the United States can go it alone or with "coalitions of the willing," reconstituting the global landscape. The paddy fields and dusty roads will be safer and more productive if President Obama rekindles the dream of due process in international forums and equal protection for people of all races, regardless of their nationality. Change will not be easy; but together, as one world, "Yes we can."

FRANK BRENNAN, S.J., *is a professor of law at Australian Catholic University.*

REUTERS/HENRY ROMERO

The Food On Our Tables

The flaws of U.S. agricultural policy

BY BOB PEACE

Most of us are happy with the food available in our markets, which to a large extent offer products of United States agriculture. As taxpayers we help to support agriculture through direct payments, or crop subsidies, paid to farmers. Many indirect subsidies, like government-sponsored research, crop insurance and import quotas on crops like sugar, also benefit our farmers. Such subsidies, however, have an unintended social consequence; they allow American farmers to grow an abundant crop and to sell it at prices often below world food prices—an advantage for us, a disadvantage for others.

To see the effect of the policy on a neighboring nation, consider Mexico, where the main crop of family farmers is corn. Mexican farmers have no comparable subsidies, and without them they cannot compete with U.S. farmers whose corn is exported to Mexico. As a result, many Mexican farm laborers cannot find work in their home country. Many of these come to the United States looking for work. Studies show that poverty fuels migration.

BOB PEACE *is an Alumni Distinguished Professor in the College of Management at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, N.C.*

Nationwide, direct payments to U.S. farmers in 2008 will total about $5 billion. In 2007, North Carolina farmers received some $66 million in direct subsidies, which placed the state 23rd among the 50 states. Not all farms and farmers receive direct payment subsidies; two-thirds of U.S. farmers do not grow subsidy program crops. And there is an income limit in the 2008 Farm Bill; a person or a legal entity, like a corporate farm, with an adjusted gross income over $750,000 averaged over the previous three years, is not eligible for a direct subsidy.

Farm Laborers From Mexico

Every year thousands of farm laborers from Mexico migrate to North Carolina with temporary visas, called H2A visas, approved by the U.S. Department of Labor. Under the H2A program, agricultural employers can hire foreign workers if they can show that they tried to hire local workers first without success, and that the work is seasonal or temporary. North Carolina's farmers are among the largest users of this temporary agricultural visa. Though H2A visa holders are temporary residents, they are in the United States legally. Studies show that about 48 percent of foreign agricultural workers in the United States hold H2A visas. That means that more than half of our foreign agricultural laborers are here illegally.

Part of what is perceived to be an illegal immigration problem is thus of our own making, as taxpayer-financed agricultural subsidies trigger a migratory flow. This problematic result should generate in us a sense of responsibility toward those we have, perhaps unconsciously, lured over our borders.

Federal and state laws provide protections for migrant farm laborers on issues that include wages, housing, health and safety. Since migrant farm workers are isolated from the greater community and depend on their employers for basic housing, transportation and wages, workers are understandably loath to point a finger at their employers when abuses under the law occur. And many, particularly undocumented farm workers, are unable to take advantage of tax-supported government services like Medicaid and food stamps.

Whether migrant workers are here on H2A visas or are here illegally and undocumented, their labor remains vital to our healthy farm production. Migrants contribute to the availability of the food on our tables.

Many of North Carolina's migrant labor camps are well organized, clean and safe, while others are not. The North Carolina Department of Labor maps and registers migrant labor camps and conducts pre-occupancy housing inspections before the camps can take in workers. Follow-up inspections are conducted to ensure compliance with the federal government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration. North Carolina's labor department employs three full-time compliance inspectors, but there are about 1,600 registered camps throughout the state. The number of unregistered camps is not known, but could be in the thousands. Despite the department's good efforts to ensure employer compliance with the law, abuses will and do occur.

Along with the efforts of the North Carolina labor department and the state's Department of Agriculture, the farm-worker unit of Legal Aid of North Carolina conducts an outreach initiative for migrant agricultural workers, partly through the state's Witness for Justice Program. Legal Aid attorneys administer the program, and an unpaid cadre of law students and members of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps conduct tours of the labor camps. The program solicits citizen volunteers through word of mouth and church bulletins. The initiative provides migrant farm workers with information that explains their rights. The citizen volunteers play an informational role; they enlighten those not professionally involved in the issue about what is learned on visits to the camps. The initiative allows community members with an interest in social justice to develop a better understanding of immigration issues. As a citizen volunteer myself, I was able to get a better look at where our food comes from and what happens to those who harvest it. A

A Response to 'The Chaplain's Dilemma'

In "The Chaplain's Dilemma" (11/17), Deacon Tom Cornell articulates well the need for priests in the military, but I disagree with his (and Gordon Zahn's) proposal that the chaplaincy be "civilianized" to be more effective.

I spent 27 years as a chaplain in the United States Navy. I served as Executive Assistant to the Navy Chief of Chaplains, as Fleet Chaplain for the U.S. Pacific Fleet and as the Pacific Command Chaplain. I also taught the courses on conscientious objection, privileged communication and confidentiality at the Navy Chaplains' School and to officers in Newport, R.I.

Cornell's position often relies on misguided generalizations, uninformed opinions and skewed perceptions. Just as a missionary who learns the customs and language of a people becomes effective in preaching the Gospel, so priests in the military who make the same sacrifices and endure the same risks and hardships as other service members command their respect in a way civilians never could.

Last year, a U.S. Marine General in Iraq, General Jim Mattis, claimed that his most trusted resource was his chaplain. He had ordered his Marines to demonstrate a show of force in full battle gear when faced with a local Iraqi demonstration. His unit chaplain, Father Bill Devine, suggested instead that the troops warmly greet the demonstrators and give them bottles of water. Father Devine explained that the gesture would be understood as hospitable and might even be disarming. The general thought the idea bizarre at first, but ordered his men to do what his chaplain advised. "And it worked," the general explained. "There were smiles all around, even some embraces, and our friendly relations resumed on the spot and have remained ever since." This is a good example of how a priest in uniform influenced the very general Cornell criticized in his article for his hard-nosed attitude. I doubt a civilian cleric would have enjoyed such influence; security wouldn't have allowed him in the war zone.

Cornell also maintains that the government trains chaplains. In fact, chaplains come to the military fully trained by their own faith groups. The government merely provides each Chaplain Corps with a school so that experienced chaplains can teach new chaplains about the local culture to enhance their own effectiveness.

Cornell's criticism of chaplains not being trained to support Conscientious Objector Status is unfounded. The subject is addressed specifically with every new chaplain. Military instructions support all those who are authentic and sincere in their newfound beliefs that all warfare is contrary to their conscience.

Some chaplains might compromise themselves, but no one is above temptation when an opinion may jeopardize status or security: It is a human flaw not confined to the military. There is a defining moment in each of our lives when we are called to stand up and be counted, and how we respond either can define us as a hero or make us look pathetic. I can point to many Chaplain Corps heroes who have demonstrated personal courage and credibility. Two such chaplains are, in fact, being considered for sainthood.

When the bishops were asking their people to protest pending partial-birth abortion legislation, I was directed by Navy lawyers to tell Navy priests they were not to participate; the Uniform Code of Military Justice specifies that officers cannot become involved in political activity. I reminded all our priests not to become involved in political activity when in uniform, but that once they put on their vestments they represented the church, and all the faithful had a constitutional right to hear what other Catholics were being told. My directive went unchallenged.

A Baptist friend of mine, a chaplain, tells the story of how his orders to the Naval Academy in the 1970s were about to be cancelled because he was black. Cardinal John O'Connor, then senior chaplain at the academy, threatened to pull out all his chaplains if the orders were cancelled. They never were. Similarly, as a senior chaplain, I had an evangelical chaplain being pressured to reveal the confidences of a marine who had been murdered. The rationale was that since the marine was deceased the privilege of confidentiality no longer held. I threatened to pull out all chaplains should any action be taken against the chaplain. That ended it.

In all three instances, a civilian chaplain would never have had such influence.

The spiritual writer Brother Roger of Taizé wrote: "The equilibrium of a Christian is comparable to that of a man who walks on the edge of a razor. Only God can maintain his balance." So it is with Catholic chaplains who minister in the military—it is a very challenging place to live out the Gospel. We have to do it compellingly and with credibility. It is like walking on the edge of a razor, and God alone can maintain our balance.

(MOST REV.) JOSEPH W. ESTABROOK
Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese for the Military Services, U.S.A.

ART | KAREN SUE SMITH

BEYOND PROTEST

The art of George Tooker

GEORGE TOOKER (b. 1920) is a living American artist whose work, and in some respects whose life, seems especially pertinent to our times. Deeply spiritual and attuned to social injustice and destructive societal trends, Tooker painted his most provocative works as protests against racism, alienation, government surveillance of citizens and homophobia. On his ominously affecting canvases, Tooker shows what intolerance, suspicion, prejudice and lack of community look like. Like Edward Hopper, Andrew Wyeth and Jacob Lawrence in the United States, and like Balthus in Europe, Tooker insisted on making figurative art when the avant-garde had moved into modernism and abstraction and had pronounced representational art passé, if not dead.

"George Tooker: A Retrospective," is the first retrospective of Tooker's work in 30 years. After closing at the National Academy Museum in New York City on Jan. 4, it will travel to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (Jan. 30–April 5) and to the Columbus Museum of Art in Ohio (May 1–Sept. 6, 2009). The show should not be missed.

These three museums collaborated on the exhibition and produced an excellent catalogue. A recipient of the 2007 National Medal of Arts and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Tooker deserves to be more widely known.

"Dark Angel," 1999

PHOTO: PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS, PHILADELPHIA; HENRY C. GIBSON FUND

In his art Tooker found a way of cultivating an interior life, and it gave him a powerful tool for communicating his observations. "Painting," he once said, "is an attempt to come to terms with life." Over six decades the artist has reflected on social injustices, on personal memories and on classical themes. Tooker focuses on the figure because his insights concern persons and how they do—and do not—relate to one another.

In "Ward" (1970-71), the artist presents a roomful of hospital beds occupied by identical looking young men under white sheets; these beds look like open coffins. Three older figures, not reclining, are awake, but no one relates to anyone else—a common theme in Tooker's protest paintings. Hanging U.S. flags indicate a military hospital. Made during the Vietnam War, this painting can be interpreted as a war protest, but it also exposes the impersonal way our society "cares" for the ill or injured. It remains relevant though nearly 40 years have passed.

Ironically, Tooker is an artist who records contemporary life using Renaissance techniques. He mixes his own egg tempera in the colors of Umbria and is infatuated with perspective and architecture, as were the Italian Renaissance painters. His most famous painting, "Subway" (1950), shows a subway station from the inside, with its low ceilings, multiple stairwells and turnstiles—a complex exercise in perspective. But the subject is alienation. Anonymous individuals look past one another, a few men peer out eerily at the viewer, and a distressed woman in a red dress gestures as though sensing danger. Tooker applies tiny methodical brush strokes to create his images; a perfection of technique used to depict imperfection within society.

In "Landscape With Figures" (1966) the "land" is a warren of cubicles, each of which contains a man or a woman, like workers in a vast office seen from above. Some have closed their eyes (perhaps to find more space within), while others look up. No one engages with the others who sit just a

thin wall away. Red pervades the painting, as though blood could course through these individuals if only they would reach out to each other.

"I am after painting reality impressed on the mind so hard that it returns as a dream," Tooker has said, "but I am not after painting dreams as such, or fantasy."

Of Cuban-Dutch descent, Tooker was educated at Phillips Academy during the Great Depression and at Harvard before World War II. In these settings, Tooker felt keenly his mixed ethnicity and understood something of the "outsider status" that racial discrimination imposes. In "Lunch" (1964) solitary men and women sit at lunch counters, all eating identical sandwiches. But Tooker adds a lone black man at the center. He seems especially alone because he is racially different. Tooker may be showing that integration does not mean the end of segregation, for isolation lies deeper still and separates people.

Tooker depicts Latinos and African-Americans in crowds and street scenes, but also shows mixed-race couples at home. In "Window VII" (1963), a lovely nude female pulls back a yellow curtain and modestly gazes out; over one shoulder, the face of a gorgeous black man looks out; in the soft red-orange background a bit of the bed is showing; it is sensuous and carnal. Tooker also painted a black Christ in the act of blessing the bread in "Supper" (1963); Jesus is with two other men, both white. Tooker said that this image recalled the story of Christ at Emmaus. In "Dark Angel" (1999), Tooker expressed his understanding of the vocation of the artist as divinely given. In this self-portrait, a black angel blesses Tooker, laying his hand on Tooker's head as the artist holds a paintbrush.

"Lovers I," 1959

Tooker's oeuvre offers more than social comment. Some of his works are beautiful, even sublime. In "Embrace of Peace II" (1988), named for a part of the Catholic Mass, Tooker shows a young woman and man reaching for each other and looking directly at each other with intense, but not sexual, longing. Perhaps because our culture is oversaturated with images of lovers, many in poses overtly sexual, Tooker's images of lovers are less memorable than his protest pieces, which show us what others do not.

"Girl Praying" (1977) is quietly moving. Perhaps a Latino or an African-American, the subject holds her hands over her heart in a gesture like that of Mary at the Annunciation. She seems in the midst of a mystical experience, communing with someone we cannot see. A golden glow behind projects a religious mood. Such images are serene and contemplative, warm and peaceful. This too is countercultural.

ON THE WEB
View a slideshow of George Tooker's work.
americamagazine.org/slideshow

An Artist in New York

During the 1940s Tooker studied at the Art Students League of New York, where Reginald Marsh and Edward Hopper were teaching. Tooker studied with Marsh, a strong social critic. He met Paul Cadmus, an artist 16 years older than he was, and the two became lovers. Their friends included the artists Jared and Margaret French, the ballet impresario Lincoln Kirstein and the photographer George Platt Lynes.

During this decade, Tooker's work explored implicitly homosexual themes. One example is "A Game of Chess" (1946-47), in which Tooker deals with societal expectations of marriage. Here a young man who looks like Tooker is about to run away from a huge mother figure and her daughter, ready to declare "checkmate." The very floor on which the young man stands looks like a game board, on which his future will be determined.

In 1949 Tooker formed a relationship with William Christopher, another artist, who would become his lifetime partner until Christopher's death in 1973. The two eventually bought a home in Vermont, where Tooker still lives. Tooker and Christopher, who was raised by an African-American family after his parents died, became ardent supporters of Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement.

Raised an Episcopalian, Tooker converted to Catholicism in 1976 after Christopher's death, a transition facilitated by his friendship with a local Catholic priest. One finds a palpable sense of peace in Tooker's later works. His most overtly religious works include stations of the cross, a depic-

PHOTO: PRIVATE COLLECTION

tion of the seven sacraments (commissioned for a Franciscan church in Vermont) and a post-Resurrection Christ, all shown in the catalogue but not on exhibit.

This retrospective allows a viewer to appreciate the balance Tooker has achieved in his lifetime. His work points to what needs repair in our society and in our relationships, and it attests to the strength and beauty of love, community and faith.

KAREN SUE SMITH, *editorial director of* ***America****, is a student at the National Academy of Design School of Fine Arts in Manhattan.*

FILM | MICHAEL V. TUETH

UNCERTAIN SYMPATHIES

John Patrick Shanley's 'Doubt'

The sun does not shine much in the Bronx neighborhood where John Patrick Shanley's powerful film, **Doubt**, is set. The atmosphere is gray and cold; its melancholy mood is disturbed only once in the film by a fierce windstorm that blows down many of the bare limbs of the convent trees. The winds of change are blowing in the Catholic Church in 1964, and Sister Aloysius Beauvier, the principal of the St. Nicholas parish school, seems determined to protect her domain from any corrupting influences in the air.

Catholics of a certain age might be tempted toward nostalgia by the film's opening shots, showing a quiet Sunday morning in this Irish-American neighborhood. The altar boys prepare the cruets of water and wine and negotiate which one of them will light the charcoal for the incense and which will ring the altar chimes for this pre-Vatican II Sunday Mass. The working-class parishioners, smartly dressed, with the women wearing the prescribed headcoverings, gently greet each other as they walk to church. Maybe Sister Aloysius has a point. Catholic life seemed simpler and more reliable then, with none of the questions and changes that the Second Vatican Council and all the other forces of the 1960s would bring to the church.

But things are not as solid and certain as they seem. The first hint comes from a sermon given by a young priest, Father Brendan Flynn: "What do you do when you're not sure?" he asks the congregation. He reminds them of the bond of despair and uncertainty they shared a year earlier, when their beloved president John F. Kennedy was assassinated. He compares this, however, to a lonelier situation, offering as a parable the story of a sailor alone on a lifeboat who cannot see the stars to guide him. The priest propos-

PHOTO: CNS/MIRAMAX

Philip Seymour Hoffman and Amy Adams in John Patrick Shanley's "Doubt"

es this as an image of the loneliness many in the congregation might feel because of some secret fear or pain in their lives that no one knows about. He suggests someone might be thinking, "No one knows that I've done something wrong."

Before long, Sister Aloysius suspects that someone has been doing something wrong: Father Flynn himself. She already clearly has a fundamental distrust of the young assistant pastor. He is too jovial for her tastes; he suggests that the school Christmas play should include a secular song like "Frosty the Snowman," which Sister Aloysius considers a heretical message about magic. As for his personal habits, he likes too much sugar in his tea, wears his fingernails too long, uses a ballpoint pen and possesses other hints of sensuality and adaptation to the modern world.

Father Flynn harbors a similar disapproval of Sister Aloysius' strict attitudes and demeanor, which he considers to be holding the school and the parish back from the newer vision of "a welcoming church." Sister Aloysius is more than ready to suspect him when a naïve young nun suggests that he might be engaging in an inappropriate relationship with one of the eighth-grade boys. Sister Aloysius determines to get to the truth of this matter, while Father Flynn responds to her accusations with ferocious self-righteousness.

ON THE WEB
Jim McDermott, S.J., on the TV season in sci-fi.
americamagazine.org/connects

To tell here how the question is resolved would be more than a disservice to our readers, because as the story develops, the audience learns that there is much more than the possibility of sexual scandal lurking in the world of St. Nicholas Parish. Shanley's screenplay reveals layers of evil that reach to a heart of darkness worthy of Joseph Conrad or Graham Greene. Sister Aloysius has her own demons, many of which are revealed in the several scenes that Shanley has added to his Broadway script, not only "opening up" the setting but providing opportunities to see both Sister Aloysius and Father Flynn interact with other members of their community. While the original play was set in only three locations—the parish church, Sister Aloysius' office and the convent cloister garden—and employed a cast of only four actors, the film makes excellent use of other locales and characters.

Sister Aloysius, for example, is shown tyrannizing the grade school children in the church, the classroom and the playground. When the young Sister James tells her that the students are "all uniformly terrified of you," she responds, "Yes. That's how it works." With little respect for anyone's agenda but her own, she invades Sister James's classroom in the midst of a lesson, and she feels free to wander up and down the pews of the church to monitor children's behavior during Father Flynn's homily. She presides over the convent meals with a mixture of gloom and sarcasm. The nuns eat their dinner in silence until Sister Aloysius rings her bell and begins the conversation; when the other nuns speak, she counters their comments with ridicule. And she certainly disapproves of Father Flynn's comfort with and affection for the students, especially Donald Muller, who, incidentally, is the first African-American student admitted into the school.

Meanwhile, Father Flynn's behavior gives Sister Aloysius further motive to suspect him. He embraces Donald after he is bullied by another student; the priest is spotted mysteriously returning Donald's undershirt to the boy's locker; and he calls Donald out of a class for a private conversation in the rectory, after which the boy returns to the classroom with the smell of alcohol on his breath. Father has several of the boys over to the rectory for soft drinks and "shooting the breeze." In one awkward scene, after a basketball practice, he encourages the boys to keep their fingernails clean and well manicured, letting them grow longer than Sister Aloysius would want. And, as Sister discovers, he has been assigned to three different parishes in the last five years.

The conflict between the priest and the nun, however, is more than personal; it signifies a more universal moral divide. When Sister James attempts to defend Father Flynn from any suspicion of misbehavior, Sister Aloysius responds, "You just want simplicity back." There is something admirable in her relentless determination not to let the issue lie unresolved but to pursue the truth, to "do what needs to be done," no matter how complicated or unpleasant the truth may be. On the other hand, Father Flynn analyzes Sister

Aloysius's search for "the truth" as a dangerous consequence of her generally joyless approach to life. As he tells Sister James: "There are people who go after your humanity…who tell you that the light in your heart is a weakness. Don't believe it. It's an old tactic of cruel people to kill kindness in the name of virtue." The drama pulls us between our admiration of Sister Aloysius's uncompromising search for the truth and Father Flynn's promotion of tolerance and compassion, or, as he puts it, Christ's message of "love. Not suspicion, disapproval and judgment."

Yet another level of evil operative in the parish neighborhood is revealed when Sister Aloysius holds a private conference with Donald's mother, who works as a cleaning woman in a nearby apartment complex. In one electrifying conversation, Mrs. Muller reveals other facts about the boy's home life and his personal confusion as well as her own attitude toward the accusations, exposing some even darker truths about race, class and the desperate search for upward mobility that private education promises to inner-city children. All these revelations seem to take Sister Aloysius by surprise.

Finally, the film exposes a deeper layer of institutional injustice that may account for Sister Aloysius' need to dominate the only realm under her control. As she remarks at one point, in the Catholic Church, "men run everything." Even she must admit that in the church's patriarchal system, Father Flynn is technically her superior. Her only recourse to any higher authority is to talk to the pastor, who, she is convinced, will side with Father Flynn. She is not allowed to appeal to the bishop of the archdiocese. Indeed, when Father Flynn later upbraids her for speaking to someone else about the matter, saying: "The church is very clear. You're supposed to go through the pastor," she responds: "Why? Do you have an understanding, you and he?" This portrayal of a clerical boys' club, especially in the U.S. church of the 1960s, might be even easier for today's film audiences to visualize after the many reports of official mishandling of sexual abuse cases among the clergy in recent years.

Not enough praise can be given to the performances of Meryl Streep as Sister Aloysius and Philip Seymour Hoffman as Father Flynn. How much more evidence do we need of their versatility? Just last year, Hoffman appeared onscreen as a depressed but articulate English professor in "The Savages," as a sleek executive-turned-murderer in "Before the Devil Knows You're Dead" and as a fast-talking alpha male C.I.A. agent in "Charlie Wilsons' War." His portrayal in "Doubt" of this likeable and eloquent young priest who may be hiding a secret draws on all of those characterizations to add complexity to the battle of wills in this drama. Ms. Streep has been even busier and more adventur-

ous in the 10 films she has made in the last three years. While her recent roles have displayed a vast range of emotions, her portrayal of the conscientious and humorless Sister Aloysius requires instead a grim intensity and a willingness to forgo any audience sympathy or even approval. In every close-up and every debate with Hoffman or Amy Adams, as the innocent but ultimately confident Sister James, and particularly with Viola Davis (whose ten minutes on screen are a knockout) as Donald's worldly-wise mother, Streep employs the subtlest of expressions and body language to create the most chilling effects.

Only a few of Broadway's most acclaimed dramas in recent years ("Closer," "Proof" and "The History Boys," for example) have made it to the screen, and none was very successful in either financial or critical terms. "Doubt," the Tony Award winner for Best Play in 2005, might well have been destined for the same fate. However, as both director and screenwriter, John Patrick Shanley may beat the odds this year with a film that is sure to garner many nominations and perhaps some awards at Oscar time. By expanding his narrative with more scenes and characters, Shanley demonstrates how a film can improve on a play's psychological tensions. It can also deepen our awareness of the darkness to be encountered even within the most sacred locales of human faith and doubt.

MICHAEL V. TUETH, S.J., *is a professor of communication and media studies at Fordham University in New York City.*

BOOKS | CHARLES BORGES

AN ASIAN GIANT FLIES HIGH

Two views of India

"Flying Hanuman (monkey-god)" and "Asian Giant" are colorful metaphors the authors Maria Misra and Dietmar Rothermund use with good effect to describe Indian history and development from the coming of the British to the subcontinent in the 17th century to the present day.

Misra, a fellow at Keble College, Oxford University, believes that the British colonial model of government continues in some degree to affect Indian political workings today. The title of her book, *Vishnu's Crowded Temple: India Since the Great Rebellion*, and sections of the book itself do seem to have a Hindu bias, likening India to a Hindu temple in which all groups and communities vie for a place. In his book, *India: The Rise of an Asian Giant*, Rothermund, a senior professor of South Asian history at Heidelberg University, cites varied figures to show how India has made impressive strides in its development while dealing at the same time with social issues and the large economic divide among the people. (Both books are from Yale Univ. Press.)

ON THE WEB
From the archives, the editors on the partition of India.
americamagazine.org/pages

Toward Modernity

Misra states that the history she delineates is not "a tale of straightforward liberal westernization, nor of a struggle between all-powerful elites and the hopelessly subordinated poor, but of its complex and halting evolution into a very particular kind of modern nation." The British government in India, known as the Raj, saw itself as a partner with Indian collaborators who were selected and rewarded according to their effectiveness in working with it. India was a temple, one in which worshippers were carefully scrutinized for their closeness to the presiding deity, the British.

The British wanted India to be modernized, but many Hindu groups did not wholeheartedly accept the modernity offered to them. As an early opposition, groups like the Brahmo Samaj (Divine Society) in the 1880s worked at accepting only certain elements from Christianity in order to reform Hinduism into a modern and vibrant belief system. The introduction of English educational institutions helped groom Indian personnel for British administrative services. Various forms of racism were apparent early on. Recruitment for the elite Indian Civil Service was open to Indians, but they had to qualify before they were 19 years of age and could take the tests only in England.

Misra's method of always seeing a clear plan in all that the British undertook in India leads her naturally to the game of cricket. The British, she concludes, saw the game as "the greatest gift imperialism could bestow, because it could transform 'natives' into gentlemen." Cricket was meant to encourage all castes, communities and religions of India to mingle together, but in reality the game boosted division, with various religious groups playing spiritedly against each other rather than with each other.

Breaking Away

Britain borrowed heavily from the Raj exchequer in India during the two Wars. Indian politicians had hoped this favor would result in more devolution of political powers to Indians, but this did not come about easily. Mahatma Gandhi, who had returned to India by 1919 after 20 years as a

lawyer in South Africa, involved himself fully in the freedom struggle. He heralded the concept of the spinning wheel, the *charka*, which stood for a break with foreign exploitation. Trained as a lawyer in England, he spent 20 years in South Africa, where he fine-tuned his doctrine of *satyagraha* (soul force, or holding on to truth).

Gandhi had a raw political cunning, Misra believes. He knew that the Raj needed Indian cooperation, so he urged his fellow Indians to withdraw it. "Indians were exhorted to disdain foreign goods, boycott the new elections, abjure the British-run courts, play truant from the state's schools and councils and reject the Raj's honors, titles and other demeaning baubles of servitude." The British had believed that their rule in India was eternal. But Aug. 8, 1942, saw the launch of the Quit India movement by the Indian National Congress, the most serious rebellion since the Mutiny of 1857 (a widespread revolt in Northern India by Hindu and Muslim soldiers against the British rule), leading to independence in 1947.

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/JEREMY RICHARDS

The partition of 1947, which created the state of Pakistan, led millions of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs to abandon their homes on either side of the border. The British were blamed for the massacres, but Misra concludes that "in fairness to the British, they were acting in concert with Indian politicians who wanted the handover to be as swift as possible and who also grossly underestimated the turmoil that would ensue."

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's charismatic first prime minister, plunged himself into the freedom struggle under the guidance of Gandhi but lacked Gandhi's genius for dealing with the masses. The centerpiece of his reforms was economic and industrial planning. In global affairs, he saw the freedom of India as a prelude to the emancipation of the colonial world.

Indira Gandhi, Nehru's daughter and third Indian prime minister, learned the political ropes under her father's guidance. But in mid-1975 she was found guilty of a minor election irregularity and was forced to resign from office. Rather than do so, however, she declared a state of national emergency and suspended democracy. Her younger son, Sanjay Gandhi, and his Youth Congress then ran roughshod over the Indian political scene, which eventually led to his mother's defeat in national elections.

At the beginning of her hefty and well-documented book, Misra speaks of "a very particular type of modern nation." India, unlike any other nation, had to deal with the issue of castes as she tried to weave the population into a single people after 1947. The Mandal Commission studied the issue of equal job and study opportunities for all citizens and recommended a 27 percent reservation of posts in the government and in scientific and professional institutions for marginalized groups. The government's decision to accept this recommendation generated fierce opposition, mainly from upper-caste students.

Over the last three decades, the 29 Indian states have seen various political alignments by parties hoping to stay in power. Regional parties have become an important element in Indian democracy. All this bodes well for the nation, says Misra, since "India has developed its own form of modernity the most striking feature of which is its highly atomized, fragmented and diverse citizenry."

Post-Independence

If in her analysis Misra appears very forceful, incisive and determined in

what she thinks of British influence in India and how politics is playing out today, Rothermund, on the other hand, appears more discreet, looking at the picture almost as an impartial observer, though his long association with Indian affairs shows. He delves more into the post-Independence years and into how India has worked at developing itself as a democratic nation.

The economic graph of India has seen an upswing under the present prime minister, Manmohan Singh. The national government, a coalition of the Congress Party and other parties, has attracted private business, both national and foreign, and has opened the power sector to private operators. It has deregulated the economy and made structural adjustments to it while reducing import duties. Its main coalition partner, the Communists, supported the government since 2004 but opposed the privatizing of the public sector and opted out of the coalition this year because of differences over the nuclear treaty signed between India and the U.S. government. Rothermund also describes in detail the success story of India especially in the diamond, garment and software fields, a trade that accounts for over 40 billion dollars in earnings, as well as promising strides in the field of agriculture.

Both of these books, with their different emphases, are valuable reading for attaining a better understanding of India in terms both of her historical background and future potential. For the political historian Misra, India is an open, pluralistic and highly diverse society from which creativity flows. She is struck by how giant-sized statues of Hanuman, the Hindu god of "fluidity, practicality, compromise, change and connections," dot the landscape of many Indian cities, reflecting the flourishing face of India today.

For Rothermund, "the Indian giant is rising like Gulliver after being released from the web of thread with which she had been pinned down." And what does he think is the face of India today? "Indian society encompasses a spectrum representative of all of mankind, from the desperately poor eking out a living in remote rural areas to metropolitan professionals in the most advanced lines of work and highly talented scientists operating at the cutting edge of research."

India recently became the fourth country in the world to send its own unmanned probe to the moon—no mean achievement. The Indian Giant, or Hanuman, has really and truly been flying high.

CHARLES J. BORGES, S.J., *is associate professor of history at Loyola College, Baltimore, Md.*

JANICE FARNHAM

HIS UNIVERSE WAS INFINITE

GIORDANO BRUNO

Philosopher/Heretic

By Ingrid D. Rowland
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 352p $27
ISBN 9780809095246

Every weekday, the piazza of Rome's Campo de' Fiori (Field of Flowers) serves as a thriving marketplace, offering a symphony of sounds and smells that have beguiled and beckoned to visitors for centuries. Contemporary tourists are for the most part unaware that the site once served as an execution ground. If they happen to be there on a 17th of February, however, they will witness a unique, annual Roman ritual, dedicated to one of the Inquisition's most infamous victims, who in 1600 was burned at the stake on this spot as an "impenitent, obstinate, pertinacious heretic."

The mayor of Rome, accompanied by a contingent from City Hall, lays a laurel wreath at the bronze statue of Giordano Bruno, whose hooded and glowering countenance dominates the piazza, facing the Vatican. All through the day, groups of freethinkers, atheists, students and artists perch on or around the statue for declamatory contests, while floral pieces, poems and candles are piled high like votive offerings to a saint. Four hundred years after his death, the erstwhile Dominican friar, wandering philosopher, reformer, visionary thinker and author still challenges and invites reflection from the "generation he foresaw, here where the pyre burned," as is engraved on the statue's pedestal.

A contemporary of Erasmus, Shakespeare, Robert Bellarmine and Galileo, Giordano Bruno remains, like the statue erected in 1889 in his honor, a dark and shadowy figure. Ingrid Rowland's sympathetic new biography brings to light many aspects of Bruno's life and thought by probing the systems of literature, religion and philosophy he inhabited. Formerly a professor at the University of Chicago, now based in Rome, Rowland has published works on the Renaissance and is a frequent essayist for The New Republic. Her style is energetic and lucid, and her elegant translations of

large segments of Bruno's works inserted into every chapter add to Rowland's lively portrait of a genius whose personality defies neat characterization or stereotyping.

As Rowland indicates, Bruno, the small man with great ideas, "could be charming or infuriating, charismatic or repellent." Her overall portrayal is a study in those contrasts as they emerge in Bruno's unorthodox quest for truth and peace. That unlikely journey took him from his native Nola, near Naples, to Rome, Venice, Geneva, Toulouse, Paris, London, Wittenberg and Prague. It included profession and ordination as a Dominican friar; training in Aristotelian and Platonic philosophies; dabbling in the Hebrew Kabbalah; teaching mathematics, astrology and the "art of memory" and mnemonics, for which he was justly famous.

Despite this peripatetic existence, Bruno was able to write and publish several works, often in the form of Platonic dialogues. These texts were devoted primarily to the area of natural philosophy, but they included collections of sonnets and an anthology of love poems. Rowland analyzes Bruno's writings thoroughly; but lengthy literary citations at times detract from the biographical narrative.

Hounded by critics because of his outspoken and "heretical" views on doctrinal matters like transubstantiation, universal salvation, the divinity of Jesus and the virginity of Mary, Bruno abandoned the Dominican priesthood, yet never publicly renounced his faith. Still, it would seem that his adult life was a series of flights from inquisitorial tribunals of every stripe. In the course of his travels, he was excommunicated by Anglicans and Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholics. But he valiantly maintained and defended his ideas and his outrageous, independent style to the end.

What tantalizes the modern reader most are Bruno's ruminations on the nature of the universe and the unity of God. A number of scientific Web sites, including one by NASA about its Terrestrial Planet Finder, point to Bruno as a kind of patron saint, the first Westerner to entertain the possibility of many planets harboring life, and the idea of an infinite universe. They find inspiration from Bruno's lines, written in 1584: "Innumerable suns exist; innumerable earths revolve around these suns in a manner similar to the way the seven planets revolve around our sun. Living beings inhabit these worlds." Indeed, by the end of the 20th century, astronomers had already discovered new solar systems and over 20 giant planets orbiting other suns.

While Bruno's forays into astronomy were radical enough to raise ecclesiastical hackles, he was ultimately condemned for refusing to recant his doctrinal errors and accept the authority of the cardinal-investigators, among whom was Robert Bellarmine, the first Jesuit appointed to the Roman Inquisition. On a cold Ash Wednesday, after seven years languishing in Venetian and Roman prisons, Giordano Bruno was led naked to the pyre awaiting him. If, as Rowland asserts, he came into this world to light a fire, this rogue Renaissance character did just that, and in the end it consumed him. Likewise, she would contend that the "generation he foresaw, here where the pyre burned" has yet to appear. While Galileo has been rehabilitated by the church that silenced him, Bruno still broods, manacled and unpardoned, over the field of flowers where his last journey ended.

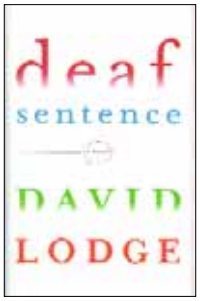
JANICE FARNHAM, R.J.M., *is an adjunct professor of church history at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, Chestnut Hill, Mass.*

JOSEPH CUNNEEN

SOUND OF SILENCE

DEAF SENTENCE

A Novel
By David Lodge
Viking. 304p $25.95
ISBN 9780670019922



David Lodge's earlier books won him a reputation as one of the leading comic novelists of the past century. *Small World* and *Nice Work*, both send-ups of the academic world, were finalists for the Booker Prize. What makes several of his novels especially hilarious to **America** readers is his use of Catholic central characters whose ridiculous actions parody the life situation of a younger Lodge. *The British Museum Is Falling Down*, for example, presents a day in the life of a married Catholic graduate student working on his dissertation. When Adam gets to the library, he is so worried that his wife may again be pregnant that he gets nothing done. (They already have three small children, and have not mastered the rhythm method.) Unfortunately, this wonderful Catholic farce—perhaps somewhat dated today—failed to reach the audience it deserved when published in the United States in 1967, perhaps since most churchgoers were too upset by the church's condemnation of birth control, renewed in *Humanae Vitae* (1968). Two later novels, *How Far Can You Go?* (1980) and

Paradise News (1991), successfully draw on the confusion of Catholics in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council.

Lodge's new book, *Deaf Sentence*, is set in Rummidge, a stand-in for Birmingham; and its hero, Desmond Bates, a linguistics professor like the author himself, has taken early retirement because of a severe hearing loss. The humor is mostly restrained, starting with Bates's difficulty in following simple exchanges with his wife, Fred (short for Winifred). Desmond is presented as an agnostic who had a nominal Anglican upbringing; Fred has returned to Catholic practice and launched a successful interior-design business. At an evening party Bates meets Alex Loom, a shapely graduate student from America, who flirts with him in the hope that he will mentor her doctoral thesis. Unable to make out what she is saying in the crowd noise but finding her quite attractive, he is maneuvered into seeing her again at her apartment—but fails to tell his wife about it.

Reminding himself that deafness is comic, while blindness is tragic, Bates starts a journal to keep his life somewhat in order. Alex has revived the sexual desire of late middle age; besides, he enjoys the prospect of helping this young woman make a close study of suicide letters, while drawing on his own specialization in linguistics and discourse. But Lodge is less successful in drawing humor from the Bates-Alex relationship than from sexual intrigues in earlier novels, primarily because readers remain uncertain as to whether they should see the young woman as an opportunist or a victim of her American past.

Bates spends much of his time going to London to see his father, a man who had worked for years as a jazz musician, now nearly 90 and degenerating but stubbornly refusing help. The frustrating relationship between father and son, though treated with sympathy, constantly reveals comic aspects. Messages from Alex bring further confusion, arriving at the same time as e-mail ads for Viagra; he is even driven to write a suicide note he has no intention of acting on.

Events pile up, with varying degrees of emotional impact on Bates. A daughter produces a grandchild; he recalls the grim reality of his first wife's death; there is a threatening note from Alex; he helps his father through the old man's final moments. Lodge somehow manages to bring these disparate threads of his story together with credibility and humanity. *Deaf Sentence* is not the author's funniest book, but readers should appreciate its mellow wit, close observation of language and compassionate understanding of aging and suicide.

JOSEPH CUNNEEN *was founder and long-time editor of the ecumenical quarterly Cross Currents.*

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LETTERS

A Great Gift

Thank you for your review of the life of Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J. (Current Comment, 1/5). One aspect of Avery Dulles should not go unremembered: he was never too busy to take time for journalists who sought him out.

I especially remember one time when I was writing a Newsweek cover story that took me on a round of interviews with theologians in Washington, D.C. Avery offered to pick me up himself at Dulles Airport. So there he was, waiting for me at an airport named after his father, John Foster Dulles, at the wheel of a beat-up sedan given him by his uncle, Allen Dulles, former head of the C.I.A. He treated me as if I, not he, were the most important person in the car.

After he transferred to Fordham, Dulles frequently met me near the Lincoln Center campus in Manhattan for long lunches. Though he didn't eat much himself, he patiently answered questions until we were the only patrons left in the restaurant.

His great gift, I always felt, was his instinct for the lively center of the Catholic tradition, which allowed him to appreciate what had been lost in the postconciliar church as well as what had been gained. I never could get around to calling him "Your Eminence," and I'm sure he was glad of that.

KENNETH L. WOODWARD
Former Religion Editor, Newsweek
Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.

Example for All

Re your tribute to Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J. (Current Comment, 1/5): It is only in recent years, as a theology student myself, that I have grown to love and appreciate Cardinal Dulles. His example is one to be emulated in all aspects of life, particularly in his humility and openness of thought. We ask his continued prayers for his beloved church. May those of us left behind to further his work continue to show the same deep respect for one another and for all we encounter in our daily lives.

ANGELA MARCZEWSKI
Schenectady, N.Y.

Transparency Needed

Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl presented an insightful and pragmatic essay on "How to Save Catholic Schools" (12/22). I have spent almost every day of the last 35 years working with and for more than 3,000 Catholic

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 edited for length and clarity.

schools across the United States. My experience suggests that the archbishop's call for partnerships with individuals, organizations and businesses is very much on target and necessary.

What Archbishop Wuerl did not say, however, is that in order to develop and maintain these partnerships, both transparency and accountability are essential. Unfortunately, all too many Catholic schools, parishes and dioceses fail to require accurate and understandable financial reports, annual audits and disclosure of test data.

My experience suggests that when Catholic school administrators and boards provide the information required to ensure transparency and accountability, donors respond, partnerships are formed and maintained, and Catholic schools thrive.

RICHARD J. BURKE
President, Catholic School Management Inc.
Madison, Conn.

Metanoia

Thank you for the wonderful job redesigning the magazine (Of Many Things, 1/5). Your effort has resulted in a more readable format. The new fonts and layout have come as a welcome change to my aging eyes, and once again I can sit down and read the articles without trouble.

MICHAEL TRUSCOTT
Washington, D.C.

Feeling Left Out

The cover of your recent issue proclaimed "The Harvest Is Great" (1/5) and promised stories of vocations in a modern church. I couldn't wait to get through the stories of religious women and of attracting young adults to the priesthood and religious life, so that I could get to a story about the role of permanent deacons in the modern church.

Alas, there was not a word about deacons. What a missed opportunity for the magazine really to talk about the modern church!

(DEACON) TONY CUSEO
Delray Beach, Fla.

Helping Homeowners

Thank you for "Forgive Us Our Debts," by Jennie D. Latta (12/15). One measure of the fairness of a capitalistic society is how it treats those who fail economically.

Under current law, bankruptcy judges cannot modify the terms of a home mortgage in a Chapter 13 bankruptcy case. They regularly can modify the terms of virtually all other secured loans. The single legislative corrective action most needed today is to permit home mortgage modification in consumer bankruptcy cases.

In 14 years as a bankruptcy judge, I can count on the fingers of one hand the consumer cases of debtor fraud or abuse that I could not correct. Bankruptcy debtors are our neighbors, friends and retired parents who are in financial difficulties because of job loss, divorce, illness or the birth of a new child. They are honest and hard working. Our laws need to give them the respect and help they are due if our society is to measure up.

C. TIMOTHY CORCORAN III
Tampa, Fla.

Just a Coincidence?

The juxtaposition of the headline "What to Do With Bad Gifts" in the online edition of your recent issue (Current Comment, 12/22) with an online ad reading "Father Martin's books—a gift they'll open again and again" may or may not have been deliberate, but it certainly succeeded in tickling my funny bone.

GINI PARKER
Duxbury, Mass.

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No Ordinary Time

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), JAN. 25, 2009

Readings: Jon 3:1-5, 10; Ps 25:4-9; 1 Cor 7:29-31; Mk 1:14-20

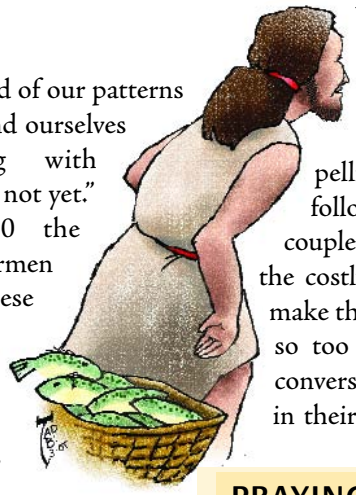
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), FEB. 1, 2009

Readings: Dt 18:15-20; Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 7-9 (8); 1 Cor 7:32-35; Mk 1:21-28

"This is the time of fulfillment" (Mk 1:15)

'Give me chastity, but not yet." This famous prayer of St. Augustine well captures the reluctance that most of us have to changing our ways. Yet we hear the exact opposite in today's readings, when the Ninevites instantly repent at Jonah's preaching and the fishermen immediately leave their nets to follow Jesus. There is an urgency with regard to the time, and a totality of response is needed. In Ordinary Time in the liturgical year, it may seem more natural to settle into the ordinary ways in which we have been living out our discipleship. Instead, we are urged to recognize that a new time presses upon us, requiring different responses from before.

St. Paul, thinking the parousia was right over the horizon, insists that time is running out and that our usual way of doing things will no longer serve. Similarly, Jonah prophesies to Nineveh that their destruction is imminent. When we think the end is near, we lose some of our inertia toward change. Today we hear this kind of urgency from those who study climate change, or the causes of poverty, food shortages, war and epidemics. To turn around these global ills requires a profound turning around of our patterns of living. Still, we find ourselves reluctant, praying with Augustine, "Yes, but not yet."



In Mk 1:14-20 the response of the fishermen is instantaneous. These adroit fishermen immediately accept Jesus' invitation to use their skills to "fish for people." They are savvy businessmen who have hired workers, and who likely moved their enterprise to Capernaum for a tax break. (Jn 1:44 says that Peter and Andrew were originally from Bethsaida, under the administration of Herod Philip, whereas Capernaum was in the territory of Herod Antipas.) Abandoning their nets is a way of speaking of what must be left behind when one embraces radical discipleship. The fishermen do not leave their families, as the next episodes in the Gospel show. Rather, Jesus becomes part of their family, making Capernaum his home (Mk 2:1), and the disciples become Jesus' new family, reorienting all relationships.

There are also many women, including Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, Salome and many others, who become part of Jesus' family of disciples. While the Evangelists do not preserve the story of their call, all agree that these women had been following Jesus and ministering with him when he was in Galilee and continued to do so all the way to the cross (Mk 15:40). The cost of such a radical response to Jesus is already in view when Mark prefaces the call of the first disciples with the notice that John had been arrested.

But like impulsive lovers who commit themselves to one another while still wrapped in their initial mutual infatuation, a compelling love causes disciples to follow Jesus instantly. Just as a couple grows into love, and learns the costly self-surrender it takes to make that love continue to flourish, so too disciples learn the deeper conversion demanded as they grow in their radical love affair with the Holy One. It is then not so much the threat of destruction that moves us to convert our ways, but an irresistible love that turns our hearts.

Paul speaks about how this love affair requires an undivided heart. His examples about married people being more anxious about pleasing their spouses and concerned about worldly matters (1 Cor 7:32-35) reflect Paul's bias in his own situation. Thinking that the end was near, he preferred that no one get married and that slaves not try to gain their freedom (1 Cor 7:8, 17-24). To a certain extent, the notion that those who are

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How is Jesus inviting you into a deeper love in ordinary time?
- What change of heart is visible in your manner of living?
- What urgent response is needed now?

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vowed to celibacy are more single-hearted toward God has persisted through the ages. The "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" of the Second Vatican Council, however, insists that all disciples are equally called to holiness and all are given the mission to make "manifest in their ordinary work the love with which God has loved the world" (No. 41). The "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" makes clear that it is precisely through engagement with the concerns of the world that Jesus' followers exercise their discipleship.

The prophet Jonah reminds us that God's concern for the world includes everyone, even those we consider enemies. Jonah had initially refused to go to Nineveh, and afterward becomes angry with God for showing favor to Israel's enemies. It took a lot longer for Jonah's heart to turn than it did for the Ninevites—and he was supposedly the one closer to God! This reluctant prophet stands in contrast to Moses, the ideal prophet (Dt 18:15-20). God gives the assurance that we are never left to our own devices. God will send another prophet like Moses who will faithfully speak God's word. For Christians, this points toward Jesus, who teaches with an astonishing authority, not like any other (Mk 1:21-28). It is by his power that all obstacles to the coming reign of God, like an unclean spirit, are overcome. There is nothing ordinary about the invitation to follow Jesus more radically in this urgent time. **BARBARA E. REID**

ON THE WEB

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