America

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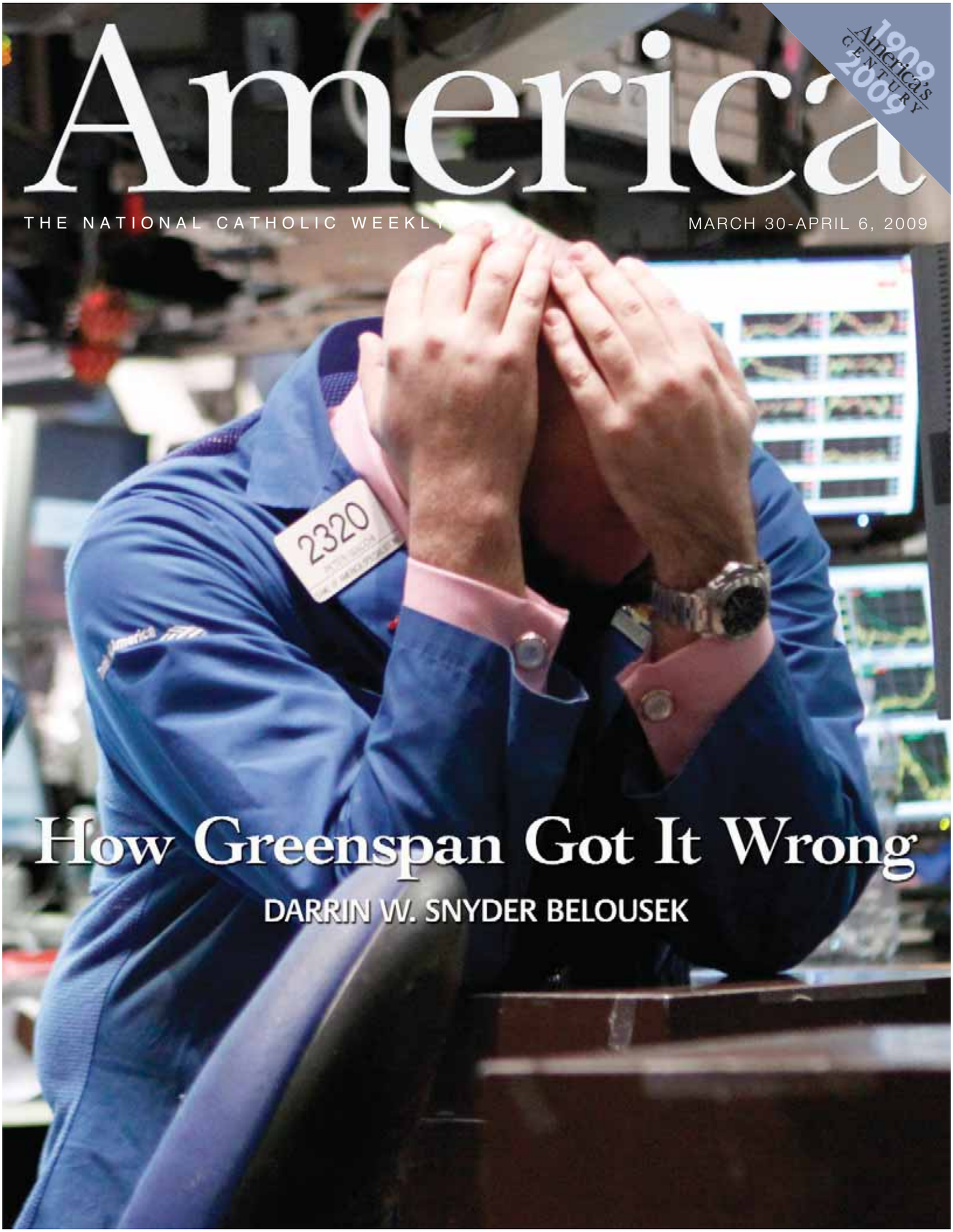
MARCH 30-APRIL 6, 2009

1909 America's CENTURY 2009



How Greenspan Got It Wrong

DARRIN W. SNYDER BELOUSEK

OF MANY THINGS

Driving in the neighborhood during my last visit home, I was surprised to find that the mall nearest to my house, Randhurst, would be closing at the end of the month, to be replaced eventually by some sort of outdoor lifestyle center. I spent many an evening and weekend during my teenage years at Randhurst, selling women's shoes at a retail outlet. It was here I learned what "taupe" meant; here I saw up close the horrors high heels cause over decades to women's feet (ladies, trust me, it's not worth the extra inches); and here that I regularly had my sales stolen by the "kindly" older saleswoman in the heavy makeup and jet-black bouffant. She wasn't the top seller for nothing.

Like some casinos today, malls are designed to look like something they are not, old-style small-town squares, Main Streets U.S.A., with footpaths and benches, light poles, shrubbery, restaurants and brightly lit store windows. They are places you're supposed to want to come for the day, destinations where you can meet up with friends, shop and visit.

Randhurst was no exception. When it first opened in 1962, it was the first enclosed regional mall in the Chicagoland area and the largest enclosed air-conditioned space in the United States. I cannot say I was a mall crawler growing up, but every time I returned home for a visit, I would go there, often just to sit, have a slice of pizza from Sbarro and let my life catch up to me.

Over the course of years, what was once a stand-alone mall grew to have quite a few busy satellites, including Home Depot, Borders, Steak & Shake, the BBQ chicken chain with the acronym I can never remember and a 12-theater, stadium-seating megaplex to which my parents went every Friday afternoon. But over the last five years or so, you could not help but notice that things were changing for the worse inside. Shop sites lay empty. More and more of the businesses that remained had the impromptu feel of a TV program on public access cable—the discount bookseller with the ugly green price tags and the terrible selection; clothing shops where you could have your name ironed onto a hat or T-shirt; the dollar store. But Randhurst hung on and tried to change; a major section outside a closed department store was used as a children's play area; some new chains, like Dave & Barry's and Costco, tried to fill the gaps left by old ones.

At my last visit, most of the stores were shuttered; the few people there were packing boxes. The mall had the barren, post-apocalyptic feel of a zombie movie. But standing in its very center, on a raised platform between the first and second floors, the mall's carousel, "the Venetian," remained lit up and waiting for customers; from its top a carved horse leapt toward the ceiling—a reminder of a golden age.

Like everything else, the structures we create change, age, diminish and eventually die. An astronomer once told me that when a star is nearing its end, it begins to pour out material like hydrogen or carbon that actually provides the source of life for other stars. As a Jesuit I have found aging members in community are often like that too; their stories and presence nourish the rest of us.

But walking the paths of Randhurst one last time, I sensed less a fading star than a black hole. What was clear was a sense of absence, of this town center that was there and yet somehow not. Once upon a time it had been a focal point for this community, maybe never so central as a Chicago parish in the 1950s could be, but still a significant part of this suburb's identity. Now, with the exception of that carousel, it felt like nothing at all.

JIM McDERMOTT, S.J.

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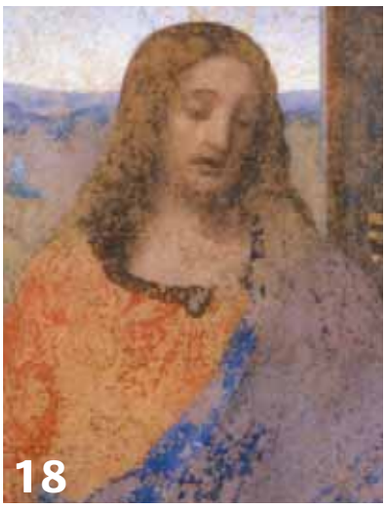

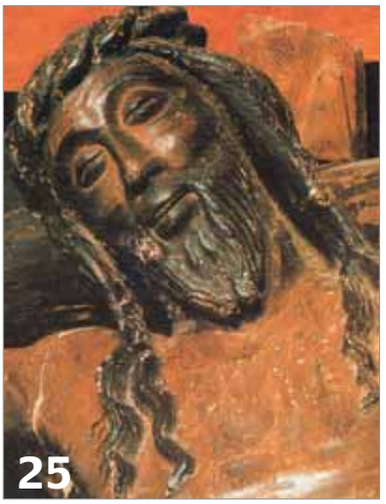

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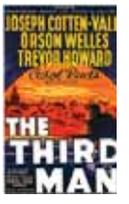

Science and Ideology

"Science, not ideology." The phrase makes a good sound bite, but it is a false dichotomy. President Obama is right to try to correct the politicization of science under the Bush administration, but he was wrong to present the lifting of the restriction on stem-cell research imposed by his predecessor as freeing science from politics. The Bush policy, like that of Bill Clinton before him, was an arbitrary political compromise for which there was no coherent moral defense.

"Big science" and science policy are often entwined with politics and ideology. This is clearest in the military field, where under ideological banners weapons are developed without consideration of their consequences. Consider, for example, the health and environmental effects of depleted uranium munitions or Agent Orange. In the health field, reproduction has often been the target of scientific experts, whether in eugenic sterilization programs or compulsory birth control policies.

The unexamined ideology in the stem-cell debate is the promise of scientific progress. Especially now that pluripotent stem cells can be produced from adult cells, it is not at all clear what advocates of embryonic stem-cell research can offer us but hopes supported by guesses, questionable predictions and future scenarios. In recent years, the salesmen of medical research touted fetal-tissue transplants and genetic therapy as panaceas, only to end up without success. Embryonic stem cells are only the latest in a series of super-cures being hyped to the American public.

As the National Institutes of Health and Congress consider future stem-cell legislation, they should understand that expert scientific advice is not free of ideology or politics.

Hate Groups Growing

Almost 100 hate groups now operate throughout the nation, a jump of over 50 percent since 2000. They include neo-Nazis, white supremacists, neo-Confederates, Klansmen, black separatists and racist skinheads, to name only a few. Some groups even produce propaganda denying the Holocaust. Latinos are a primary target because of alarm at their growing numbers. Hate groups blame them for the downturn in the economy. The Southern Poverty Law Center cites one false claim that holds Latinos responsible for the subprime mortgage debacle, contending that undocumented immigrants held five million bad mortgages and are responsible for the subsequent meltdown. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development was cited as the source of this false information, and although H.U.D. quickly debunked the claim, right-wing commentators like Rush Limbaugh and television programs like CNN's "Lou Dobbs Tonight" spread the bogus information without checking the facts.

The election of Barack Obama has also stimulated the growth of hate organizations. They resent the fact that an African-American is president of the United States, seeing it as a sign that the country is coming under the control of non-whites. Incidents after the election have included the burning in effigy of Mr. Obama and Obama-focused racist graffiti. Several white supremacists have been arrested for allegedly plotting to kill him. In one case, a federal grand jury indicted a former marine after investigators discovered white supremacist materials and a journal in his barracks at Camp Lejeune, N.C., outlining an assassination plot. There is no place in a democracy for hate groups of this or any kind.

A Face by Any Other Name

Art historians recently announced the authentication of the only known painting of William Shakespeare completed in his lifetime. More accurate than the traditional woodcuts known by generations of English students, the painting shows a man with an intelligent countenance, a sidelong glance and a thinning pate, all characteristic of other (posthumous) representations. Yet does this add much to our appreciation of the Bard of Avon?

The human desire to know the physical face of the hero (or heroine) extends beyond Shakespeare aficionados. Indeed, there is an entire history of devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus in Eastern and Western Christianity: the religious name taken by one of the most popular modern saints was Thérèse of the Infant Jesus and the Holy Face. More recently, in 2002, forensic specialists reconstructed the face of a man from the time of Jesus. Photos of the resulting sculpture, with heavy brows, a thick beard and bovine expression appeared in media outlets across the world. "The Real Face of Jesus?" asked the headlines. Christians can be forgiven for wanting to see God "face to face." Shakespeare enthusiasts feel the same. For now, they can be content with this single portrait and, more important, his plays, which are a clearer indication of who he was. For Christians, the Gospels will suffice.

Editor's Note: Because the next issue of ***America*** *(dated April 13) commemorates the centennial of the magazine, some of the usual weekly features will not appear in the print edition. They will, however, be posted on* ***America****'s Web site, www.americamagazine.org.*

EDITORIAL

Star Struck

There are more stars in our universe than grains of sand on all the shores of oceans of this planet earth. Try to grasp that, just one of the many startling findings of astronomers. More down to earth, an astronomer at an observatory in South Africa tells local politicians: "If tensions in troubled areas risk escalating into violence, do not send in the troops, send in astronomers." An awareness of our infinitesimal place in this incredible universe, the scientist believes, might relativize our struggles and possibly help us to live together in peace. Although the potential of astronomy to contribute to world peace is one possible fruit, this is not the main focus of Unesco's Year of Astronomy, whose motto is "The Universe—Yours to Discover."

Why this year? The year 2009 is the 400th anniversary of Galileo Galilei's first observations with the telescope, which led to the discovery of the four moons of Jupiter. His observations helped demonstrate that the earth is not the center of the universe. Yet 24 years later, Vatican authorities put Galileo under house arrest because of these views and forbade him to publish. How times change! Sixteen years ago Pope John Paul II rehabilitated Galileo. In announcing the Catholic Church's participation in the Year of Astronomy, Pope Benedict praised Galileo, calling him a man of faith who "saw nature as a book written by God." Echoing the thought of St. Bonaventure and Galileo, the pope explained that God has given us two books to read: "the book of Sacred Scripture and the book of nature." The church is joining in this year with special events sponsored by the Vatican Museum, the Vatican Observatory and the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

Why should Catholics join the celebration? A more accurate understanding of our universe should lead to a deeper appreciation of the God who Christians believe created the heavens and the earth, and of Jesus Christ who is "the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15). Here are a few recent discoveries of astronomers to help us situate ourselves. The universe is approximately 13.7 billion years old. We know that beyond the few thousand stars (suns) visible to the naked eye, there are more than 100 billion galaxies, each with perhaps 100 billion stars of immense variety. We have discovered quasars that emit the light of a trillion suns and stars that are 40 million times brighter than our sun. While gazing on the second nearest star, we see it as it was 4.2 years ago. That is how long it took the light to travel to our planet. We can also see light that left another star 2.5 million years ago. Most recently we are finding planets orbiting many of the stars in our galaxy. The planet Jupiter, we see now, has not four but 64 moons. Most "shooting stars" (meteors), it may be a surprise to learn, are bits of dirt or dust the size of a grain of rice that delight our sight as they burst into our atmosphere 60 miles above us.

We know now that the universe is expanding, and with it our notion and appreciation of the power of God must also expand. (*Deus semper major*—God is always greater—is a traditional saying of Christian theologians.) Our hope is that schools and parishes, teachers and preachers, might pick up the year's theme, "The Universe—Yours to Discover." One recent survey found that more Americans believe in the biblical six days of creation than in the magnificent scenario set before us by scientists. Close to a majority do not believe in evolution and are therefore most likely unaware of the true size, shape and history of our incredible universe. How many Christians realize that if the history of the universe were reduced to one year of 365 days, then Jesus Christ would have become flesh at 23:59:58—that is, two seconds before midnight on Dec. 31?

In addition to learning more about our universe, we hope that many will take time to go outdoors on a clear evening, find a spot without too much light pollution and grow in appreciation of our awesome universe and of the loving God who created the heavens and the earth. Indeed, the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., urges us: "Look at the stars! Look, look up at the skies! O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!" St. Ignatius Loyola wrote of himself in his memoirs almost a century before Galileo that "it was his greatest consolation to gaze upon the heavens and the stars, which he often did, and for long stretches at a time, because when doing so, he felt within himself a powerful urge to be serving our Lord." If the Year of Astronomy leads some of us to overcome violence, as the South African astronomer hopes, or to engage in service, as St. Ignatius experienced, or simply to appreciate our universe, as Hopkins urges, it will have achieved much.

POLAND

Agents of Reconcilation, Guardians of Memory

During a major address at an international conference in Krakow, Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, archbishop of Krakow and former personal secretary of John Paul II, assessed how far the Jewish-Catholic dialogue has progressed in the past half-century and where future dialogue partners in Jewish-Catholic relations might direct their efforts. "I have come here to thank you for your continuing and courageous following of the hard path of dialogue," Dziwisz told the conference participants on March 6. "It is also to assure you how much I personally share your desire that the relations between Christians and Jews become increasingly fruitful as befits the children of One Father, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Cardinal Dziwisz emphasized his own determination to build on the progress in Jewish-Christian relations that took place during John Paul II's pontificate: "It was not by pure chance that a Polish pope, the pope from Krakow, has done so much for the cause of rapprochement and reconciliation between Christians and Jews." Cardinal Dziwisz reflected on Krakow's complex history of relations between Catholics and Jews, which included long periods of religious tolerance as well as episodes of persecution and bigotry, and which was marked in the 20th century by "increasingly darker colors." By cherishing its traditions of pluralism and its historical embrace of diversity and dialogue with intermingled cultures, Dziwisz noted, modern Poland can affirm John Paul's vision of Polish identity, and Poles can be "guardians of memory" of the Holocaust and agents of continuing reconciliation.

"The turnabout in Christian-Jewish relations which occurred after the [Second Vatican] Council was partly a response to the shock that humanity was going through in the 20th century, becoming aware of the vast extent of suffering which can be brought about by prejudices and hatred of other people," Dziwisz commented. "Aware of this, the church wants more profound transformation of the minds and hearts of its sons and daughters with regard to their attitude toward Jews—the transformation at the level of theology and religious instruction, at local churches, and in each parish." Efforts toward this transformation, Dziwisz noted, will include frequent meetings between Polish youth and Jewish pilgrims, many of whom come to visit Jewish martyrdom sites in Poland. The church in Poland, Dziwisz promised, "wants to do everything possible" to achieve "a full development of this brotherhood of Christians and Jews recently found anew."

Cardinal Dziwisz called upon all his dialogue partners to renew their efforts and appealed to the international community for assistance. "In all these efforts undertaken in hope for full reconciliation we feel a strong need for support from the Jewish side. Keeping in mind the enormous numerical disproportion between our communities, Polish Christians, and Polish Jews, we place our hopes even more on the commitment to the dialogue by the representatives of Jewish communities from Israel and the United States."

Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz in Southern Poland

A number of prominent figures in Jewish-Christian relations participated in the conference, which was held at the Jesuit Center for Culture and Dialogue.

ANALYSIS

The Complex History of Indulgences

Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, called on March 10 for a clarification of the Catholic doctrine on indulgences and at the same time asserted that the church's teaching on the matter was not an obstacle to ecumenical dialogue. He made his statement in response to criticisms by some Protestant leaders of the recent decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary granting

indulgences to those who undertake a pilgrimage during the Pauline Year to the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in Rome.

Origins. The remote origin of modern indulgences is the practice of allowing the intercession of those awaiting martyrdom to mitigate ecclesiastical penances imposed on public sinners, which was practiced during the persecutions in the early centuries of the church. During the First Crusade, in 1099, Pope Urban II remitted all ecclesiastical penance for the armed "pilgrims" setting off for the Holy Land. As the doctrine of purgatory evolved, the practice and teaching on indulgences shifted to the shortening of punishments in purgatory for oneself or somebody else in exchange for a good deed done in this life. By the late Middle Ages the practice was rife with abuses and helped to spark, as is well known, Luther's 95 Theses, which marked the beginning of the Reformation. The Council of Trent took up the matter in a late, short and hastily devised decree that reaffirmed the medieval teaching but condemned abuses.

Protestant observers at Vatican II

Vatican II. Indulgences came up again at the Second Vatican Council. Before the council began, a number of bishops asked that the council clarify the teaching and practice. As it turned out, these requests did not make their way into any of the initial drafts of the council documents. In July 1963, however, the newly elected Pope Paul VI asked Cardinal Fernando Cento to form a commission of council fathers and advisors to study the question. As the council was drawing to a close in November 1965, time became available for "new business." The pope therefore asked the national episcopal conferences to study the document on indulgences produced by the commission and to report their assessment to the council.

The first prelate to speak on the matter in Saint Peter's Basilica was the Melkite patriarch Maximos IV Saigh. After asserting that there was no continuity between the practice of the early church and the medieval doctrine and practice of indulgences, he went on to say: "The theological arguments that try to justify the late introduction of indulgences into the West constitute, in our opinion, a collection of deductions in which every conclusion goes beyond the evidence." Most of the reports that followed the next day were also negative. When the time for discussion had elapsed, the episcopal conferences had not yet seen all the submitted written reports, many of which echoed the criticism being heard during discussions in the basilica. The reports from Dahomey (now Benin), Japan and Laos were the most radical, calling for the complete abolition of indulgences. The matter went no further in the council.

On Jan. 1, 1967, Paul VI issued the apostolic constitution *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, a long instruction that was a modest reworking of the medieval teaching on indulgences. It ended with 22 norms on the doctrine and some relatively modest revisions of the practice. The definition of indulgences the pope gave is quoted verbatim in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven" (No. 1471).

JOHN W. O'MALLEY, S.J., *is university professor, theology department, at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.*

Vatican Official: Mercy After Abortion

A 9-year-old Brazilian girl and the doctors who performed the girl's abortion needed the Catholic Church's care and concern, not its condemnation, said a leading Vatican official. Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, criticized what he called a "hasty" public declaration of the excommunication

of the girl's mother and the doctors who aborted the girl's twins. "Before thinking about excommunication, it was necessary and urgent to protect her innocent life and bring her back to a level of humanity of which we men of the church should be expert witnesses and teachers," he said. "Unfortunately, this is not what happened, and it has affected the credibility of our teaching, which appears in the eyes of many as insensitive, incomprehensible and devoid of mercy," he said. Doctors at a hospital in Recife, Brazil, performed an abortion March 4 on the girl, who weighed little more than 80 pounds and reportedly had been raped repeatedly by her stepfather (now in police custody) from the time she was 6 years old.

Alternative to Female Circumcision

A Catholic diocese in Kenya is giving girls a chance to make the transition to adulthood without participating in the traditional tribal rite of female circumcision, sometimes referred to as genital mutilation, a practice that carries the risk of disease and death. Workers in the Diocese of Meru have developed a ritual called "An Alternative Rite of Passage," which formally marks a girl's passage into adolescence by including some of the elements from the traditional rite. In other areas of Kenya, programs to stop the circumcisions have not succeeded, so Meru diocesan officials decided to begin slowly. Joseph M'Eruaki M'Uthari and Martin Koome, coordinators of the program, said they spoke with community leaders, members of the councils of elders, parents and the girls themselves to make sure that the people knew that the diocese did not wish to condemn the culture but rather to affirm it, without compromising ethical principles or standards of public health.

NEWS BRIEFS

Mauricio Funes

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is accepting comments until April 9 on its move to rescind a Bush administration regulation giving federal protection to the **conscience rights** of health care providers. The 30-day comment period opened on March 10. ✦ Poland's Catholic bishops said the Vatican has cleared them of collaborating with the secret police during **Poland's Communist era**. ✦ Mauricio Funes, a journalist and proponent of liberation theology who said during his campaign that the moral strength of churches was at the center of change, was elected **president of El Salvador** on March 15. ✦ The possibility that the Catholic Church will allow **married priests** should not be dismissed, New York's Cardinal Edward M. Egan said on March 10 during a radio interview. ✦ Though the number of U.S. adults who identify themselves as **Catholics increased by 11.1 million** since 1990, to 57 million, the percentage of Catholics in the general population dropped from approximately 26 percent to 25 percent. ✦ Internet users will be able to access and read texts by Pope Benedict XVI in traditional and simplified Chinese characters beginning on March 19 at the **Vatican's Web site**.

Bishops Address Drug-Related Problems

A series of arrests for dealing in illegal drugs in the United States and the arrival of Mexican troops in Ciudad Juárez to control violence related to the illegal drug trade have drawn increased attention to the serious problem of drug trafficking, say Latin America's Catholic bishops. Prelates in several countries have spoken about the problem in recent months. In February, when a district mayor in Lima, Peru, suggested that the Ministry of Health sell controlled doses of drugs to addicts, Archbishop Hector Cabrejos Vidarte of Trujillo called the idea a "serious error," saying it "would not be good for Peru or for parents, much less youth and children." Other bishops have expressed concern about the violence and corruption throughout Latin America that results from drug trafficking and have pushed for the creation of a commission headed by three former Latin American presidents—César Gaviria of Colombia, Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico and Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil—that has called for an "in-depth revision" of international drug policies "in light of their enormous human and social costs and threats to democratic institutions."

From CNS, staff and other sources.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE

Accounting for Torture

What does it mean to worship a tortured God? Many do not think of the crucifixion in the context of torture, but Christ was in fact tortured—in what would today be considered violations of the Geneva Conventions and Conventions on Torture. God became not just any human, but a person who was methodically tortured, stripped of his clothing, beaten by guards and forced into stress positions by the wood of the cross. Many of the methods used to torture Jesus were also used by U.S. forces at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and military bases in Guantánamo and Afghanistan.

The fact that Catholics worship a tortured God is not merely an academic point. Many other Christian communities do not use images of the crucifix, as they feel this memorializes Christ's suffering and death rather than his resurrection. Over the years my students at The Catholic University of America and I have been questioned about this by Baptists while on service trips. Displaying a crucifix "is like wearing an electric chair around your neck," one preacher told me.

Being disciples of a tortured God means that we must never be torturers, but must see in the image of Christ our solidarity with the powerless and marginalized, the victims of torture. We must see the fundamental dignity of human life, the face of God, even in suspected enemies, and treat them accordingly.

But what we remember at Sunday Mass and in Lenten Stations of the Cross we seem to forget in the public sphere. General Antonio Taguba, a lifelong Catholic and two-star army general, found in his Abu Ghraib investigation that U.S. forces, C.I.A. operatives and military contractors tortured prisoners by waterboarding, sodomy using sticks, stripping and beating them, sometimes to death. These were not the actions of "a few bad apples," according to documents recently made public, but the result of policies written by President George W. Bush's lawyers and approved by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Bush in an irregular process that avoided the military JAG lawyers (who were against such methods).

What are our moral obligations as disciples of a tortured God?

President Barack Obama issued executive orders to stop these practices, close Guantánamo and return to the previous U.S. practice of abiding by the Geneva and Torture Conventions. (Before the Bush administration, U.S. soldiers found waterboarding were court-martialed). Is this enough? With an agenda already crowded by economic meltdown and two wars, there is little appetite for "looking backward" into these issues.

But we may have to. U.S. and international laws commit us to investigate and prosecute such violations. Senior U.S. officials have admitted the practice of torture. If we do not pursue an investigation, other countries or the International Criminal Court will do so. There are practical reasons for an investigation: to restore U.S. legitimacy, credibility and reputation internationally; to rebuild the military's institutional reputation and functioning; and to understand how the law was perverted and ignored, in order to prevent this from happening again.

U.S. torture practices have hit home. My sister, Theresa Cusimano, Sr. Diane Pinchot, the Rev. Luis Barrios, and others are currently in federal prison for participating in the peaceful annual protest of U.S. torture training at the School of the Americas that resulted in the suffering and murder of many in Latin America, including Jesuit priests. The call to Theresa's conscience came from the photos of Abu Ghraib and the witness of a torture victim and a Jesuit colleague at Regis University in Denver, Colo. They advocate signing the online petition to President Obama to close the facility at Fort Benning, Ga., because of its history and urge passage of legislation to conduct an investigation.

General Taguba, now retired, also argues for accountability in remarks prepared for a conference at C.U.A. on March 19. General Taguba notes: "The only question that remains to be answered is whether those who ordered the use of torture will be held to account. [Those tortured] deserve justice.... And so do the American people."

What are our moral obligations as disciples of a tortured God? We must stand in solidarity with torture victims and ensure that our country will never go down this path again.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE *is a professor of international relations at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.*

THE DEMISE OF THE CULT OF SELF-INTEREST

Greenspan's Folly

BY DARRIN W. SNYDER BELOUSEK

I was wrong, Alan Greenspan said in so many words. Seated before his congressional inquisitors in October 2008, with the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression cascading down Wall Street, Mr. Greenspan confessed that the philosophical principle upon which he had based his highly influential professional judgment is—flawed.

For some two decades as chairman of the Federal Reserve, Greenspan had counseled presidents and Congresses that government deregulation of financial markets and reliance upon self-regulation by self-interest was the way of both freedom and prosperity. The collapse of one insolvent bank after another has called such counsel into question.

Here are Greenspan's own words: "Those of us who have looked to the self-interest of lending institutions to protect shareholders' equity, myself included, are in a state of shocked disbelief.... The whole intellectual edifice [of risk-management in derivative markets]...collapsed last summer." Asked whether his ideological bias led him to faulty judgments, he answered: "Yes, I've found a flaw. I don't know how significant or permanent it is. But I've been very distressed by that fact."

One pillar in the "intellectual edifice" of Mr. Greenspan's economic philosophy is the objectivist philosophy of the late Ayn Rand, whose inner circle Greenspan joined in the 1950s. As explained in her book *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964), Rand believed that the individual exists solely for her own happiness and thus that rational self-interest is the only objective basis for moral action. There are no moral constraints on the selfish pursuit of personal happiness, except force and fraud. And there is no moral duty to sacrifice individual advantage for

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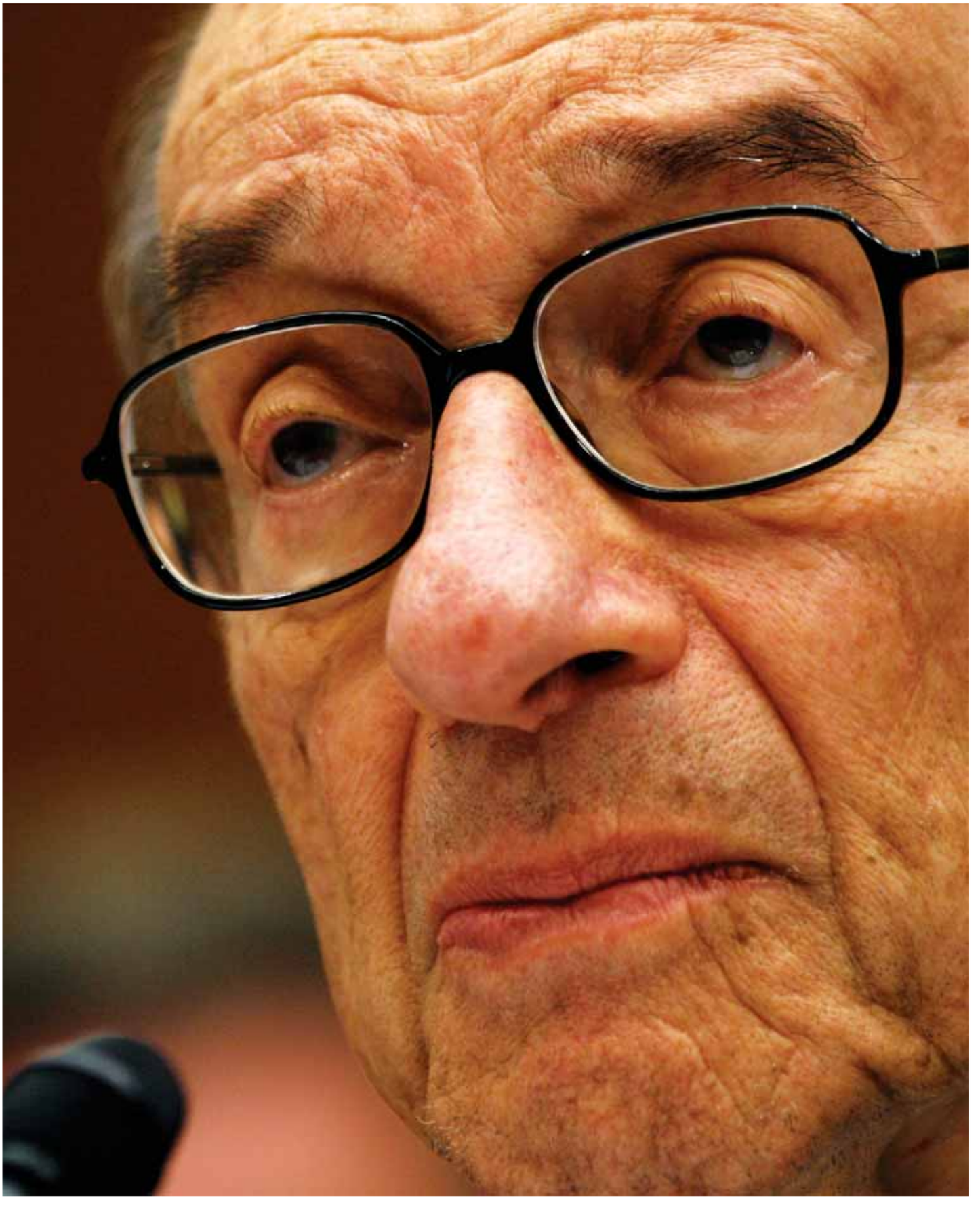
PHOTO: REUTERS/KEVIN LAMARQUE



any greater good, because there simply is no greater good than personal happiness ("egoism").

In the view of the objectivist philosophy, the only moral economic system is laissez-faire capitalism, which gives free rein to the selfish pursuit of individual profit. Accordingly, government should be minimal, limited to national defense, property protection and criminal prosecution. In his memoir, *The Age of Turbulence*, Greenspan acknowledged Rand as a "stabilizing force" in his life and reconfirmed as "compelling" the "philosophy of unfettered market competition."

Ayn Rand and the Egoist Ethic

As his comments to Congress indicate, Greenspan seemed sincerely surprised (and distressed) that financial institutions managed by self-interested individuals seeking to maximize private gain in unregulated markets would not have more prudently protected shareholder interest from excessive risk. He had assumed, implicitly, that corporate executives would seek what was best for the institution and its investors—and hence, that self-regulated self-interest would align private profit with institutional good. Given a Randian ethic of rational selfishness, however, one should be wary of such assumptions.

The egoist ideal is that, short of force or fraud, I pursue my own advantage regardless of others, because individual happiness is the ultimate good. Consider executive compensation. If I am an executive, then on egoist terms, I have limited rational interest to sacrifice personal gain for shareholder equity on account of risk assessment, as long as my compensation package guarantees me multimillions regardless of stock performance. Even if the company crashes, I escape with my "golden parachute."

The egoist ethic amplifies this divergence between private interest and common good throughout the financial market. Consider the mortgage market. If I am a mortgage lender, then issuing risky loans that are unlikely to be repaid is a good investment for me, as long as the secondary mortgage market allows me to pass the risk of default to others—say, by selling the loans on the secondary market for bundling into mortgage-backed "securities." Even if the borrower later goes into default, I have gained in the market as long as I am able to remove the loan from my books and reap my commission.

And if I am an investment banker, then purchasing bonds backed by risky loans is also a good investment, as long as a derivatives market allows me to "swap" the risk with a leveraged investor or an insurance company. Even if the underlying loans go into default, I have still maintained my market position, as long as my credit-default swaps pay out and I cover my losses.

In short, as long as there is an unregulated market for betting on loan defaults and as long as there are investors willing to take the bets, financial risks that promise individual profit with potential cost to the common good make rational sense. Of course, this game of risk is sustainable only as long as the bets continue paying off—which meant in this case, only as long as housing prices continued rising. With the burst of the bubble in the housing market, resulting in a flood of mortgage defaults, bond sellers and default insurers alike were left unable to make good on their promises, leaving bond holders to absorb the losses they had gambled others would pay. Although the risk-takers have reaped their reward in a whirlwind, it is ultimately stockholders and taxpayers who have borne the real cost through losses to retirement funds and education budgets.

Buying into the market depends on trust; but trust in the market cannot be bought.

Greenspan's "intellectual edifice" of self-regulation by self-interest has thus collapsed upon its own presuppositions. Having recognized the "flaw" in his thinking, Greenspan now suggests that financial institutions selling complex products (e.g., securities backed by high-risk mortgages) be required to hold a substantial portion of the bonds they issue in their own portfolio. That is, institutions should be required to expose themselves to the risk they market to others in order to constrain the excesses of self-interest.

Reasonable regulation of capital markets and executive compensation to rein in self-interest, though necessary, does not get to the heart of the matter, however. The deeper philosophical issue is that the egoist ethic underlying Greenspan's theory is an insufficient foundation for how we envision our economic life. According to the Randian philosophy, rational selfishness is the chief virtue, its constraint the chief vice. What the financial crisis teaches us is that excessive self-interest is economically destructive. Unrestrained selfishness is thus itself a vice, undermining not only the general welfare but also self-interest.

While self-interest is the operative principle of the marketplace, and while Greenspan is correct to argue that markets have made expanding prosperity possible for many, the unrestrained self-interest that egoism values has proved corrupting of the very free market in which it was supposed to flourish. Rational selfishness without moral constraint has corroded the trust between financial institutions that is necessary to sustain the flow of credit upon which a market-capitalist economy depends. Not even the lowering by the

Federal Reserve of its lending rate to practically zero has been sufficient to stimulate financial markets in the current climate of mistrust.

Buying into the market, inasmuch as it involves risk, depends on trust; but trust in the market cannot be bought. For trust depends essentially upon the trustworthiness of prospective buyers and sellers, borrowers and lenders. Without mutual trustworthiness, freedom of exchange is undercut, even if the cost of buying into the market (the interest rate, for example) is cut to zero. Virtue thus is prior to freedom; and without virtue, freedom destroys itself. The free market cannot operate by self-interest alone, therefore, but relies on ethical presuppositions.

An Alternate Vision

What is further lacking in the Randian philosophy is a robust concept of the common good. The common good is more than the competing interests of selfish individuals (the view on the right). It is also more than the composite interests of special groups (the view on the left). The common good is "the good we have in common"—the comprehensive communal conditions necessary for the virtuous pursuit of human fulfillment by all in society.

Talk of virtue ethics and the common good is the language of Christian moral philosophy. The financial crisis, then, issues a special call to the faithful. American society needs an alternative vision of economic life to the one that has reigned over the past quarter-century and has now brought so many institutions and investors to ruin.

The first task of this alternate vision—in the face of ingrained individualism and endemic egoism—is to reclaim the very fact of our common life as the basis of our obligations to one another. Times of crisis remind us of our inter-dependence and summon us to our mutual responsibilities. Without sustained focus and reflection, however, such lessons learned can be quickly lost in the public consciousness. (Recall how soon the official message after 9/11 shifted from "let's pull together" to "everyone go shopping.")

ON THE WEB
From the archives, **America**'s review of Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*.
americamagazine.org/pages

As a Mennonite philosopher, I have found Catholic social teaching to provide a plentiful resource of reflection on these questions, especially Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), where we can find precisely the principle that we need to re-learn: "Civil society exists for the common good, and, therefore, is concerned with the interests of all in general, and with the individual interests in their due place and proportion" (No. 37).

From the perspective of Catholic social teaching, individual interest is inseparable from the common good. The individual's claim on the community is bound up with the community's claim on the individual. Such mutuality implies moral principles for the economic system: individual profit is accountable to the common good; gain for the wealthy is immoral apart from justice for the poor; economic freedom entails social responsibility (see the U.S. Catholic bishops' pastoral letter, *Economic Justice for All*, 1986).

Another rich resource for reflection is John Paul II's centenary reflection on Pope Leo's encyclical, *Centesimus Annus* (1991), which includes a comment (No. 17) with a remarkable relevance for the current crisis:

> We see how [*Rerum Novarum*] points essentially to the socioeconomic consequences of an error which has even greater implications.... This error consists in an understanding of human freedom which detaches it from obedience to the truth, and consequently from the duty to respect the rights of others. The essence of freedom then becomes self-love carried to the point of contempt for God and neighbor, a self-love which leads to an unbridled affirmation of self-interest and which refuses to be limited by any demand of justice.

The "unbridled affirmation of self-interest"—among buyers and sellers, borrowers and lenders—was indeed the mantra of the Greenspan era. And the "socioeconomic consequences" of that "error" are now evident to all.

Secular Wisdom

The wisdom of virtue ethics and the common good, as Catholic social teaching itself acknowledges, is not confined to the tradition of the church. It would thus behoove people of faith, when presenting an alternative vision to persons of good will in American society who are not Christian, to seek out sources of such wisdom beyond ecclesial documents.

We could reconsider such classic writers as Aristotle, Aquinas and Tocqueville. They understood civil society as the natural setting for human fulfillment, the common good as the moral horizon of individual pursuit and wise governance to be as important as individual liberty for the sustainable pursuit of living well.

We would also do well to consider contemporary writers like Robert Bellah, Stephen Carter and Amitai Etzioni. They not only remind us of the republican ideal of a common good above private interest, but also call us away from the egoist ethic of selfish individualism toward a civic ethic of shared sacrifice and social virtue.

The need now, for both people of faith and all people of good will, is a return to the ethics of virtue and the philosophy of the common good, within which human freedom and individual interest find their "due place and proportion." The welfare of the nation depends on it. **A**

Advocate for the World's Poorest

Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez on reducing extreme poverty

BY GEORGE M. ANDERSON

According to Caritas Internationalis, someone in the world dies of hunger every 3.6 seconds. Eleven million children under the age of 5 die each year, six million of them from preventable causes. And the odds that a woman in Sub-Saharan Africa will die from complications of pregnancy or childbirth stand at one in 16. In the developed world, the odds are one in 3,800.

"Health is the only capital of the poor," says Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez of Honduras, "and health is at its worst in the poorest nations." A longtime advocate for the world's poorest people, Cardinal Rodríguez serves as president of Caritas, which is the global umbrella group for some 160 Catholic charitable organizations.

In late September the cardinal addressed the U.N. General Assembly about the Millennium Development Goals, eight goals established by the United Nations in the year 2000 to combat extreme poverty in the world, meant to be achieved by 2015. The goals, said the cardinal, are "a catalyst for action...a reminder of the suffering of millions of people who live in extreme poverty."

Progress has been slow; in some areas there has been practically none at all. The problem, said Rodríguez in an interview with **America**, lies to a large extent with the international community, which is "closed in on its own interests." The G-8 industrialized nations see the rest of the world as strangers and regard "the market as their god." Greed has invaded many giant corporations. When human beings forget that there are limits to the spirit of acquisitiveness and do not take into account the needs of the rest of the world, "we see the consequences." He identified an example of unbridled greed: "The oil industry enriches some nations, but without a greater sense of universal solidarity it will be impossible to overcome poverty."

PHOTO: CNS MICHAEL ALEXANDER, GEORGIA BULLETIN

Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga

"I've seen that same greed in my own country, Honduras," Cardinal Rodríguez told the General Assembly. "International mining companies extract from the land its riches" and then "leave it poisoned and the people who live there worse off."

Sustainable Development

Rodríguez explained that the international community's reluctance to foster sustainable development in the poorest countries is partly responsible for the massive waves of global migration that are now taking place, as well as the walls built to stop them.

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In May 2008, when he was interviewed in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, Cardinal Rodríguez spoke of the painful irony that while the North American Free Trade Agreement allows for the free movement of goods between Mexico and the United States, human beings are not afforded that same privilege, though they are usually poor men and women seeking only to forge a better life for themselves and their children through hard and honest work. Five years earlier, at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' annual Catholic Social Ministry gathering in Washington, D.C., the cardinal had also articulated the link between poverty and immigration: "The wealthy North will never have enough steel walls to contain the avalanche of illegal immigrants unless there is a real development" in poor nations.

Development and immigration are global issues that need large-scale remedies. There is a need, Cardinal Rodríguez said in his U.N. address, "to galvanize governments into urgent action by living up to past promises on development." Past promises have been many. In 1975 at the Helsinki Conference, for example, 35 countries, including the United States, agreed to set aside 0.7 percent of their gross national product for development in poor countries. Without creating development opportunities in poor countries, "the only businesses that prosper are drug trafficking and the trafficking of human beings."

So powerful has the drug trade become in Central and Latin America, he said, that the leaders of some cartels are able to direct their activities by cellphone while in prison. Complicating matters is the weakness of the justice system; the drug trade "involves so much money that a judge who really does his job places his own life in danger," said Rodríguez.

Regarding human trafficking, the cardinal observed that traffickers in Honduras, his own country, charge $5,000 to transport a person into the United States, but once across the border they often abandon their charges in the desert. Hundreds die every year from exposure. Kidnapping, too, has become a kind of industry unto itself in Latin American countries.

Over the years Cardinal Rodríguez has commented on other issues affecting the poor of the world. He once described debt as "a tombstone over many nations." Yet in countries where debt cancellation has occured, the results have been striking. Caritas Internationalis has reported that in Mozambique, for instance, cancellation has freed up money to pay for immunizations for children; in Tanzania it has meant the abolition of school fees and as a result, a 65 percent increase in school attendance.

At the United Nations, Cardinal Rodríguez warned that "climate change is undoing much of the progress made in developing countries." Hurricane Mitch destroyed half a century of progress in Honduras. Climate change affects all countries, he said, but "the poor suffer disproportionately more than the rich," even though "they bear the least responsibility for the pollution causing global warming." To begin to change this dark situation, the industrialized nations "must back up their M.D.G. commitments by cutting greenhouse gas emissions by at least 24 to 40 percent by 2020," he explained, and then "by 80 percent by 2050 to avoid catastrophe."

One hopeful sign of progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals lies in the $16 billion in new contributions and pledges made during the U.N. gathering at a high-level meeting in which Cardinal Rodríguez took part. Caritas Internationalis subsequently reported that $1.6 billion had been pledged to foster food security and another $2 billion to improve maternal health and address child mortality.

In light of the soaring prices and given the global economic downturn, however, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon warned that additional efforts will be needed before the international community can come even close to reaching the targets for reducing extreme poverty. The cardinal's words at the end of his address were similarly blunt. Much of the world's ongoing poverty, he said, has been caused by "a failure of politics and a failure of leadership." How far those failures can be rectified may become evident in the next two years, if the secretary general's proposal is accepted to hold a summit meeting in 2010 to review the Millennium Development Goals. A

A Shared Meal

Despite differences, Passover and Easter occupy a similar sacred space.

BY DANIEL F. POLISH

A visit to an ancient refectory in Milan embodies a significant paradox in the relations of the Jewish and Christian traditions. On the wall of the old dining room is Leonardo da Vinci's well-known fresco of the Last Supper, with Jesus and the disciples at table. And there, unexpectedly and incongruously, among the dishes and the wine cups is a loaf of bread. The problem turns on the familiar words of Matthew 26: "Now on the first day of the feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?' And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples" (verses 17, 19-20).

Last Supper as Seder

The paradox is this: A Jew reading these words would understand immediately what is transpiring. Since it is a Seder, commemorating the Israelites' preparation for their journey through the desert memorialized at Passover, the bread should not be leavened as in the mural, but unleavened, flat bread, less likely to spoil and, because it is light and compact, more easily carried on a journey. Most Christians do read Matthew, or hear the Gospel read, but some (like Leonardo) do not have a reflexive grasp of Matthew's reference to the Seder meal and the unleavened bread prescribed for its celebration.

Mandated in the Bible as an annual commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt, Passover appears from the beginning to have involved a table celebration. At the heart of the commemoration was a seven-day abstinence from eating leavened bread. Jewish tradition mandates that during the entire week of Passover we eat Matzah—unleavened bread—in a re-enactment of the unleavened bread "our ancestors ate when they came out of Egypt." How would Leonardo have known? It was one of those details that was simply lost over the ages as Christian knowledge of Judaism waned, and the focus of Christian piety became not the historical ties of Holy Week to the Exodus but Jesus' Last Supper.

This unleavened bread, along with the four cups of wine that we drink during the Seder ritual, became the basis of the bread and wine of the Christian Eucharist. Thus the theme of Passover plays a significant role in the celebration of Holy Week and Easter. A sensitive attunement to the readings of Holy Week, particularly those for the Easter Vigil and Easter day, reveals how redolent they are with evocations of the unleavened bread and the Exodus narrative. The Last Supper account and Paul's use of the leavened/unleavened metaphor to explain the new moral life of Christians in their faith in Christ, in the second reading (option b) of the dawn Mass for Easter (1 Cor 5:6-8), hearken back to the Passover. Thus the events of the Seder and the form and meaning of Passover can be a very real part of the events of Holy Week and of the central story of the Christian tradition.

What Matthew makes evident is the reality—and the reason—that the celebrations of Easter and Passover usually overlap on the calendar—usually, but not always. (In 2008 they were separated by a month.) The two sacred times share temporal space. This proximity has led more than a few perplexed people to ask, "Passover is the Jewish Easter, isn't it?" (I have never heard the opposite formulation, however.) But are the two holidays really one? Or doublets? Actually their points of discontinuity and continuity intertwine like a braided candle. And, like a candle, they can shed much light.

Liturgy and Memory

The two holidays underscore much of what divides the two traditions. They celebrate two very different historical events. Easter commemorates the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus; for Jews those events play no role whatever in their religious lives. Passover celebrates the exodus of the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery; for Christians those events have mythic resonance but less personal significance.

There are also significant differences in the central religious vision of the two traditions. Easter reminds us that for Christians, Jesus is the central reality of Christian faith. The

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PHOTO: SCALA/MINISTERO PER I BENI E LE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI / ART RESOURCE

celebration of Passover, by contrast, highlights the centrality of the People of Israel itself to Jewish faith. It is the liberation of the People that gives the holiday its meaning. Passover underscores the almost mystical participation of each Jew in the totality of the history of the Jewish people. For Jews the Exodus does not have merely metaphorical meaning; nor is it felt to be some distant event. Rather, it is a tangible, immediate reality, so much so that the Haggadah, the liturgical text whose reading constitutes the Seder service, articulates the animating vision of the entire holiday—and perhaps of all of Jewish reading of the Bible: *in every generation all Jews should regard themselves as if they themselves had gone out of Egypt.* These two holidays are hardly a single entity.

The Seder experience and the Haggadah are the product of rabbis who sought to translate into concrete action the more general injunction of Exodus, "tell your son in that day saying, 'it was because of what the Lord did for me when I came forth out of Egypt.'" The rabbis sought to ritualize the telling (*Haggadah*, in Hebrew). This insistence on applying biblical imperatives to concrete action is itself a radical distinction from the Christian rejection of such biblical literalism.

Although this resistance to literalism of action is characteristic of the sacramental churches, there is, even here, a provocative convergence with the Seder's understanding of the Jews' "entry into" the experience of the Exodus. We can hear echoes of a theology of participation in the celebrations associated with Holy Week and Easter. The baptism of catechumens and the renewal of baptismal vows for the baptized is seen as a participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus—and the entrance into a new creation, a new humanity.

The singing of the "Exsultet," praising the paschal candle as the light of Christ, reviews for Christians salvation history culminating in Christ. The procession in darkness evokes the Exodus experience: the people of Israel were led through the desert by a pillar of fire by night. The readings of the Easter Vigil also make the connection explicit by recapitulating the history of the Jewish people.

Analogues to this participatory sensibility in Jewish practice can be found elsewhere in Christian life. In celebrating the Eucharist, in baptizing new members and in dramatic readings of the Passion, Christians see themselves as striving to carry out Jesus' commands and sharing mystically in the events of Holy Week.

Troubled Memories

On a more somber note, these two festivals capture tragic realities in the relations of the two communities.

Historically, for Jews, Easter and Passover were a particularly dangerous time of the year. In Europe the approach of Passover raised anxieties about the possibility of an eruption of a "blood libel"—the hoary lie that Jews would kidnap a Christian child and make use of his blood in the preparation of the Passover Matzah. This charge erupted throughout medieval and early modern Europe, precipitating terrifying and deadly assaults on Jews. It is this canard that we hear echoed in the "Nun's Tale" in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. It continued to exert its malign influence in Europe up into the 20th century; and in somewhat altered form it finds expression in the Muslim world today.

Passover and Easter: their points of discontinuity and continuity intertwine like a braided candle. And like a candle, they can shed much light.

Easter was the day of darkest dread for European Jews. As related in accounts of individuals who lived through the events and in collections of community chronicles, enraged mobs would pour out of the doors of the village church after a particularly inflammatory Easter sermon and run amok upon the Jews with whom they had been living amicably throughout the year, wreaking vengeance on the "perfidious Jews" for their unbelief, or worse, for the crime of deicide. Easter Sunday was often a very bloody time for Jews.

Recent history offers a new meaning to the convergence of these two festivals. The season of celebration once fraught with tension has become for most Christians and Jews an occasion for interreligious harmony and mutuality. The Seder itself has become less a barrier to amity than a bridge to understanding. Many Christian and Jewish congregations have celebrated the Seder together. More controversial are those Catholics and Protestants who participate in a form of Seder during Holy Week. Though the practice may be perceived by Jews as syncretism or as an appropriation of their own holy rituals, it stands as testimony to a recognition of common roots of faith and practice.

Since the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church and many Protestant denominations have been energetic and vigilant about the way in which the Passion is taught. Indeed, the church has issued materials, including commentaries on the Lectionary, aimed at educating Christians about anti-Semitism precisely during Holy Week. What a remarkable reversal of the resonances this period held for Jews in pre-*Nostra Aetate* Europe! After Vatican II the church vigorously expunged from its liturgy prayers that would arouse enmity toward Jews. When in 2008 it appeared that this liturgical advance was to be rolled back, it was the memories of the old realities and the tragic consequences of the old practices that evoked an outcry in the Jewish community.

History has engendered other telling disjunctions as well. For Americans the assassination of Abraham Lincoln has, since 1865, burnished the motif—echoing Christ's passion—of the martyrdom and unjust death of the saving one. The template shines through the poem Herman Melville wrote immediately after the assassination:

Good Friday was the day
Of the prodigy and crime
When they killed him in his pity
When they killed him in his prime....
But they killed him in his kindness,
In their madness and their blindness...

In the past 60 years, Passover too has assumed an additional significance. On the second day of Passover in April 1943, the remaining Jews of the ghetto of Warsaw began their uprising against the Nazi machinery of destruction. Jews regard the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, though it was futile, as an emblem of heroism and resistance—and as another instance of Jews, as a people, seeking to seize their freedom in the midst of oppression. As testimony to the capacity of Jewish religious practice to renew itself continually, the commemoration of the events of April 1943 has now found its way into many contemporary Haggadot. This adds another dimension of meaning to the annual commemoration of freedom.

Feasts of Rebirth

Of all the convergences of these two holidays, the most significant may lie not in the realm of history or of liturgy but in the world of nature. On the deepest level that convergence may be recognized most tellingly whenever Jews and Christians hear in each of these celebrations resonances of their common humanity.

It is no accident that both holidays are celebrated in the spring. I cannot imagine either of them occurring in the dead of winter. Both traditions celebrate a profound human reaction to the realities of our natural world; both celebrate the change of seasons. Passover celebrates that the earth has thrown off, at least in the Northern hemisphere, its mantle of snow and been reborn in all its verdant beauty. The Seder plate, which holds the symbols of the Passover service on each table, includes a sprig of parsley—or some form of

green vegetable—and an egg. Both symbols evoke the reawakening of the earth, an integral part of the inner meaning of the observance.

Passover, no less than Easter, testifies in its own idiom to the miracle of rebirth. Passover speaks in the language of history and nature. The waters of the parted Red Sea speak of the rebirth of the People of Israel—liberated from the shackles of slavery, born anew as a people between the watery walls of the sea. The waters in which the parsley and egg are dipped during the Seder service evoke our rebirth from the tyranny of winter's icy grip. Easter, too, is a festival of rebirth. Christians celebrate their liberation from death and sin. The Resurrection for Christians and the Passover for Jews both speak of being born anew, triumphing over death, being recreated.

Two festivals, very different, with differing meanings, evoke very different associations and memories. Yet on another level, the two share profound commonalities at the fundamental level of our shared humanity. How very representative of the relationship we are only now beginning to see between our two traditions! Collectively we are in the process of being reborn: from enmity and estrangement to new mutuality and fraternal affection. Perhaps someday we will evolve a shared commemoration celebrating that. It ought to take place in the spring. A

Reading Karl Rahner

Twenty-five years after his death, Rahner's works still illuminate.

LEO J. O'DONOVAN

On Ash Wednesday 1984, the day after the city of Innsbruck had celebrated the 80th birthday of Karl Rahner, S.J., I drove him on a tour that was to be the last we made together. In the neighboring town of Schwaz, we visited the Church of the Assumption, which interested him especially because of its two naves, one for the upper classes and one for the workers. At a restored Franciscan cloister he corrected me quickly when I observed a scene of "the resurrection of the dead." "No, no," he objected, "the resurrection of the body!" Over dinner it was clear that he paid little attention to the body's nutritional needs, ordering only an elaborate local dessert of apple pancakes. Weeks later, back home in the United States, I grieved upon learning of his death on March 30.

Important publications, especially from a new generation of German scholars, continue to research the roots of Rahner's thought. Successive volumes of a landmark new edition of his *Sämtliche Werke* ("Complete Edition") have been appearing regularly, with 23 volumes now available out of the planned 32. The English translation of an important book of essays by German-speaking colleagues and friends, *Encounters With Karl Rahner*, is forthcoming.

Reading Rahner can be a lifetime's occupation or, better, a resource for a lifetime. For wayfaring Christians perhaps more than for academic theologians, pages in even his most difficult essays still illuminate in startling ways. Rahner writes like a poet whose creativity has been constrained in order to serve the community's shared questions—or like a mystic willing, though always discreetly, to share profound intimations of divine presence.

How might we in a new century read this legendary figure? I offer five guiding questions.

1. How did Karl Rahner understand human reason and its capacity for truth? Well, quite differently from both 18th- and 19th-century science and from the First Vatican Council, which too easily defended reason on terms it accepted from that science. Like other great humanist thinkers of his time—Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, for example—Rahner warned repeatedly against reducing reason and the language through which it expresses itself to technical and instrumental uses. He admired the advances of science and was grateful for them (fast cars and escalators fascinated him, and he knew the value of an occasional sleeping pill), but he repeatedly insisted that the mind's deepest need is communion in what can never be ultimately defined—in love, fidelity and trust. "What if it is essential and constitutive of true knowledge," he asked in a famous essay of 1959, "of [knowledge in its deepest, fullest sense], of its growth, self-awareness and lucidity, to know by knowing also that it does not know, to know itself oriented from the start to the incomprehensible and inexpressible, to recognize more and more that only in this way can it truly be itself and not [just] come to a halt at some regrettable limit?"

He was speaking as a believer in search of understanding, as someone who felt himself addressed, welcomed and embraced by a holy mystery for whom the word "God" is a necessary, perhaps, but terribly faltering term. The more reasonable we are, the more we realize that only the horizon and term of our mind's endless, questioning dynamism can satisfy the hunger of human hearts. The insight had roots in Augustine and Aquinas, but also, by contrast, in the self-confidence of modernity—of which Rahner was one of the most trenchant and profound critics. (This against the often-advanced view that he adopted a philosophical starting point and sought God and the incarnate Word of God from that point.)

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2. In Rahner's thought, what is the relationship between knowing and loving? Do they stand next to each other, does one follow upon the other, is one primary (as in the tradition of heaven as beatific vision)? Or are they more intrinsically and dynamically related, neither being really itself without the other? His answer came as early as his famous lectures on the philosophy of religion, *Hearers of the Word* (1941), in which he understands knowledge as ordained to fulfillment in love. Refusing to choose between intellectualism and voluntarism, he draws on Bonaventure's notion of ecstatic reason and sees knowledge and love as mutually related, as indwelling each other: "In the heart of knowledge stands love, from which knowledge itself lives." Here the commonplace misunderstanding that we can choose only what we first understand yields to the experientially more accurate sense that inquiry is always *motivated*, that it is the inquiry of subjects who have concerns, commitments and convictions. Rahner writes : "Thus will and knowledge can only be understood in a relationship of reciprocal priority with one another, not one of linear sequence."

Rahner warned repeatedly against reducing reason and the language through which it expresses itself to technical and instrumental uses.

Rahner restates this view often. In his essay on the Trinity, for example, he speaks of truth as "first the truth that we *do*, the deed in which we firmly posit our self for our self and for others, the deed which waits to see how it will be received." We are the truth of lives that only love can guarantee. Thus, knowledge is only momentarily an end in itself; it must always be guided by love, just as, in strictly Trinitarian terms, Christian believers can accept God's Word only if they are guided by the Spirit of God (see l Cor 12:3; Jn 14:26, 16:12).

3. Of whom is Rahner really speaking? Often his theme is taken to be the relation between the individual human subject and the God who redeems us in Christ. But this interpretation does an injustice to his thought. Rather than considering individuality a primordial anthropological given ("first the 'I'"), Rahner actually had a profoundly, even mystically, social conception of humanity and of all created reality. As early as *Hearers of the Word*, he wrote: "We are human beings only within humanity." In contrast to the extrinsicist, objectivistic and a-historical neoscholasticism in which he was educated, he became steadily more emphatic that our social character as human beings must be grounded, not merely psychologically, sociologically or ethically but through a religiously motivated ontology, that is to say, through a view of reality informed by faith. It is in our historical journey as human subjects toward what we religiously call the "holy mystery of God" that we become increasingly aware of ourselves as responsible subjects.

In a crucial essay in 1971, Rahner wrote:

> In the unity of the experience of God and the experience of one's self, on the one hand, and in the unity of the experience of the self and encounter with the neighbor, on the other hand, we see that these three experiences are fundamentally one experience [in the sense not of a temporal moment but rather of an ongoing life] with three aspects which mutually condition each other [God, self, community]. But that means, reciprocally, that the unity of the love of God and neighbor is only conceivable if we presuppose the unity of the experience of God and of the self. [It is in being drawn to God that we become truly aware of ourselves.] What first appears as a purely philosophically formulated and indirectly grounded unity of the experience of the self and of God is also an implication of the fundamental Christian statement on the unity of the love of neighbor and of God.

Neither an intellectualist nor an individualist, Rahner was also not primarily a theoretical thinker. That brings us to our fourth question.

4. What was the role of practice in Rahner's thought? In his early meditations *Encounters With Silence* (1938), he spoke of the true wisdom of experienced love. Rahner's work under Karl Rudolph at the Pastoral Institute in Vienna during the war years had a lasting influence on his thought.

Above: Karl Rahner (left) at a book signing in Chicago, 1974

PHOTO: AMERICA ARCHIVES

And his practical bent became most obvious in the five-volume *Handbook of Pastoral Theology*, for which he served as co-editor (and frequent contributor) from 1964 to 1972. In an interview for his 70th birthday he said, "Behind everything I did stood a very immediate, pastoral and spiritual interest." Church teaching, he thought, should be subordinated to church praxis, and theology should be conceived not primarily as a theoretical but rather as a practical discipline.

Why? Most fundamentally because Rahner believed that in our shared and fallible freedom we are called to participate in the justice and generosity of God's own freedom. From the very beginning, he understood Christian faith not simply as knowledge about God, but as trust in the saving grace of God. Revelation is not information about God but is God's own self-disclosure to us. Jesus is not a messenger with unexpected news but a mediator of all-encompassing, divine grace. The Spirit is not a universal instinct but a transforming power. And the church is not meant to be a self-sufficient institution but a sacrament, an effective sign of salvation for all of us poor, wayward human beings.

Rahner held that our knowledge is truest in action, not in prior speculation. "Theology is directed toward living out hope and love, in which there is a moment of knowledge which is not possible without them," he wrote. "Orthodoxy [thinking rightly] and orthopraxis [acting rightly] mutually condition each other in a primordial nameless unity, which is known, if at all, only *through praxis* [emphasis added]. And this is because all [religious] knowledge is valid only in saving action, when it has fulfilled itself in love and *thus* remains as theory."

In suggesting each of these four questions on the place of knowledge, love, community and practice in Rahner's thought, I have emphasized the dynamic interaction of the elements involved, a mutual conditioning that charges life and history forward, even when it falters. That brings us to the last question.

5. *What might have most originally inspired this sense of dialectic, of interaction that promises or at least offers progress?* From Klaus Fischer's groundbreaking study of Rahner's anthropology through fine studies by Harvey Egan, S.J., and Philip Endean, S.J., the spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola and his Spiritual Exercises have been suggested as the deepest source of Rahner's worldview. He himself said as much, implying it most memorably in the essay that he often called his last will and testament, "St. Ignatius Speaks to a Jesuit of Today" (1978). Less noted, however, is that the Exercises are a school of freedom—freedom from the false self that imprisons us and freedom for the call of Christ to serve beneath the banner of his cross—and a freedom that undergoes transformation.

The journey of the "Four Weeks" of the Exercises does not unfold all on the same terrain. It moves from a recognition of graced life and repentance for how we distort it toward a readiness to hear the call of Christ, which leads then to assimilation to his way of life, humbled wonder at the depth of suffering love shown in his self-emptying death, and then to rejoicing with his Easter joy and hoping in his Spirit. Each moment in the journey raises a question whose answer carries us to the next stage and a new question ("To what is Christ calling me?"), which then carries us toward another answer and another question ("What will it cost?") and further still to a prayer that wagers all we are can be surrendered into the immense and infinite love of God (the "Contemplation for Attaining God's Way of Loving"). The hope of the Fourth Week is present as goal in the meditations of the First Week, but only passage through each of the "weeks," or stages, can allow that real hope to be born. The prayer of the Exercises, then, might best be described as dialectical. And so too at its root is Karl Rahner's theology.

But see for yourselves: take and read, and pray, certainly. Above all, hope to find nourishment for life. Having a few good questions to ask at the beginning may help you to understand what your faith calls you to do. Good questions bring light for understanding. I remember Karl Rahner, on entering the church in Schwaz, going first to a statue of the Virgin and lighting a candle there. When I started to do the same, he held me back. "No, one light is enough."

"Indeed it is," I thought, "if it is yours." A

LENTEN REFLECTION

The Smiling Christ

The last in a series for Lent

BY PETER SCHINELLER

In this holiest of all weeks, Christians are confronted by the crucified redeemer on Good Friday, before coming to new life with Jesus Christ the risen Lord on Easter Sunday. How do we imagine the death of Jesus?

One relatively unknown way of imagining Jesus on the cross comes from a crucifix, probably from the 13th century, found in the chapel of the castle of St. Francis Xavier, in northeast Spain. His suffering is clear: Jesus is stripped, arms outstretched, head crowned with thorns; he is nailed to the wood. His face is unusual, however, not wracked with pain, but peaceful and serene. The sculpture is called "the smiling Christ." Shocking! Is this blasphemy or deep insight? Why such serenity in the midst of suffering, a smile at the moment of death?

The Seven Last Words—From Suffering to Glory. The most shocking words of Jesus on the cross are those in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" The Father seems absent to the Son. Pain, suffering and spiritual desolation dominate. Then the mood shifts. Forgiveness and mercy emerge as Jesus prays for his executioners, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). To the good thief Jesus proclaims, "I assure you: this day you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). Jesus lovingly entrusts his mother to the beloved disciple. Finally, after proclaiming "I am thirsty," and sipping the wine, Jesus says, "Now it is finished" (Jn 19:30). He bows his head and delivers over his spirit (Jn 19:30). In John's account the cross is the exaltation of Jesus. In Luke's Gospel as well, the moment of death is a positive act of love: "Jesus uttered a loud cry and said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit'" (Lk 23:46). Surely all these texts give some basis for the figure of the "smiling Christ," which depicts Jesus in death entrusting himself into his Father's loving hands.

The centurion's reaction to the death of Christ too points in this direction. According to Mark, "when the centurion who stood facing him saw how he breathed his last he said 'Truly this man was the Son of God'"(Mk 15:38). One theologian called the moment of death of the smiling Christ "the non-existent boundary between the cross and the resurrection." In fact, Jesus said to the good thief that "today", not in three days, not on Easter Sunday, but "today you will be with me in Paradise!"

Our Sharing in the Paschal Mystery. Is not this image of the smiling Christ reflected in the deaths of some saints, too? In the midst of their passion and pain, even in the face of death, they keep faith and manifest a sense of joy. St. Thomas More joked with his executioner: "Be not afraid. You send me to God." In the words of St. Ambrose, St. Agnes went to her place of execution "more cheerfully than others to their wedding." The martyrs of Uganda and of Japan went joyfully to their death, reciting the Rosary and loudly singing psalms of praise and joy.

We may never be called upon to suffer and die as did Jesus Christ or the martyrs. Yet the liturgies of Holy Week remind us that the cross is the only way to life. For those who are faithful, Good Friday leads to Easter Sunday. The smiling Christ points to a loving Father, who at the moment of deepest suffering reaches down in love to accept the life and work of his Beloved Son. Love triumphs over death.

Christianity does not promise us freedom from suffering, but reveals a more significant truth: it is through suffering that we are saved. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ—no trial, distress, persecution or cross: "nothing in life or death will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Rom 8:38-39).

The first in this series of Lenten reflections had a paradox as its title: "A Sorrowful Joy." We end with a paradoxical image, that of the smiling Christ, peaceful and serene at the moment of death. May this face illumine our way to the full joy and peace of the Resurrection.

FROM AMERICA ARCHIVES

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ART | JOHN COLEMAN

JESUS THE PRISONER

A Lenten reflection on 'The Mocking of Christ'

On an impulse, I decided to drop into the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in early January to tour its European galleries. Standing before the Gerrit van Honthorst painting "The Mocking of Christ," I shuddered in painful recognition. Honthorst's canvas conjured up for me those horrible photos, found ubiquitously on YouTube, of the cruel, sardonic mocking of prisoners at Abu Ghraib. The fundamental basics of dealing with prisoners (binding of limbs, confinement in space and dehumanizing rituals) have scarcely changed since Jesus' time.

Honthorst (1590-1656), a follower of Caravaggio, lived in Italy from 1610 to 1620. He was also known as "Gherardo della Notte" (Gerald of the Night) since he painted so many scenes set in that time of day. When he returned to Utrecht, Honthorst became a pillar of the Utrecht school of Northern Caravaggioists, who gloried in chiaroscuro.

At that time, I had been closely reading and meditating on an arresting new book by Michael Kennedy, S.J., *Jesus the Risen Prisoner: An Invitation to Freedom* (Paulist Press). Since I decided to use it for Lenten prayer, I was seeking an apt artistic rendering of Christ the prisoner. Kennedy, who has worked closely with prisoners for many years, asks in his meditations on the passion of the prisoner that we linger on that unusual title for Jesus: "When have I ever heard of Jesus referred to as a prisoner?" As a longtime pastor of an East Los Angeles Hispanic parish, Kennedy has firsthand knowledge of young people who have gone to prison. In his book he describes their testimonies and those

ART: GERRIT VAN HONTHORST. "THE MOCKING OF THE CHRIST," CA. 1617. LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART; GIFT OF THE AHMANSON FOUNDATION.

of their mothers, who agonize (as Mary surely did) about their sons, the prisoners. Then as now, prisons were rarely safe, salutary and sane places, even under the best of regimes.

The scene depicted in Honthorst's painting can be found in Mk 15:16-20. Actually there were two distinct mockings of Jesus. The first (cf. Mk 14:65-15:1) took place after the trial of Jesus by the Sanhedrin. The priest's attendants covered Jesus' face, struck him and, in a cruel variant of the child's game blind-man's bluff, said: "Prophesy for us. Who hit you?" The Roman abuse and mockery of Jesus pictured by Honthorst is the second account, which takes place after Pilate sentences Jesus to death. The soldiers ironically mock what Jesus truly is: the messiah king. Raymond Brown, S.S., in his magisterial commentary *The Death of the Messiah*, records several historical parallels in Jesus' time of other condemned prisoners being dressed in royal robes, then stripped, spat upon, scourged and killed.

In the Honthorst painting, the taunting guards look like ordinary twenty-something Dutch males today. The artist resisted demonizing the guards or making them brutish buffoons or grotesque caricatures, as Hieronymus Bosch does in his famous "Mocking of Christ" at the National Gallery in London. Rather than being, as such, especially sadistic, they were merely following the relatively routine cruel punishments of their day. Honthorst also shows Christ as vulnerable. Some famous paintings of the mocking (for example, Anthony van Dyck's at the Princeton Museum of Art) show Jesus seemingly unmoved in his inmost being by the mocking. But the very essence of being a prisoner is to be vulnerable and perhaps even to doubt, at times, one's own very self.

In his meditation on this scene, Kennedy asks: "How many other prisoners, like Jesus, would feel themselves at the very center of ridicule? Being mocked because they were captive, laughed at because they stumbled blindly beneath such power, not able to respond, so those who taunt them are not afraid of them?"

Stephen Barber, S.J., a Catholic chaplain at San Quentin prison, told me that the essence of being a prisoner consists in binding and confinement, the loss of freedom and mobility, being subject at almost all times to the commands of another. But Barber also challenged any simplistic devotional singling out of Jesus the prisoner. Prisoners lose their names and become mere numbers. Part of the humiliation Jesus must have felt was that he saw himself being treated (or mistreated) just like any other prisoner that night (as, for example, the two thieves eventually crucified beside him).

In the way that many Christians reject capital punishment because Jesus was the victim of an unjust capital punishment, many also take to heart Jesus' blessing of those who saw him in prison and visited him (Mt 25:36), recalling that Jesus was a prisoner. They heed the injunction of the Letter to the Hebrews: "Be mindful of prisoners, as if sharing their imprisonment." In one sense, we all do share it.

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BOOKINGS | ANN M. BEGLEY

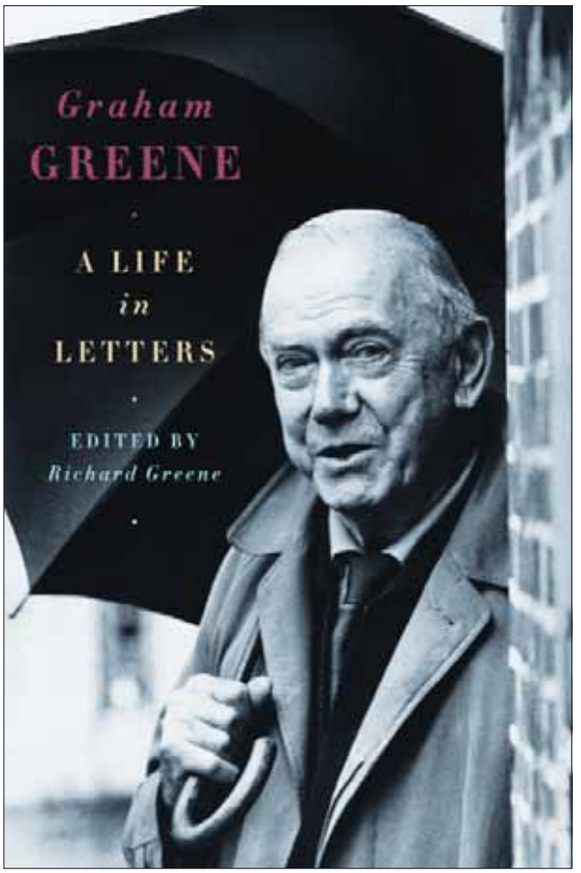
A VACILLATING BELIEVER

As soon as Graham Greene—an English writer of international status and perhaps the most celebrated Catholic layman of the 20th century—died in 1991 at the age of 86, the presses began churning out conflicting accounts of who and what he was. It is a widely held view that to fathom Greene's life, one need only decode his fiction. Indeed, as the Joseph Conrad scholar Norman Sherry illustrates in his authorized biography of Graham Greene, there is a strong affiliation between the personal history of the novelist and the fictive world he created. As he himself proclaimed, "I am my books."

The problem is that the lens through which a reader peers is unique, invariably coated with prejudice of one kind or another: Whereas the Rev. Leopoldo Durán's account (*Graham Greene: Friend and Brother*) approaches hagiography, Michael Sheldon has written (*Graham Greene: The Enemy Within*) what Joyce Carol Oates would call a "pathography," a sinister portrait of a dishonorable man whose entire life was based on deception, his Catholic faith being nothing more than one of the multiple masks that he wore.

Just as the dust had settled and we had come to believe that we—each with his own clouded glass—knew all that we were going to know about the author of *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), along comes *Graham Greene: A Life in Letters* (W. W. Norton, $35). A biography of sorts, constructed in part out of the novelist's own words and replete with photographs, this collection of personal letters (including many that were unavailable to his official biographer) is edited, well documented and engagingly annotated by Richard Greene (no relation), who points out that his subject once estimated that he wrote about 2,000 letters a year. Greene's prose here—in striking contrast to his published writings—tends at times to be flat. We are reminded that letters are generally written in a single draft, and many in

this book were actually dictated and later transcribed by a secretary. They nonetheless are of great interest in that they reveal the novelist's personal, literary, religious and political concerns over a period of 70 years. Greene discusses the craft of writing with some of the outstanding literary figures of his day and describes in detail his travels around the world. The letters also give evidence of his anti-Americanism, his support of the infamous traitor Kim Philby, his inexplicable fondness for certain Latin American dictators and his involvement with British Intelligence—which engendered both *Our Man in Havana* (1958) and *The Human Factor* (1978).



The portrait painted is of an elusive and exceedingly complex, enigmatic, courteous and caring man, an inveterate traveler who was torn apart by longing and brought low by bipolar disorder—which is probably what prompted Malcolm Muggeridge to remark that Greene had a dual personality that he was unable to fuse into any kind of harmony. "Graham was a man of strong appetites," the editor of this volume comments, "often made utterly unmanageable by bipolar illness."

To escape the spiritual angst that tormented him from boyhood on, an inner void bordering on despair that Baudelaire termed ennui and Sherry describes as "a fall in spirit of an unalterable intensity, a kind of plague spot," Greene resorted to a variety of diversions—alcohol, opium, tawdry sexual adventures, attempted suicide and voyages to dangerous areas of the world, "where life," he observed, "was reinforced by the propinquity of death." Writing also was an escape from "the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation." It was perhaps this spiritual blackness—a major theme in this book—together with his sporadic lack of orthodoxy that led some to conclude that Greene's faith was a sham. The love letters—first to Vivien, who became his wife after a two-year courtship, then to the beautiful American Catherine Walston, who pervaded his thoughts for more than a decade—manifest a painful longing for a lasting, reciprocal passion.

Greene's Catholicism has engendered endless controversy. An atheist, he took instruction in the faith—which he would later describe as "a malign virus from which one could never be cured"—to understand better the beliefs of his fiancée and, in short, to please her. Accepting Catholicism on an intellectual level, he was received into the church when he was 22. As he matured, however, he was often referred to as a religious maverick who kept one foot in the church while identifying with such ecclesiastical dissidents as Hans Küng and liberation theologians in Latin America. His fiction reveals a vacillating belief that was, as the author himself strongly suggests, undoubtedly affected by his continual disregard of the church's moral precepts regarding sexuality. With increasing doubt as to the existence of a loving God, he nonetheless continued to attend Mass periodically, eventually describing himself as a "Catholic agnostic." It is worth noting that the unnamed minor character in *The Quiet American* (1955) who, fearful of an imminent death, seeks out a priest to hear his confession, is, Greene's diary reveals, the novelist himself.

Early on, Greene took to writing fast-paced thrillers—"entertainments" he called them. The best known among these are *A Gun for Sale* (1936; U.S. title, *This Gun for Hire*), *The Confidential Agent* (1939) and *The Ministry of Fear* (1943). His first novel with a Catholic theme, *Brighton Rock* (1938), is at the same time an exploration of good and evil and a psychological thriller. In it the author probes "the appalling...mystery of the mercy of God" moving through a ravaged world. It was undoubtedly T. S. Eliot's support of the thriller as a reputable literary form that encouraged Greene to experiment with it.

The travel book *The Lawless Roads* (1939; U.S. title, *Another Mexico*), a report on the persecution of the church in the states of Chiapas and Tabasco by the Socialist government in power, became a sketch book for *The Power and the Glory* (1940), a serious novel that employs all the conventions of a first-rate thriller. In both the fictional and the historical accounts, any semblance of religious

adherence is outlawed, and priests who do not submit to laicization and marriage are summarily executed. It is through the moving story of a priest on the run—the so-called whiskey priest who in a moment of loneliness has fathered a child—that the novelist examines the function of the priesthood as a medium of grace, placing in relief the distinction between the man and his office. *The Power and the Glory* was condemned by the Holy Office on the grounds that the work was injurious to the priesthood and that the book "portrays a state of affairs so paradoxical, so extraordinary, and so erroneous as to disconcert unenlightened persons, who form the majority of readers." The author was instructed not to permit further editions or translations. Greene composed a "casuistical" response, pointing out that he had already sold the translation rights and so no longer had any control over them. He sent a copy of his response to the influential Monsignor Montini (later Pope Paul VI), who defended the book, shielding Greene from the Holy Office. During a private interview, Pope Paul VI told the novelist that there would always be things in his books that some Catholics would find offensive, but that he should not let that bother him. The aim of his novel, Greene explained, was "to oppose the power of the sacraments and the indestructibility of the Church on the one hand with, on the other, the merely temporal power of an essentially Communist state. "

The Vatican quietly dropped the matter. In his lecture "Virtue of Disloyalty" (1969) Greene affirms the necessity of the artist's freedom. Literature has nothing to do with edification, he insists. Catholic novelists (he prefers to say novelists who are Catholic) should, he urges, take Newman as their patron. When defending the teaching of literature in a Catholic university, the cardinal declared that "...if Literature is to be made a study of human nature, you cannot have a Christian Literature. It is a contradiction in terms to attempt a sinless Literature of sinful man."

Greene was sometimes accused of heresy when his characters espoused an unorthodox interpretation of the Catholic creed or value system. The publication of *A Burnt-Out Case* (1961) distressed Evelyn Waugh immensely: he viewed the novel as a confession of disbelief and strongly suggested that the author was "finished as a Catholic." Greene wrote to his friend of many years to assure him that this was not the case; he merely wanted to give expression to various states of belief and disbelief. "If people are so impetuous as to regard this book as a recantation of faith, I cannot help it. Perhaps they will be surprised to see me at Mass."

The End of the Affair (1951), clearly a close transcript of Greene's relationship with Catherine Walston, deals with the secret love affair of a middle-aged novelist, who narrates the story, and a married woman. A third protagonist, though invisible and mute, the Deus Absconditus, plays the strongest role. As in Paul Claudel's *The City*, some of the writings of Evelyn Waugh and Marguerite Yourcenar, as well as much of the work of François Mauriac—who maintained that there is only one Love—*The End of the Affair* expresses the belief that human love, which cannot satisfy the universal inner longing, is in some arcane

Jesus and the Muses

Whoever hears voices has heard the muses.
Sometimes the devil whispers with malice.
With hope, the mad poet listens for Jesus.

Often it's chaos, at times it's curses.
The devil's breath causes fear and injustice.
Whoever hears voices has heard the muses.

It's what one hears, but not what one chooses:
no single song but a tangle of voices.
With hope, the mad poet listens for Jesus.

No one can say it's the thoughts he deduces—
for him there is no other choice.
Whoever hears voices has heard the muses.

He doesn't speak of what the mind confuses
with sin. He learns to absolve and rejoice.
With hope, the mad poet listens for Jesus.

Some call him saint, others sinner. His verses
display and dispel his forms of madness.
Whoever hears voices has heard the muses,
with hope, the mad poet listens for Jesus.

LEONARD CIRINO

LEONARD CIRINO, *a poet and editor of a small press, lives in Springfield, Ore.*

way a search for God.

For tax purposes, reasons of health and a desire to be closer to Yvonne Cloetta, with whom he had formed a relationship that lasted over three decades, Greene moved to France in 1966, maintaining apartments in Paris and Antibes as well as a house in Anacapri. Shedding dogma after dogma, he was wont to say that he had "excommunicated" himself and joined "the Foreign Legion of the Church." In his old age, however, Greene returned to the sacraments and together with Durán made an annual retreat at a Trappist monastery. (It is their friendship that forms the basis for the picaresque novel *Monsignor Quixote* [1982], a work that deals with age, death and illusion.) The editor remarks that there are those who are of the opinion that Greene did this just to please his clerical friend. Perhaps. Months before he died, the novelist confided to the literary scholar Alberto Huerta, S.J., whose opinions about politics in Central America he shared, "Really the only link I feel I have with the Catholic Church now is the Jesuit Order." Nevertheless following Greene's instructions, as he lay dying of leukemia at a hospital on the shores of Lake Geneva, Durán was summoned to his side to administer the last rites of the church.

Graham Greene's vast oeuvre consists of more than 25 novels or entertainments, novellas, short stories, plays, children's books, numerous literary and political essays, a biography, screen scenarios, travel books, hundreds of book and film reviews and two volumes of autobiography (in which very little of his personal life is revealed). Although he explored a variety of genres, it is mainly for his fiction that he is known—as well as the masterly film scripts for "The Fallen Idol" (1948) and "The Third Man" (1949). The recipient of a plethora of awards, he was repeatedly considered for the highest literary honor, the Nobel Prize, but each time, this editor notes, his nomination was blocked by "the anti-Catholic Artur Lundkvist." Still, François Mauriac's Catholicism did not stop him from receiving this honor. There is another explanation: some academic critics, ignoring Greene's deep spiritual insight and artistic intensity, dismiss his work as mere entertainment because he used the thriller as a vehicle of serious thought.

ON THE WEB

Clips from the films of Graham Greene.

americamagazine.org

Considered to be one of the greatest Catholic writers of the century, Graham Greene continually disputed church teaching, chafing under papal infallibility. He disapproved of the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, but was drawn to the Mass. As he aged he explained that he had less and less belief every day but more and more faith. Eventually even that seemed to slip away. The malign virus seemingly cured, or almost so, he nonetheless repeatedly declared, "I don't believe that death is the end of everything." Readers of this volume may find Greene's spiritual ambivalence unsettling, but whatever his personal spiritual struggle was, the work he produced is, paradoxically, that of a Catholic writer.

ANN M. BEGLEY, *an essayist and reviewer, has taught at universities on both the east and west coasts.*

BOOKS | PATRICK SAMWAY

SOUTHERN EXPRESSIONS

FLANNERY

A Life of Flannery O'Connor

By Brad Gooch

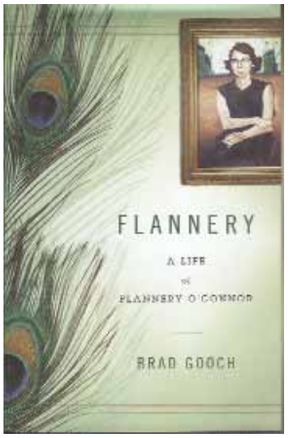
Little, Brown and Company. 464p $30
ISBN 9780316000666

Robert Giroux, Flannery O'Connor's editor at Farrar, Straus & Giroux, thoroughly enjoyed talking about his noted author. He told me on several occasions (and always with a slight chuckle afterward) about a visit to see Flannery and her mother at their farm "Andalusia" outside Milledgeville, Ga. Rising early and wanting some coffee, he entered the kitchen, only to find Mrs. O'Connor preparing his breakfast. "Mr. Giroux," she said, "why doesn't Flannery write about nice people?" When Mr. Giroux tried to explain that Flannery was a nice person and that she wrote from the depths of her imagination and thus her characters actually were nice, Mrs. O'Connor would have none of this pseudo-literary psychobabble. As she left to feed the peacocks, Flannery entered with a question: "Bob, what did THE MOTHER say this morning?"

This anecdote reveals a good deal about Flannery O'Connor and her imaginative fiction, particularly the unusual (and sometimes freakish) characters in her works and the tensions brought about by the seeming omnipresence of her mother. (O'Connor's father died at age 45 in 1941, when she was 15.) In his excellent new biography of O'Connor, Brad Gooch, professor of English at William Patterson University in New Jersey and author of a biography of Frank O'Hara, often probes the relationship between O'Connor's life and her fiction as he highlights the various facets of O'Connor's complex personality.

Southernly polite, standoffish,

highly creative, sometimes overtly critical of others, devotedly Catholic, sardonic, witty, philosophically grounded, far-seeing and drained by the effects of lupus, which developed when she was 25 years old. She painstakingly observed the world around her: from her earliest days in Savannah, then Milledgeville, where she spent her teenage years and also went to college, to her apprenticeship at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, then at Yaddo, the artists' colony in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., to her brief, but important time with the Robert Fitzgerald family in Redding, Conn., before her return to Milledgeville.



O'Connor, for example, partially based her story "The Displaced Person" (1954) on a Polish family, the Matysiaks, who arrived at Andalusia in 1953 (Jan, the father, who had been incarcerated in a German labor farm in World War II; Zofia, the mother; 12-year-old, English-speaking Alfred; and his younger sister, Hedwig). With information supplied by Alfred; Gooch records the Matysiak family's interaction with the O'Connors, especially Flannery's mother, as well as the role played by the Rev. John Toomey, then involved in the local Catholic Resettlement Commission, and two African-American farm workers, portrayed in the story as Astor and Sulk. In addition, O'Connor looked to the Stevens family (a dairyman, employed by Mrs. O'Connor at Andalusia, his Protestant wife and two daughters) in portraying the Shortleys. In this story, when we see the widowed Mrs. McIntyre on her deathbed (no doubt a projection of Mrs. O'Connor), we are led to a private place within ourselves where we need to consider whether Mrs. McIntyre (and, by extension, ourselves) understands that we are all displaced people on this earth awaiting the glorious return of the Lord, proleptically seen in the transforming beauty of a peacock's unfolding tail feathers.

In another life-based story, "Good Country People," written in spite of her advancing lupus, O'Connor portrays a one-legged, unemployed female with a Ph.D. in philosophy, who has nothing to do but stay at home and irritate her mother. When a Bible salesman, Manley Pointer (does one need to highlight the significance of this name?), arrives at the Hopewell house, Joy, who has changed her name to Hulga, much to the annoyance of her mother, joins her new friend in an excursion to a nearby barn, complete with a romantic hayloft. As Manley attempts to become intimate with Joy/Hulga, even asking her to remove her prosthesis, a private part of her she has not shared with others, he reveals unexpectedly that he has a history of promiscuity and that his hollowed-out Bible contains evidence of previous conquests—condoms, raunchy playing cards and a flask of whiskey. Helpless and abandoned, Joy/Hulga needs to consider whether she should, in the future, reach out to another man to experience love—or maybe withdraw within herself because the effort to try again is simply not worth it.

Gooch's research for this story, based on that initially done by Mark Bosco, S.J., of Loyola University Chicago, shows the importance of Erik Langkjaer, a native of Copenhagen who emigrated to the United States and worked for Harcourt Brace as a college textbook salesman. When Flannery first met Erik in April 1953,

she was clearly taken with him and relished their time together, especially their drives through Baldwin County in his car. When he decided to break off their friendship and return to Europe a little over a year later, O'Connor, then using a cane, felt betrayed, as revealed in their short-lived correspondence. In early 1955, O'Connor took only four days to write this story; her intense feelings about Langkjaer quickly found their outlet. As she later said in a note to him, "I feel like if you were here we could talk about a million years without stopping."

Perhaps, too, Joy/Hulga needed to meditate—as did O'Connor throughout her adult life—on one of Manley Pointer's throw-away lines: "You never know when you need the word of God." Cagey, but not too subtle in her fiction, O'Connor appreciated the works of Christian writers, philosophers and theologians, especially Louis Bouyer, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., Yves Congar, O.P., Étienne Gilson, Jean Guitton, Henri DeLubac, S.J., Jacques Maritain, François Mauriac, George Tavard, A.A., Charles Péguy, Romano Guardini and William Lynch, S.J. She had the habit in her later years of reading some of the writings of Thomas Aquinas, not seeking academic expertise (she called herself a "Thomistic hillbilly"), but as someone who took her Catholicism very seriously.

Though Gooch acknowledges this dimension of O'Connor's spirituality, he rarely enters into a discussion of its significance; he avoids asking how these writers influenced O'Connor. What views of these writers did she understand and incorporate into her own theological perspective? It should be noted that O'Connor, who died at age 39 on Aug. 3, 1964, did not read the decrees of the Second Vatican Council, which concluded on December 8, 1965. Given this, one could well ask: What theological tenets were most important to her? In short, Gooch would have done a service to his readers to explain in greater detail O'Connor's theological views as relating to what she read and studied and how they were manifested in her fiction, much of which seems focused on Southern expressions of the Baptist Church rather than those of the Catholic Church.

Gooch, as he acknowledges, builds on the initial investigative work done by Jean W. Cash in her *Flannery O'Connor: A Life* (2002). Two other biographies of O'Connor are anticipated. William Sessions, professor emeritus of English at Georgia State University in Atlanta, has announced that he is writing an O'Connor biography. Given his friendship with O'Connor and a number of her friends and acquaintances, his biography, when finished, should have those up-close moments of insight not afforded to someone who never knew his or her subject. In addition, Sally Fitzgerald, a close friend of O'Connor from their time together in Redding, gathered what many presume is an enormous amount of material on O'Connor's life. After Fitzgerald's death in June 2000 at age 83, no one outside the immediate family seemed to know the status of this biography. Mr. Giroux, who looked forward to editing Fitzgerald's biography, told me in 1997 that he had never seen even a word of this work. Yet the prize-winning collection of O'Connor's letters (*The Habit of Being*, 1978), edited by Fitzgerald, is clear evidence of her scholarly and devoted affection for her subject.

Such biographical attention to Flannery O'Connor leaves little doubt about her status in the American literary canon.

PATRICK SAMWAY, S.J., *the author of* Walker Percy: A Life *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux), is professor of English at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia.*

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LETTERS

Realpolitik

I am a Venezuelan missionary priest working in the United States, and I make frequent visits to my home country because of my ministry. I deeply agree with your editorial on Venezuela ("A Future With Mr. Chávez," 3/16). I would like your readers to focus their attention not on whether Hugo Chávez is a democratic ruler or a dictator, but instead on what U.S. policies toward Venezuela and Latin America are needed to avoid the same errors made in the past. As your editorial states, "What is required now is a new policy that is balanced and realistic."

(REV.) ALEJANDRO LOPEZ-CARDINALE
Plainfield, N.Y.

Dictatorship or Democracy?

I eagerly read your editorial on Venezuela ("A Future With Mr. Chávez," 3/16), expecting to find an enlightened Catholic position from the brothers of the murdered Jesuits of El Salvador. But I was disappointed by your narrow definition of what constitutes a democracy. You appear to give more weight to the rights of the rich to their already-substantial private property than to the rights of the poor to food, health care and education.

Hugo Chávez has brought more "good news to the poor" in Venezuela than have any of the oligarchs of the past century. You do him a disservice by dismissing him as a "dictator."

REG McQUAID
Toronto, Ont.

Future Shock

How refreshing to read Mary M. Foley's article on lay pastoral leadership ("Exceptional Pastoring," 2/9), and what a contrast her story offers to the depressing stories of parishes closing for lack of priests! Some of these parishes are vibrant, financially viable communities, but they are closed because some bishop decrees that only a priest can be the leader of a parish community.

The future is clear. Either the church will keep retreating and shrinking as the number of priests declines, or the role of the laity will expand to ensure that the mission of the church will be carried on. May the Holy Spirit help us.

JOHN PELISSIER
Amherst, Va.

Identity Crisis

I could not help but smile as I read Mary M. Foley's article. It was one that several women in my diocese could have written. It is an exciting time to be a woman in the church; we are modern-day pioneers.

With the U.S. bishops' document, *Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*, an invitation was made to the laity to discern vocations to lay ecclesial ministry, either as parish life coordinators, pastoral associates or directors of religious education.

Foley's article addressed the fears of many who think the identity of both priests and parishioners is threatened by these new vocations. We must never forget that we are all in this together as followers of Christ. God bless the bishops and priests who have a new vision for the church.

ROSIE RUNDELL
Manhattan, Kan.

Embracing God's Gifts

Re Mary M. Foley's story on lay pastoral leadership: It is a tragedy that the church cannot embrace gifts of leadership and service that are so selflessly given by talented and gifted women. What are we Catholics afraid of? Are we so narrow-minded that we think God parcels out gifts of ministry and leadership only to a few men? If we do, then we limit God's kingdom among us.

NANCY HAMMACK
Smithfield, Va.

Eloquence

As a cradle Catholic, I am always impressed by those who come to the faith as adults by the use of their intellect and, of course, the grace of God. Like Walker Percy and G. K. Chesterton, Karen Sue Smith ("Bon Appetit!" 3/16) expresses her convictions eloquently.

JOSEPH HAMEL, M.D.
Minneapolis, Minn.

Open Book

Thanks to Barbara E. Reid, O.P., for her excellent reflections in the Word column. I find her articles thoughtful, inclusive, prayerful and scholarly. And thanks to the editors for selecting such

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a fine person to open up the Scriptures for us each week.

BARBARA SHEEHAN, S.P.
Chicago, Ill.

R.I.P.

Re your editorial on a truth commission to investigate the Bush administration ("Truth and Prosecution," 3/23): For God's sake, you've gotten your precious left-wing administration. Tell yourself "All's well that ends well," and let the poor man rest in peace.

JACK SLADE
Fairfield, Conn.

Sacrilegious

Thank you for "Animal Welfare," by Kate Blake (3/23). I agree with Blake about the need for ethical treatment of animals, and I hope that readers will take her words to heart. I am a strict vegetarian, and I hope that all animals will be treated with kindness and compassion and cared for as God's creatures. Anyone disputing that we should treat them any differently from the way we treat all natural gifts from God, with care and love, and who feel that this is somehow a sacrilege, should consider the life and words of St. Francis of Assisi, who loved all living creatures.

MICHELLE BENEDICT
Leonardo, N.J.

Nasty, Brutish and Short

I very much agree with Kate Blake's reflections on treatment of animals ("Animal Welfare," 3/23). I found her article supportive of my own attempts to wean myself "off the grid" of the industrial food complex, especially where it colludes in systems that brutalize animals. We cannot escape our connection with creation.

LORI HURLEY
New York, N.Y.

Time to Move on

I found "Then There Was One," by Daniel P. Sulmasy, O.F.M., M.D. (3/16) a very interesting story about the future of Catholic health care, but I drew completely different conclusions than the author. I see a parallel between the situation of Catholic health care institutions and the mounting financial struggles of Catholic elementary schools and high schools. I think it is time to question the value of these systems in light of contemporary reality. We are not an immigrant church any longer. We do not have many nuns who work for low wages anymore.

In my experiences with hospitals, Catholic ones are not different from others. Yes, they have well-crafted mission statements, but not everyone on staff is capable of or even interested in living them out. It is time we realized that the parish is the fundamental entity of Catholicism, and focused our resources there. A new form of health care ministry, and certainly a new form of education, can be brought to life in that setting.

PEG CONWAY
Cincinnati, Ohio

Rethinking Mission

Re the insightful article by Daniel P. Sulmasy, O.F.M., M.D., on the decline of Catholic health care in New York: I wonder if the time has not come when the Catholic health care system should rethink its medical mission, downsizing from the kind of institutions that can compete technologically with other hospitals that enjoy a stronger financial base. That way, they can devote themselves to meeting the type of median health care needs that are the concern of the average Catholic, and indeed of the average person.

SEBASTIAN MACDONALD, C.P.
Chicago, Ill.

New Undertakings

Thanks to Daniel P. Sulmasy for a fine analysis in "Then There was One." I am convinced that even though we are no longer an immigrant community, our Catholic institutions still have a role to play, especially in a society that is dominated by huge corporations (the recent banking scandals are a case in point). Our educational and health care institutions are both important social forces and means by which we form the laity more deeply in their faith.

In all our sponsored ministries, we need to move beyond a false inclusivism that prevents us from saying anything substantive about our own faith tradition or allowing it to make a difference in the way we "do business." This is an entirely new undertaking for us. Catholics have not been accustomed to exercising this kind of responsibility for our ministries, but they are going to have to learn to do so.

CHARLIE BOUCHARD, O.P.
St. Louis, Mo.

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Love to the End

PALM SUNDAY (B), APRIL 5, 2009

READINGS: MK 11:1-10; IS 50:4-7; PS 22:8-9, 17-24; PHIL 2:6-11; MK 14:1–15:47

EASTER SUNDAY (B), APRIL 12, 2009

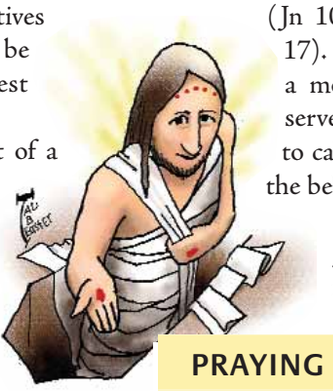
READINGS: ACTS 10:34, 37-43; PS 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-24; COL 3:1-4; JN 20:1-9

"He loved them to the end" (Jn 13:1)

In this holiest of weeks, we could not have two more contrasting portraits of Jesus than Mark's account of the passion, read on Palm Sunday, and John's on Good Friday.

Mark's version is stark, depicting a very human Jesus. In Gethsemane Jesus falls prostrate in deep distress. Three times he begs God to let the cup pass him by; three times his pleas are met with silence. At earlier crucial turning points, Jesus had concrete signs of God's presence and affirmation (an overshadowing cloud and a heavenly voice), but in Gethsemane there is only terrifying silence. Before him, across the Kidron Valley, rises the Temple, with its officials who want him dead. Behind him, beyond the Mount of Olives, is the Judean desert. He could yet slip away and avoid death for the time being. What was God's will? Jesus finds no discernible response; all he can do is rely on his previous experiences of God's faithful love. Not knowing how God will bring the divine will for life and love to fullness through his brutal execution, Jesus chooses to remain in trust.

As the Sanhedrin and Pilate interrogate Jesus, he remains silent, like the Servant in Is 53:7. Throughout his ministry, Jesus was not silent in the face of injustice; he denounced it and acted to rectify it. Here, his refusal to engage with representatives of corrupt systems can be read as a silent protest against them.



The desolate portrait of a Jesus abandoned continues unrelieved as Mark recounts the mockery by the soldiers, the march to the place of execution, and the verbal and physical abuse at Golgotha. Jesus' final words are an anguished cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" By invoking Psalm 22, Mark helps us to see that even when one cannot sense God's presence or understand how God's saving purposes are at work in excruciating suffering, the Holy One never abandons any beloved daughter or son.

The mystery deepens at the empty tomb. The enigmatic ending of Mark's Gospel (16:1-7), which is proclaimed at the Easter Vigil, does not explain suffering and death, but insists that they do not have the last word. The Gospel ends on a note of profound mystery and awe, inviting us to abandon ourselves into the unfathomable love of Holy Mystery, following the Risen One, and trusting in his transformative power at work within us. Like the women at the tomb, we too are to announce this mysterious, abiding love.

A far different portrait of Jesus is offered to us in the Fourth Gospel. Here Jesus knows all that is to happen and even seems to direct the action. In the footwashing that we re-enact ritually on Holy Thursday, Jesus interprets the meaning of his death through an acted parable: "he loved them to the end [*eis telos*]." The Greek expression has a double meaning: "completely" and "to the end." Jesus demonstrates that his death is his free choice to lay down his life for his friends out of love (Jn 10:17-18; 13:1-20; 15:13-17). What he does for them is a model of how they are to serve one another and even go to calamity's depths for any of the beloved.

In the garden, the Johannine Jesus does not fall prostrate or beg God to take away the cup. Rather, it is the soldiers who fall to the ground when Jesus speaks the revelatory words, "I AM." He is eager to move toward his "hour," saying, "Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me?" The disciples do not abandon Jesus, but are ready to defend him. It is Jesus, however, who protects them, insisting that the arresting party take only him. At the trial before Pilate, Jesus does not remain silent. Rather, it is he who conducts the proceedings, and the procurator who is under scrutiny. In the end, Pilate brings condemnation upon himself, because he cannot decide in

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Ask Jesus to help you abide with him in the transformative power of Holy Mystery, which is beyond explanation.
- Let Christ show you how to stand, like the Galilean women, with victimized persons, to protest death-dealing powers, and to bring healing ointment and words of restorative hope.

ART: TAD DUNNE

BARBARA E. REID, O.P., *is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill.*

favor of the one who is the true king before him.

In John's account of the crucifixion, Jesus appears to be reigning already from the cross. At the foot of the cross stands not only Mary Magdalene, as in all the Gospels, but also Jesus' mother and the beloved disciple. These two are never named in the Gospel and allow us to identify with their symbolic roles. Jesus speaks to them, entrusting those who are bound to him by blood ties to those who are "his own" through discipleship. All are embraced as his kin. The last words of Jesus are a confident declaration: "It is finished" (*tetelestai*). The Greek word (19:30) has the same root as *telos* (13:1), tying the whole passion narrative together as the completion of Jesus' mission to love to the full, to the end. A unique detail in Jn 19:34 gives us one other powerful image by which to interpret Jesus' death. A soldier pierces Jesus' side, from which flow blood and water, the same liquids that accompany childbirth. Jesus' death is not the end of life but the portal to a new birth and endless life.

At the empty tomb, the driving question is: where is Jesus now? The answer comes in two parts. On Easter morning, we hear the first half of the answer: he has returned to the Father (20:1-9). On Tuesday in the Octave of Easter we hear the second half. Jesus tells Mary Magdalene not to cling to him as the earthly person she knew previously. He directs her to go to the gathered community of the brothers and sisters: it is there that he is to be found alive (20:11-18).

BARBARA E. REID

Note: The Word column for the Second Sunday of Easter (April 19) will not appear in the next print edition of **America**, dated April 13, which will be a special issue celebrating **America**'s centennial. The column will appear on **America**'s Web site on April 3 and in the print edition dated April 20-27.

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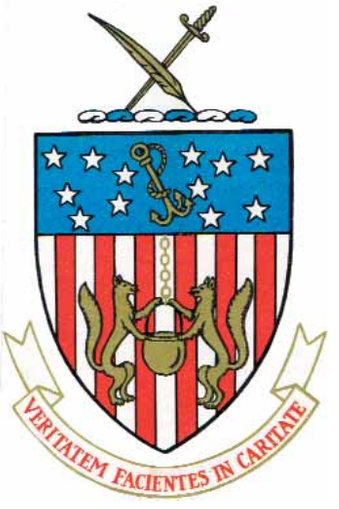

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