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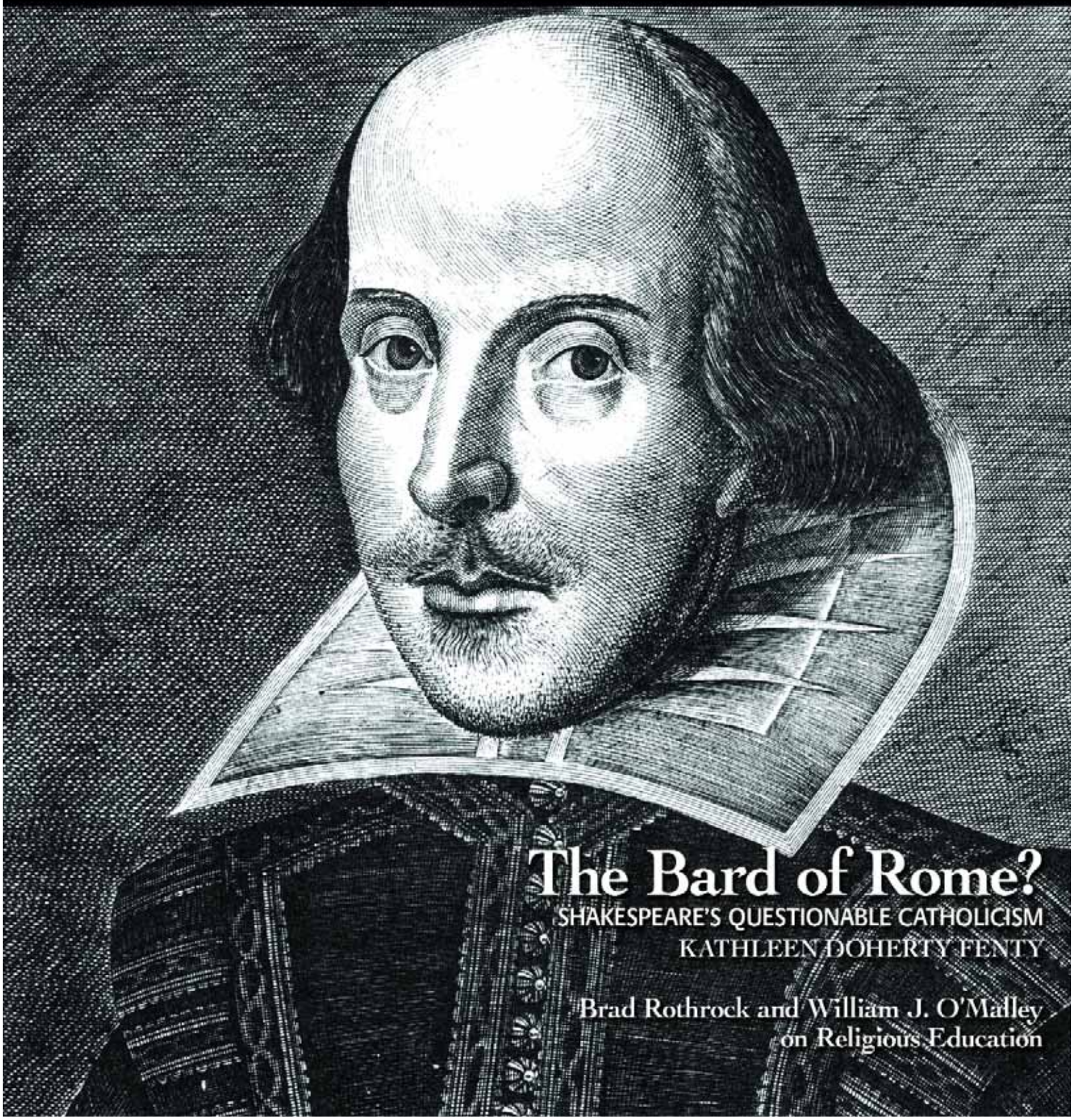

The Bard of Rome?

SHAKESPEARE'S QUESTIONABLE CATHOLICISM

KATHLEEN DOHERTY FENTY

Brad Rothrock and William J. O'Malley on Religious Education

OF MANY THINGS

I am not a natural athlete. Like most Catholic school students, I played C.Y.O. basketball, though I did little to distinguish myself on the hardwood. In high school I tried track and field, and then tennis, but I did not fall in love with either sport. My tennis racket sits unmolested in my garage, and though I still lace up my running shoes from time to time, I do not crave a daily run as many friends do.

So it is with some surprise that I now find myself, in my mid-30s, with a new love: cycling. I bought my first road bike last summer and have put over 2,000 miles on it so far. In the spring I trained with the New York Cycle Club, learning how to ride with a group and exploring routes in New Jersey and Westchester County. On our final ride we climbed the hills of Harriman State Park, crossed the Bear Mountain Bridge and cruised into Cold Spring, N.Y. Even on a foggy day it was, in more ways than one, a breathtaking experience.

Cycling is often described as addictive, and I suppose I display symptoms of the addict. I subscribe to Bicycling magazine, and I enjoy spending part of my weekend at a local bike shop, contemplating which gadget to purchase next. In July I followed Contador and Armstrong on the roads of France, and last month I tuned in for the rain-shortened Tour of Ireland.

If I had to name the reasons for my obsession, I would begin with the thrill of discovery. I have lived in New York for most of my life, but riding through it on a bike has introduced me to parts of the city I had never encountered before. My first ride down Manhattan's West side bike path was revelatory. Along one stretch I passed the charred remains of the Hudson's waterfront piers and then underneath the cathedral ceiling of the West Side Highway before emerging into sunlight again at West 57th Street. I had been at that spot many times before, but almost always in a car, and the idea that I could arrive there by my own means was indescribably exciting.

Riding alone allows for this kind of meditation. Riding with a group offers different rewards. On a physical level it is not as draining, since you can draft behind your companions and cruise at speeds that would be difficult to sustain on your own. Group riding also forces you to look out for one another, to make sure you do not drop a rider on a tough stretch of road. Of course, some cyclists enjoy breaking away from the pack, and group rides have taught me a little bit about what kind of rider I am. When a cyclist pushes ahead, my competitive streak kicks in, and I pedal furiously to keep up. Yet I also find myself checking behind me, to make sure the group is intact. That mixture of drive and empathy is a stark manifestation of my own personality traits—an insight that had not ripened in my mind until I took up the sport.

Fall is the cyclist's favorite season. The cool weather and autumn leaves lure us out of bed and onto the roads, where legs are strong after a summer of training. Many riders leave the city for the countryside, and I too will find time to climb the Palisades and explore the farmland of central New Jersey. My favorite ride of the year, however, is only a few miles from my apartment.

The Tour de Bronx is a 40-mile circuit of my native borough. It starts in the shadow of Yankee Stadium, hugs Long Island Sound and traverses the hills of Riverdale before looping back to the New York Botanical Garden. New York cyclists like to describe the roads of the Bronx as junk miles because they are clogged with traffic and spotted with potholes. For me they pulse with music and life, and for a few hours in October I will find myself, once again, in communion with the place my family calls home.

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Cover: Engraving of William Shakespeare from the First Folio of the year 1623.
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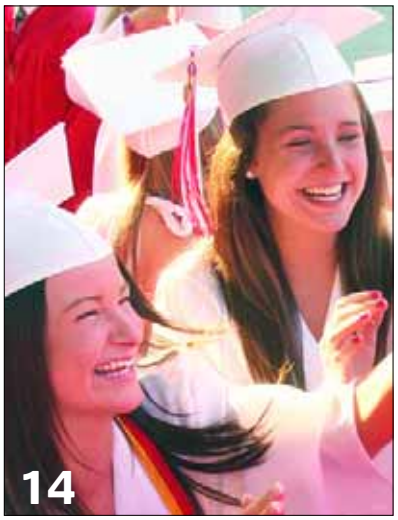

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Thomas Massaro, S.J., considers the **legacy of Robert McNamara** on our podcast, and James T. Fisher reports from the New York waterfront on the **Jesuit labor priests**. Plus, the Rev. Robert Barron examines the philosophical questions posed by the **film "District 9."**
All at americamagazine.org

The New Old Liturgy

Catholics with a special interest in liturgical matters could be forgiven for scratching their heads last month over several news stories that centered on the celebration of the Mass. First, Bishop Edward Slattery of Tulsa, Okla., announced that in his cathedral he would henceforth be celebrating Masses *ad orientem*, that is, facing East with his back to the people. Explaining his decision, the bishop called the Second Vatican Council's "innovation" of the priest facing the congregation a "serious rupture with the Church's ancient tradition." On the other hand, a few weeks before, Vincent Nichols, the new archbishop of Westminster, wrote the following to the Latin Mass Society regarding the Tridentine Rite: "The view that the ordinary form of the Mass, in itself, is in some way deficient finds no place here." The Tablet of London praised Nichols for a "timely display of clear leadership" in the matter. But then, in a letter to The Tablet, one of Nichols's auxiliary bishops wrote that the archbishop had not intended to marginalize the Tridentine Rite in any way.

These recent developments fall under the rubric of reaction to *Summorum Pontificum*, issued *motu proprio* by Pope Benedict XVI in 2007, which encouraged greater use of the old rite. It has been taken as a signal of the Vatican's approval of forms of the Mass other than what most Catholics are now used to seeing every Sunday—in the vernacular, with the priest facing the people. Thus bishops are now navigating among several desires: to hew to tradition, to respond to the needs of the faithful and to listen to the pope. But another voice also needs to be heard: that of the Second Vatican Council, which clearly opted for encouraging the Mass that we have come to consider familiar.

Repentance for My Lai

William Calley has apologized for his leadership role in the massacre in 1968 of over 300 civilians in the village of My Lai in Vietnam. Now 66, he told Kiwanis Club members in Greater Columbus, Ga., in August, "There is not a day that goes by that I do not feel remorse for what happened that day."

A young lieutenant at the time, he received a life sentence, but President Nixon reduced it to three years in Calley's apartment at nearby Fort Benning. Calley was the sole U.S. army officer convicted, although over 20 soldiers were arrested. Seeing bodies, three helicopter crew members tried to stop the massacre, landing their helicopter between a group of still living women and children and U.S. troops who were ready to fire on them. After testifying before a Congressional committee about the atrocities, the helicopter crew received hate mail and death threats.

One survivor, Pham Thanh Cong, who saw his mother and brothers killed in the massacre, said he accepted the apology, but "his apologies come too late." Cong, director of a small museum in My Lai, told the news agency AFP, "We want him to come back...and see things here. Maybe he has repented for his crimes." War-related massacres have always been common, but apologies have been very rare. In the case of My Lai, the conscience of the individual most directly responsible prompted long-overdue repentance. We hope other deeds of repentance and signs of reconciliation will follow, not only for atrocities in Vietnam, but for crimes of war committed elsewhere as well.

Wheels of Misfortune

Every year drunk driving causes more than 17,000 fatalities and 500,000 injuries. Alcohol-related fatalities in the past 25 years, according to the Web site AlcoholAlert.com, total well over half a million. A recent case in upstate New York has drawn extensive media coverage and elicited public outrage. Returning with her children and nieces from a camping trip, a young mother drove the wrong way on a parkway, crashing head-on into a vehicle carrying three men. Eight lives were lost in an instant. Since the driver herself was killed, no criminal penalties can be imposed.

But what about the drunk driver who survives? States use varying criteria to impose penalties. In a case from 2006, an intoxicated young man drove the wrong way on an expressway and hit a limousine head-on, killing the driver and decapitating a young flower girl returning from a wedding. Found guilty of two murders, he was sentenced to 18-to-25 years. But penalties meted out when there is no fatality often range from a slap on the wrist to a few months in prison.

In response to demands for stiffer penalties, some states are now drafting harsher legislation and calling for mandatory installation of ignition interlocks after a person's first violation. The driver must blow into the device, which then registers blood alcohol level and renders the vehicle inoperable if the driver fails the test. This year 21 states have passed new legislation about driving while under the influence of alcohol (see Dui.DrivingLaws.org). Still, the number of accidents reportedly holds steady: our nation's highways are becoming killing fields. Government agencies, legislators and prosecutors must change their approach to the problem—and soon.

Camelot's End

When the history of the United States Senate is taught 100 years from now, the syllabus will be organized around six names: Clay, Calhoun, Webster, Lafollette, Taft and Edward M. Kennedy. Ted Kennedy was arguably the most effective U.S. senator of the last century. His name graces nearly 1,000 laws, 300 of which he wrote himself, including some of the most far-reaching and lasting legislation of the postwar period: the Civil Rights Act, the Americans With Disabilities Act, immigration reform, children's health care, the Family and Medical Leave Act.

He was the third-longest serving U.S. senator, yet his success cannot be attributed simply to his 47-year tenure. Unlike his brothers, Kennedy possessed the character of a legislator: a tenacious will, a keen, tactical mind and patience to match his passion. His death on Aug. 25 silenced an unrelenting advocate for the nation's poor and marginalized, a lifelong champion for universal health care and a vehement opponent of war as an instrument of foreign policy.

As the nation's gaze was again directed to Arlington National Cemetery, where the Kennedys had assembled to bury the last of four brothers, we were reminded that Ted Kennedy's death also severed our most visible remaining link to another era: a time when Catholics had finally found their way in national politics, on a path that had led to the White House. As the senator's hearse paused at the steps of the U.S. Senate in a final tribute, we had a moment to reflect on how dramatically Washington has changed since it first welcomed the president's youngest brother in 1962. Some of that change has been for the better, including a Senate that looks more like America than it did in Ted Kennedy's earliest days.

Yet that increasing diversity has been accompanied by a dramatic decline in gentility, one of the hallmarks of true statesmanship. Kennedy's legislative career began in a capitol in which partisans vigorously debated, but civility nearly always prevailed. This ethos shaped both his public and private lives. Kennedy's capacity for friendship was legendary; he numbered his friends in the thousands. They came from both sides of the Senate aisle, from America's boardrooms as well as its union halls, from the mastheads of both The New Republic and The National Review. His death was mourned by those both at the center and at the margins of national life. His talent for building effective coalitions is already greatly missed.

Like his five illustrious predecessors in the U.S. Senate, indeed like all of us, Kennedy's life, in public as well as in private, was a mix of light and shadow. Yet unlike most of us, his successes and failures were on constant public display. His heroic defense of civil rights, for instance, even in the face of raging mobs during Boston's school busing crisis, was accompanied by his tragic support for abortion virtually on demand. His courage during the depths of his harrowing, public mourning for his brothers was followed by moral and political disaster at Chappaquiddick and, later, in Palm Beach. It was obvious that he knew something of sin and suffering. In the end it seemed he had also learned something about redemption. His second marriage, in 1992, to a spirited Louisianan, Victoria Reggie, appeared to rescue him from the worst in himself and the ghosts of his past. It also brought new luster to his virtues.

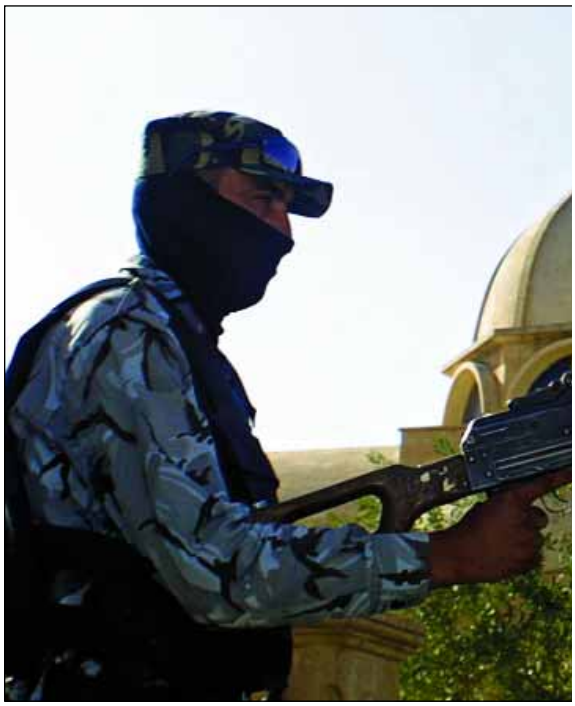
One of the last survivors of America's most famous Catholic family, he rarely spoke openly about his faith. At Kennedy's graveside, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick read from the senator's recent letter to Pope Benedict XVI: "I know that I have been an imperfect human being," Kennedy wrote, "but with the help of my faith, I have tried to right my path."

Ted Kennedy had a complicated relationship with his church. Her faith was his own, he said, sustaining him through more tragedy than anyone should bear in a lifetime. The Sermon on the Mount and the church's social teaching inspired his public life. Until his death, however, he remained at odds with some of those very same teachings. "I have always tried to be a faithful Catholic, Your Holiness," Kennedy wrote, "and though I have fallen short through human failings, I have never failed to believe and respect the fundamental teachings."

In this final sentiment, perhaps, Ted Kennedy was not unusual, but simply one among many contemporary American Catholics who struggle to navigate the tension between their faith beliefs and their civic ideals and obligations. America is a moral complex in which truth and freedom appear in perpetual tension. This is truer today than ever before. Perhaps no one knew that better than Ted Kennedy, whose life was as complicated, as tragic and ultimately as inspiring as the place and the times in which he lived.

MIDDLE EAST

Arab Christians Face New Wave of Violence



In its 10th pastoral letter, the Council of Catholic Patriarchs of the Middle East examines the challenges facing Arab Christians across the region. The council issued the letter at a time this summer when Iraq was suffering new waves of bombings against Christian churches in Baghdad and in the Kurdish north. Entitled *The Christian Arab Confronts the Challenges of Today*, the letter was released in Arabic and French.

The patriarchs continue to regard Christians as integral members of the Arab society, who hope to be equal members of their respective communities. While they regard Islam as a formative force in the Arab world, they see a shared future for Christians and Muslims if together they "form a common front to challenge new extremist movements which are a threat to all, Christians and Muslims alike."

Long-term Developments. The current troubles, the patriarchs suggest, began in 1967 with the Six-Day Arab-Israeli war, followed by the Lebanese civil war, the Iraq-Iran war, the first Persian Gulf war and the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. At the same time, they explain, the Arab world has suffered from underdevelopment, demographic expansion and the denial of rights by authoritarian governments.

Christians have suffered from these conditions along with their majority Muslim neighbors. These pressures, the council observes, result in emigration and sale of ancestral lands, hollowing out the Christian churches of the Middle East (Copts, Maronites, Melkites, Syrians, Chaldeans, Armenians and Latins, or Roman Catholics).

As religious minorities, the patriarchs report, Christians have also often suffered from discrimination and persecution. Their neighbors do not regard them as integral members of society, "as citizens, with the same rights and duties" as the majority but as "a people apart." With the rise of extremist religious politics, moreover, they find that despite their efforts to participate in their societies and appropriate their Arab identity, they must live on the margin, even in modern Arab states.

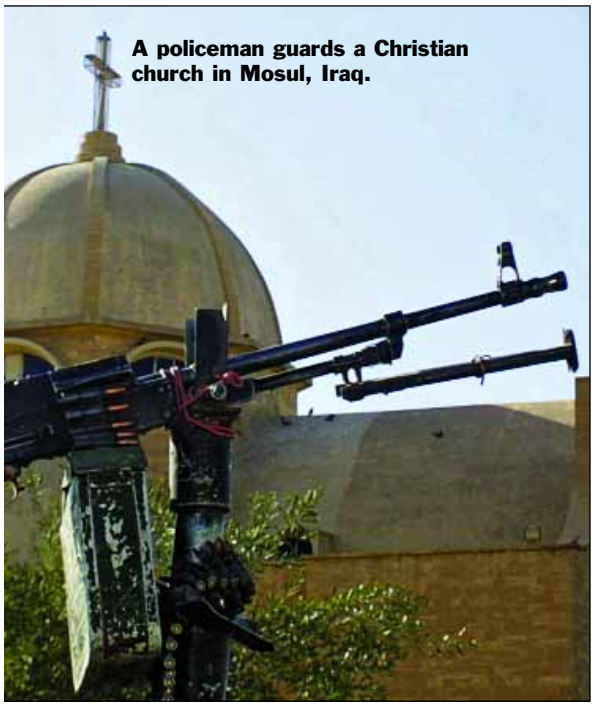
Country Reports. In Iraq, the patriarchs report, sectarian violence afflicts the whole society, but Christians are kidnapped and murdered "because they are Christian." In Egypt, interconfessional hostility flares up from time to time with the acquiescence of "the government or minor officials who permit themselves to harbor confessional attitudes [prejudices]."

In Lebanon, where Christians are a diminished but still influential minority, they experience various pulls. They find themselves simultaneously in alliance with some Muslims and opposed to others and divided among themselves. Political stability still seems out of reach.

Finally, in Palestine, Christians, like the majority Muslim population, share the suffering and the consequences of the Israeli occupation. Referring to Muslim-Christian tensions, the patriarchs allow that there are on the local level "incidents and clashes between individuals" that are exaggerated by the international media. In Israel, the letter reports, minority Christians experience hostility from some Israeli Muslims, including extremist groups, which inflame confessional "tension and fear."

Peace and Pluralism. While some Arab Christians, the council says, "are firm in their faith and in their engagement in society," others "are disheartened and no longer have confidence in their societies and their capacity to obtain for them equality with all citizens." As a result, there is an age-old temptation "to retreat into their church and its institutions."

The patriarchs reject this strategy as a symptom of weakness, however, and recommend that their people "find strength in the force of faith and love and in social engagement." Seeing the fate of Christian communities intimately bound to the surrounding milieu, the patriarchs conclude, "insofar as society analyzes and corrects its attitudes toward 'the least of these,'



A policeman guards a Christian church in Mosul, Iraq.

toward those who are different by virtue of their religion or personal characteristics, it will become capable of achieving peace for all its citizens."

ROME

Vatican Revisits Wartime Legacy of Pius XII

The Vatican marked the 70th anniversary of the start of World War II with a series of messages highlighting Pope Pius XII's warnings against hostilities in the weeks leading up to the war's outbreak. In late August, Vatican radio replayed the pope's address of Aug. 24, 1939, in which he told the world's leaders that "the whole of humanity hopes for justice, bread and freedom, not the iron that kills and destroys." L'Osservatore Romano, the Vatican's official newspaper, printed the papal warnings against war, depicting Pope Pius as a prophetic figure who was ignored by those in power.

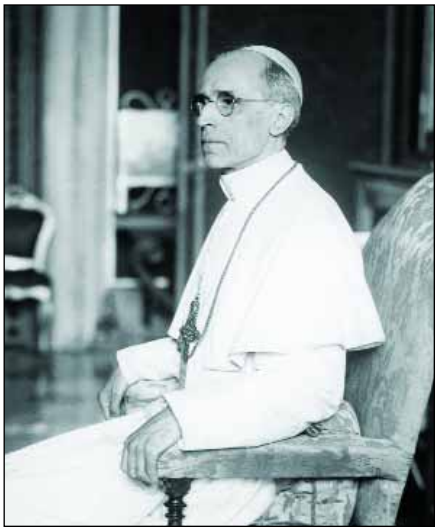
A week after the pope issued his appeal, German troops invaded Poland and ignited a six-year war that would leave an estimated 60 million dead, including six million Jews.

"Today, when the tension of spirits has reached a level that makes the unleashing of the tremendous whirlwind of war appear imminent, in a spirit of paternity we make a new and heartfelt appeal to governments and peoples," the pope said in his 1939 address. "To governments so that, laying aside accusations, threats and the reasons for reciprocal mistrust, they try to resolve present differences through the only suitable means, that is, sincere joint agreements; and to peoples so that in calm and serenity, and without unbecoming agitation, they will encourage efforts for peace on the part of their leaders."

Vatican Radio called the message "a milestone in the church's service to peace." On Aug. 24, L'Osservatore Romano argued that Pope Pius and his aides never stopped working for peace throughout the conflict. The article, signed by the newspaper's editor, Giovanni Maria Vian, said the pope "helped the persecuted, without distinction," inside the Vatican, in Rome, throughout Italy and in other European countries.

The role of Pope Pius during the war has been much debated in recent years. Against the accusations of indifference to the plight of Jews and inaction on other fronts, the Vatican has stepped up its defense of the wartime pontiff. In early August, the Vatican newspaper published a sharply worded critique of Allied governments for failing to help European Jews despite having detailed information about the Holocaust. The article contrasted U.S. and British inaction with the quiet efforts undertaken by Pope Pius to save as many Jews as possible.

Vatican media have presented the pope as a trained diplomat who followed the international events carefully, noting that in May 1939 he made a quiet but forceful push for negotiations. In a speech in June of that year, the pope expressed optimism for his diplomatic offensive, but those hopes slowly vanished as the months progressed. "We have tried and done what was in our power to stave off the danger of war," the pope later said, predicting that the war would be unprecedented in its "physical and spiritual destruction."



Pope Pius XII prepares to give a radio address in 1943.

Amid the Vatican publicity, no mention has been made of Pope Pius XII's pending sainthood cause. Despite a general recommendation in favor of Pius's beatification, Pope Benedict put the cause on hold last year.

Coalition Questions Jerusalem Evictions

U.S. Catholic leaders have joined leaders of other faiths in protesting the evictions in August of Palestinians from East Jerusalem. In a letter to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton dated Aug. 7, an interfaith coalition of U.S. religious leaders called for the immediate reversal of the evictions. Israeli riot police evicted two Palestinian families—more than 50 people in all—from their homes in the Arab neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah on Aug. 2. Police later allowed Jewish settlers to move into the homes where the Palestinian families had lived for more than 50 years. The U.S. religious leaders objected to the evictions in part because they occurred close to the 1949 armistice line or Green Line, which separates Israel and the Palestinian territories. Among the Catholic signers of the letter were representatives of the Conference of Major Superiors of Men and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Delegation Reports Violence in Honduras

Nonviolent protesters opposed to the ouster of President Manuel Zelaya of Honduras are regularly intimidated, jailed, beaten and raped by the country's security forces, members of a delegation of U.S. Catholic religious leaders have said. During a weeklong visit to Central America's second poorest country, representatives from Pax Christi International and the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas met with dozens of people from several cities who said they were attacked by Honduran soldiers and members of the national police as the security forces swept in to break up their demonstrations. The demonstrators, which include teachers, students and church workers, have been calling for the return of Zelaya to the presidency until the conclusion of his term later this year. Zelaya was removed from office on June 28 during a predawn raid on the presidential palace in Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital.

Women Religious Address U.S. Visitation

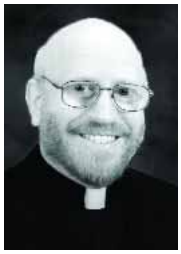
Leaders representing 59,000 women religious are questioning what they call a lack of full disclosure about what is motivating the Vatican's apostolic visitation to study the contemporary practices of U.S. women's religious orders. In a press statement on Aug. 17, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious also said the leaders "object to the fact that their orders will not be permitted to see the investigative reports about them" when they are submitted in 2011 to the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life and its prefect, Cardinal Franc Rodé. Furthermore, no details about the study's funding have been released by the office of the Apostolic Visitation of Institutes of Women Religious in the United States. Mother Mary Clare Millea, the apostolic visitor charged by the Vatican with directing the study, had said on July 31, "The reason we're doing this is we want to help assess and promote the vitality of all the sisters."

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Seeking to strengthen relations between **American and Vietnamese Catholics**, Bishop William S. Skylstad of Spokane, Wash., led a small U.S. delegation on a tour of Vietnam that included a stop at a Marian shrine. ✦ A Moscow court sentenced a man to 14 years in prison for the **2008 murder of Victor Betancourt, S.J.,** but failed to convict him of the murder of a second Jesuit at the scene. ✦ Nearly two-thirds of U.S. Catholics surveyed said they have no opinion on the increased availability of the **Tridentine Mass** since Pope Benedict XVI made it easier for parishes to offer the traditional liturgy two years ago. ✦ The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has launched a Web page (www.usccb.org/romanmissal) to educate Catholics about the forthcoming English translation of the **new Roman Missal**. ✦ The Maryknoll Order has confirmed that **Roy Bourgeois, M.M.,** was excommunicated in November 2008 for not recanting his public statements supporting the ordination of women. ✦ The Missionaries of Charity have launched a year of programs celebrating the centennial in 2010 of the birth of **Blessed Mother Teresa**, the order's founder.

THOMAS MASSARO



The Human Factor

Grappling with the legacy of Robert McNamara and the Vietnam War

Major news items this summer evoked nostalgia at every turn: 40th anniversaries of Woodstock and Apollo 11; deaths of celebrities like Michael Jackson, Ed McMahon and Karl Malden. Saying farewell to Walter Cronkite alone dredged up reminiscences of dozens of world events he reported on.

Possibly lost in the news cycle was the death on July 6 of Robert S. McNamara at age 93. He was surely the most influential secretary of defense in U.S. history, serving from 1961 to 1968, during such events as the Bay of Pigs, the Cuban missile crisis and the massive escalation of America's involvement in Vietnam. While Mr. McNamara accomplished much in his remarkable life, filling top posts at Ford and the World Bank, his name will always be linked with the war in Vietnam ("McNamara's War").

Late baby boomers like Barack Obama and me (we were born in the first year of Kennedy's presidency) mostly knew about McNamara after the fact. By the time I reached college, one could (and I eagerly did!) take courses in diplomatic history and political science that covered the Vietnam conflict and the role McNamara played in it. My interest in moral evaluations of America's role in Vietnam was revived by the fascinating 2003 documentary "The Fog of War," in which McNamara consented to be filmed reflecting at great length, and with no absence of emotion and even contrition, on the quagmire in Southeast Asia.

Several obituaries likened McNamara to a figure from a Greek tragedy, with a tragic flaw intricately related to his greatest attribute: a keen mind dedicated to charting precise courses of action based on the best available facts and figures. President Kennedy lured him into his cabinet with the flattering comment that McNamara was the smartest man he had ever met.

Yet, despite a knack for systems analysis and technical insight, however brilliant and well informed, McNamara and his Pentagon "whiz kids" somehow missed the human factor in modern warfare. For all their precise calculations surrounding America's involvement in cold war-era Vietnam, even our best and brightest grossly underestimated the tenacity of those fighting in what they considered a struggle for national liberation from Western colonialism. Add to this miscalculation the loss of support from average Americans due to a vigorous antiwar movement and media exposure to the horrors of war, and the outcome in Southeast Asia now appears inevitable.

To his credit, McNamara in retirement labored to articulate the central lessons to be appropriated for U.S. foreign policy: avoid over-reliance on quantitative data, like body counts and firepower superiority, and do not overlook those pivotal factors that touch the hearts and minds of the people, without which modern warfare is unwinnable.

The most excruciating moral questions, less than fully resolved in his late-in-life memoirs and in interviews that probed his mind, involve what the secretary should have done as he came to the realization, near the end of his Pentagon tenure, that war in Vietnam was an unwinnable proposition. Poring over troubling evidence, he faced the perennial dilemma of the statesman serving a demanding superior. McNamara, however, failed the honesty test, as he was unable to push the point with President Johnson. Hundreds of thousands more civilians and soldiers would die before the United States left Vietnam. The ethics of war haunted McNamara's final decades. His death was met more with pity and scorn than admiration.

The more I ponder the life and times of Robert McNamara, the more I feel a sense of relief that I will never be in a position to send people to their death, whether for arguably good causes or transparently unjustifiable causes. On the larger scale, it renews my conviction that every sane, peace-loving person should be vigilant to press those who do shoulder the burdens of office not to repeat the mistakes of Vietnam.

Of course, Vietnam was not the last dubious land war in Asia that the United States has entered, and many have drawn parallels to our current involvements in Iraq and Afghanistan. I suspect we will be grappling with the moral lessons tangled up with the life of Robert McNamara long after we have gotten over the summer 2009 deaths of celebrities like Farrah Fawcett and the ad pitchman Billy Mays.

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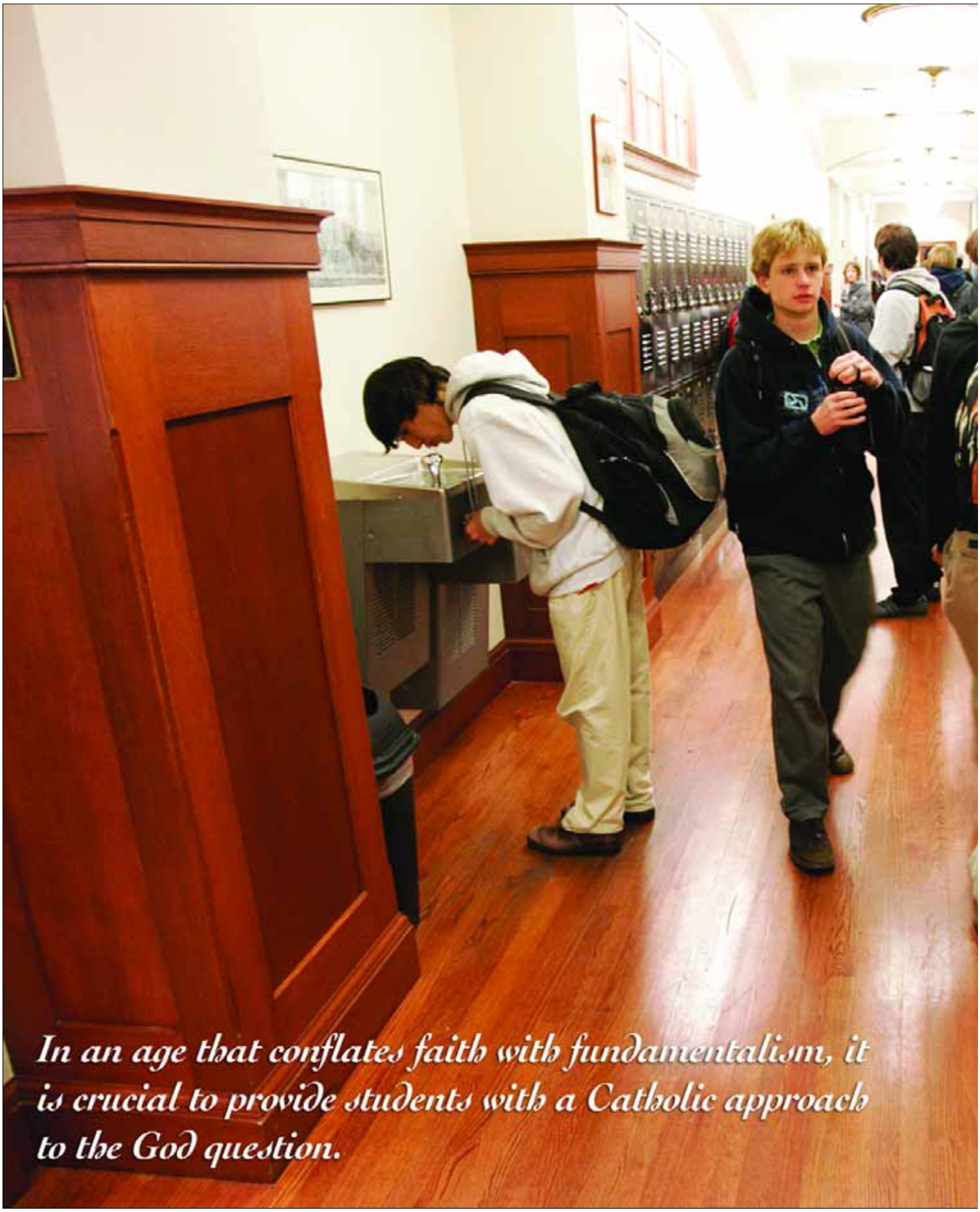

PHOTO: CNS/BOB ROLLER

God and the Teenage Mind

BY BRAD ROTHROCK

A religion teacher today faces students schooled in both scientific methods and vague understandings of what is meant by the spiritual. Students often exhibit a strange mixture of hard-headed empiricism and naïve superstition. When I suggest to my students, for instance, that reality includes the intangible, which can be glimpsed in the light of faith and reason, they nod in agreement and confess their belief in the predictions of Nostradamus, about whom they have seen a documentary. For them the intangible means the realm of fortune-telling and ghosts, to which they are willing to give assent because of the "empirical" evidence offered by television and the Internet.

In such an atmosphere, teaching religion requires familiarity with a range of subjects seemingly unrelated to those covered in the religion textbooks. Teachers of religion need to be able to explain the distinctions between different kinds of knowing, the various ways human beings arrive at truth claims, the type of understanding proper to the spheres of science and religion, and the relation between mystery and faith.

Too often both textbook and teacher simply assume that students understand what is meant by the term God. I have seen many student texts intended to be an introduction to Catholicism that use the word God from the first page to the last without once attempting to explain just who or what they are referring to. As John Haught states in his aptly named book, *What Is God?*, "Unless there is some common ground of reference when people speak of the divine…it seems pointless to speak to them of the divine at all." Unfortunately, for many students God-talk is pointless.

Five years of teaching high school religion have led me to concur

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wholeheartedly with the suggestion made by Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton that adults, including religious educators, need to "develop more confidence in teaching [adolescents] about their faith traditions and expecting meaningful responses from them." This suggestion, from their book *Soul Searching* (2005), is backed by interviews and surveys of more than 3,000 teenagers regarding religion and spirituality. Among other findings, the authors contend that most teenagers, even those in Catholic schools, have an extremely poor understanding of the most basic concepts and beliefs held by their particular faith traditions. While Smith and Denton do not lay the entire blame for this situation on the shoulders of religious educators, their suggestion that adults attempting to communicate the faith to adolescents need both confidence and high expectations certainly challenges those of us whose job it is to teach and transmit the Catholic faith to our students.

Before high school religious education can be reinvigorated, then, the confidence with which educators themselves speak of God must be built up. Their education must go beyond a passing knowledge of terms and formulations of doctrines to include a fundamental and rigorous analysis of such concepts as meaning, truth, belief and knowledge, as well as the ways in which human beings arrive at these concepts in the first place. In other words, we need to place philosophical theology at the heart of educating both religion teachers and those they serve.

Tapping Tradition

Most students in fact have already formed their own basis for belief or unbelief, and in both instances their implicit "philosophies" are cobbled together from some of the worst God-talk popular culture has to offer. In this sense, there is no question that students are up to the task of philosophical reflection about God. The problem is that this reflection is taking place without the direction and input of the Catholic intellectual tradition.

For the last several years I have begun my classes with a lengthy unit on the doctrine of God. I have introduced students to thinkers from Thomas Aquinas to Karl Rahner and Elizabeth Johnson. We have looked at what we mean by God from several perspectives, like the analogy of being, the logical movement from creation to creator in natural theology and issues of gendered language. I have had to work hard to translate this material into vocabulary, examples and conceptual models that my students are able to understand, and they have consistently risen to the occasion. After all, these same students are also taking courses in geometry, chemistry and world history. If they can master the Pythagorean theorem and the complex interaction of chemical substances, they are up to the task of understanding the relation between freedom and transcendence, and the need to use analogical language when speaking of God.

In these times of worry over the loss of the Catholic identity of both secondary and higher educational institutions, such explicit use of philosophy in the service of understanding faith also serves to highlight the Catholic roots of religious education. The inextricable link between faith and reason is one of the hallmarks of the Catholic tradition.

When students understand that Catholicism has a rich history of encouraging and using reason to approach mystery, they begin to overcome their sense that intelligence and faith are antithetical. They also begin to understand the distinctly Catholic take on issues like evolution and biblical literalism, issues fraught with conflict for many other Christians. In an age that often conflates knowledge with scientific empiricism and faith with uncritical fundamentalism, it is important to provide students with a Catholic approach to understanding the complexities of the "God question" that enables them to give meaningful responses to questions about faith.

Recently I witnessed an example of what can happen when students have engaged in the challenging process of thinking about God. A transfer student from another Catholic school arrived in my sophomore Scripture class several months after we had completed the unit on the doctrine of God. As I was explaining that ancient Israelite cosmology viewed the universe as composed of three tiers, with God residing above the dome of the sky, one of my students raised his hand to say that technically this could not be correct because God is infinite and cannot therefore be confined to a single space; that would place a limit on God, who transcends all limits. The transfer student raised her hand in confusion, and I attempted to explain what the other student was talking about by mentioning that God has no body. Still confused, she said that she had always thought of God as being like Hercules, "but real." Several students then tried to explain to her that God is not a "thing," but rather the act of existence itself from which all "things" proceed. Though the transfer student remained confused, and I suggested she see me later, this was one of those moments teachers dream about. My students had actually listened, understood and were able to communicate that understanding in response to live questions.

A Personal, Relational God

None of this is to suggest that religious education should focus solely on the philosophical comprehension of God. In fact, if this intellectual understanding is not followed by a presentation of the personal, loving and gracious God of revelation, then the philosophical aspect might do more harm than good. Addressing the reasoned basis for faith in the God of revelation is only one component—albeit an extremely important one—of a faith education that seeks to form students as whole persons: mind, body and soul. Liturgy, prayer and service are equally necessary if students are to deepen the understanding they have begun in religion class. Nevertheless, if we truly desire to form a generation capable of facing the problems and promises of both the church and the world, we must make the ability to give a reason for the hope within them (1 Pt 3:15) a necessary precondition. A

Faulty Guidance

A new framework for high school catechesis fails to persuade.

BY WILLIAM J. O'MALLEY

More than 50 years ago, an elderly priest told my education class that "the three most important things to high school boys are baseball, ice cream and holy Communion." Even in those days, when Lucy and Desi had twin beds and before consumerism had subjugated adolescent hearts and minds, we howled. But that perilous naïveté still reigns unchallenged throughout much of the American church.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has launched *Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age*. It is a colossal effort and theologically unassailable, but in the judgment of this 43-years-in-the-trenches veteran and others, it is pedagogically counterproductive. Inquiries revealed that no veteran high school catechists were involved in the document; it is the product of theorists and administrators.

The *Framework* exemplifies how Jesus did not teach—analytically and preceptively; instead, he taught in stories, as societies have done since the caves. It also ignores the church's consistent practice of teaching first humanities, then philosophy and only then theology. Jesus often validated claims with Scripture, but to a people who all but adored it. Presuming such reverence in today's high school students is risky.

The *Framework* is inflexibly "top down," preceptive, rigorously certain. It is, as theorists describe academic theology, faith seeking understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*). That could hardly be further from our primary task as educators. Our audience does not have personally validated Christian faith. A majority are baptized but never converted and prefer not to be. Many have a real, albeit vague, faith in God based on their parents' faith, but the question is too peripheral to merit personal probing. After all, the reality of death (without which resurrection has no meaning) is a lifetime of distance from relevance for most young people. In my experience, kids are admirably polite, but if you keep at it, you had better be entertaining! As they approach the age of reason, they begin to absorb cultural suggestions that the Roman Catholic Church might be something less than it claims.

A few years ago, one diocese dismissed its entire catechetical staff, reasoning that "we have about 20,000 baptisms and about 20,000 marriages every year. Why are only a fraction of those going to church?" This is justified puzzlement. But the question never seems to be posed as: "Why do nonpracticing Catholics demand engagement with the church at the three crucial life-moments: birth, marriage, and death, yet feel no sense of loss—much less guilt—for otherwise ignoring the church?" No one asks, "What if the liturgy were more engaging?" Or, "Why now, without hell as our ace of trump, do we still force-feed our catechesis into kids so early and often that when questions about religion become relevant, our answers are no more meaningful than hero-worship and Barbies?"

I base my critique on decades of teaching religion to high school seniors, college freshmen, teachers and night school adults, and on reading 80 to 100 reflections a year from about 4,000 respondents. Conservatively, this means 300,000 papers, which might be a Guinness world record. Thus I respond to the *Framework* with the loyal frustration of a Panzer commander ordered to advance on Stalingrad when the oil in my tanks is black ice.

Flaws of the *Framework*

In its Introduction, the *Framework* states: "The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ." Any catechist would warmly accept that goal. But then: "These ends are evident in this framework—designed to guide catechetical instruction for young people of high-school age...so that each may come to know him and live according to the truth he has given to us."

Not really. Intimate knowing was the meaning of the word "know" for a Jew, whose primary understanding was knowing with the whole self, as in "he knew his wife." But for the next 53 pages, the *Framework*'s "know" shifts definitively into a Greek understanding, meaning to grasp as the

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PHOTO: CNS/OWEN SWEENEY III, CATHOLIC REVIEW

result of logical research, as in "science tells us" or "2 + 2 = 4." (Or, more to the point, "the church says.") That seemingly slight semantic shift makes all the difference between persuasion (conversion) and indoctrination (brainwashing). This model syllabus does not aim at knowing God, but at knowing about God. The difference is vast. The exclusively cognitive smothers the affective. That's why so many Catholics are not "going to church."

The text remains as personally uninvolving as the *Baltimore Catechism*. No segment addresses kids the way they are: polite but hostile. There is no attempt to make the material even vaguely relevant to their lives and felt needs. (The framers say that is "up to the publishers," but Internet articles show that dioceses are scrambling to outrun them.) No element pretends to elicit faith, but simply presumes it. Despite excellent material to help students know about God, one finds not a flicker of inducement to intimacy, unless one can be "intimate" with a total abstraction.

The text cautions that "the order in which the doctrinal elements within each theme are identified should not be understood to be an outline of a text or course." But 53 single-spaced, double-columned-for-density pages seem hardly a neutral "suggestion."

The content for the first semester of ninth grade centers on "The Revelation of Jesus Christ in Scripture." No one could cavil with the subject's worthiness, just its relevance. What if the kids start from the assumption the Scriptures are as boring (therefore as unprofitable) as Mass? In the second semester they are asked "Who Is Jesus Christ?" outlined in a rigorously academic way, suitable for graduate students in religious education.

The second year begins with "The Mission of Jesus Christ (The Paschal Mystery)." The very word "Paschal" belies connection to 15-year-olds. It's a buzz word for liturgists and theologians, but meaningless to a normal teenager. In their second semester, sophomores consider how "Jesus Christ's Mission Continues in the Church." But kids might ask: "You mean the same church that forbids artificial birth control to committed parents? The one with child-molester priests? That church?"

The first semester of junior year covers "Sacraments as Privileged Encounters With Jesus Christ," which again no believer could gainsay, as long as students' actual experience of parish rituals makes sacraments even remotely as engaging as a rock concert or "American Idol." Those are, after all, the actual competition. Finishing the core courses in 11th grade is "Life in Jesus Christ." The very first item reads: "God creates us to share eternal love and happiness with him in Heaven." This is hardly a ploy for boys and girls in an ethos where anyone over 18 who is still a virgin is puzzling. Experienced religion teachers might suggest searching for a more immanent, this-worldly motivation and payoff. At least for starters.

The very first segment is: "How Do We Know About

God?" Any parent or teacher or even camp counselor might assume this would start with 14-year-olds' receptivities, perhaps nature walks, exercises in centering prayer, the story of Helen Keller in her lonely, yearning darkness suddenly, miraculously, realizing at the pump that she was not alone, then sharing experiences where each person felt God "touching" them. Not so here. Nothing can be put forth unless it is preceded by written ecclesiastical validation. Freshmen can no more discern a transcendent dimension to the onset of adolescent *angoisse* than an infant can tell why it's O.K. to bite the breadstick but not the cat's tail. No experienced classroom teacher could ever have approved such an uninformed document.

ON THE WEB
William J. O'Malley, S.J., on teenage spirituality.
americamagazine.org/pages

Under "Contemporary Arguments," we are directed to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which offers not one concrete suggestion where to find modern testimony to God's presence. Both works suggest sources like the Fathers and councils, utterly without persuasive force with young people, but lack even a hint about classic novels or stories (much less films) to trigger a suspicion of God's provident presence.

Freshmen study "Divine Inspiration," which after my own four years of study of theology and decades of teaching still baffles me. We would not offer this audience Carl Jung, Mircea Eliade or the apostate Joseph Campbell.

The Audience

Would it be heretical to ask the preliminary question: Why should any intelligent young person rooted in the kingdom of this world even consider the kingdom of Jesus Christ?

By the time high school students come to the *Framework*, they will have spent unimaginably more hours in the grasp of TV, video games, iPods, the Internet and movies than they will spend before all the teachers they will ever have through graduate school. Few religion teachers will be as convincing as "Survivor" ("To win you have to screw your teammates") and "The Bachelor" ("If it feels good, why not?"). Their sex education courses, even in Catholic schools, thoroughly explain the mechanics, with little or no emphasis on the fact that human beings make the interchange much more than that. Through the media, students have witnessed more deaths than a veteran in the army of Genghis Khan; as a result, death—and ipso facto resurrection—have no felt meaning for them. The number of teenage drunken drivers caught yearly by police, and by death itself, shows that many teens are unfazed even by the law of cause and effect. The fear of hell that motivated my generation's virtue is nullified, and the thought of spiritual atrophy carries no sting. In role-playing moral dilemmas, their motives can be as relativistic and utilitarian as any atheist's. Yet the *Framework* makes bold to begin by idealizing a crucified felon who could have escaped if he had only shut up. Kids cannot fathom that.

Needed: A Prologue

If the church to which I have given my life were to make a well-intentioned but tragic mistake and I kept silent, I would be no loyal servant. The *Framework* needs a prologue that acknowledges the horrific obstacles educators face just to get a hearing among teenagers. It presumes too much of what our audience does not have: faith, awareness of the transcendent, appreciation of altruistic values, among much else. It must make explicit provision to:

- Heighten awareness of the miraculous order of the universe, the omnipresence of the immutable laws of physics, the innumerable elements that had to fall into place just for life, much less intelligence, to emerge from inert matter. It should help students develop sensitivity to the numinous presence of God in nature and not presume that science teachers evoke this (even Catholic ones). They don't.
- Slowly develop, very early on, a familiarity with centering prayer, a budding relationship with God, without which "religion" (*religare*, to connect) has no meaning.
- Demand at least a rough understanding of epistemology, the study of which opinions are true and why (it establishes that subjective opinions are valid only if they are substantiated by objective facts) to challenge nearly universal relativism. Make clear that faith is not absolute certitude, as taught by Aquinas (who described absolute, physical and moral certitude) but moral certitude, which is a calculated risk.
- Through the legends and myths of all cultures, grasp the universal truth-bearing value of stories, which makes libraries worth preserving. Few English teachers engender this.
- Foster a felt awareness of the insidious influence of media brainwashing; it is an influence high school kids routinely deny. Brainwashing is useless if the victim is critically aware he/she is not free, so that awareness is critical.
- Grasp what Ignatius Loyola called the radical difference between the two standards—the self-serving of the world versus the self-giving of the kingdom. After 12 years of our religious education, would most kids choose a retreat over a rock concert? Evangelize this audience.
- Understand that morality means simply being a decent human being, while Christianity goes a quantum leap further: forgiving before a perpetrator has "earned" it.

This audience does not need catechists with the skills of Thomas Aquinas but those of Professor Harold Hill from "The Music Man." Jesus might admonish today's sowers, "Plow before you plant!" A

The Binding of Isaac

What if the angel had arrived too late?

BY HAROLD KASIMOW

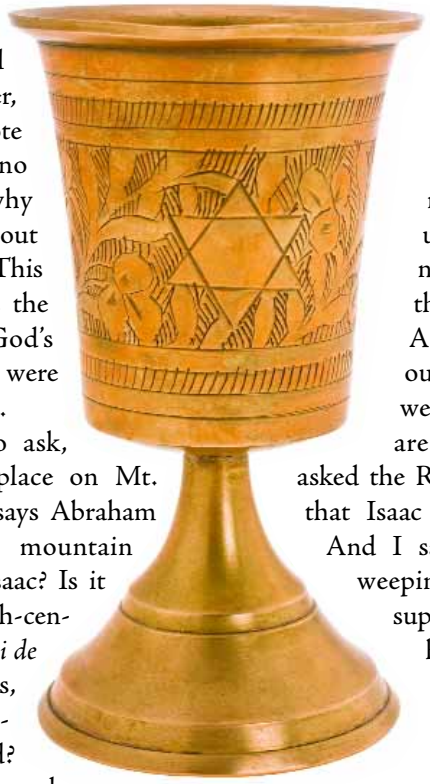
The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashana, begins the High Holy Days—a 10-day period of penitence and reflection on the meaning of life and death, when God decides who shall live and who shall die. The Torah reading for the second day is the story of the binding of Isaac, the *Akeda*.

In this perplexing story, God says to Abraham, "Take your son, your favored one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you" (Gn 22:1-2). Abraham obeys. He is about to sacrifice Isaac when an angel intervenes and tells him not to slay his son.

The story raises deep questions. How can a God of love command Abraham (chosen to be a blessing to all people) to sacrifice the son he loves? How can Abraham agree without a word of protest? And how can he be certain he is hearing the voice of God? Why does Isaac, already a mature man according to many Talmudic rabbis, submit to his ancient father?

Although it appears that neither Abraham nor Isaac deserved to go through this ordeal, a predominant Talmudic interpretation is that where there is suffering, there must be sin. In this view, both sinned: Isaac, by bragging to his brother Ishmael that he was the more virtuous; Abraham, by showing insufficient gratitude to God for the miracle of Isaac's birth. The rabbis put these words in Abraham's mouth: "I have rejoiced and given joy to others, but I have never put aside for God a single bull or a single ram" (Midrash Rabbah Gn 55:4).

The rabbis also point out that the command to sacrifice was not really a test of Abraham, for God knew that Abraham loved him with a perfect heart. God did not doubt Abraham, but knew that humanity might. If Abraham were to demonstrate his own unconditional faith in God, however, the world would note his greatness and no longer question why God had singled him out for a special destiny. This interpretation blunts the accusation that God's actions in the *Akeda* were capricious or reckless.



Some rabbis also ask, What really took place on Mt. Moriah? The Bible says Abraham returned from the mountain alone. Where was Isaac? Is it possible, as the ninth-century Jewish text *Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer* asserts, that Isaac was sacrificed and resurrected? Is it possible the angel arrived too late, or that Abraham did not listen to an angel because the demand to sacrifice Isaac came directly from God?

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel movingly describes the experience of a 7-year-old who hears the *Akeda* for the first time:

> Isaac was on the way to Mount Moriah with his father; then he lay on the altar, bound, waiting to be sacrificed. My heart began to beat even faster; it actually sobbed with pity for Isaac. Behold, Abraham now lifted the knife. And now my heart froze within me with fright. Suddenly, the voice of the angel was heard: "Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad, for now I know that thou fearest God." And here I broke out in tears and wept aloud. "Why are you crying?" asked the Rabbi. "You know that Isaac was not killed." And I said to him, still weeping, "But, Rabbi, supposing the angel had come a second too late?" The Rabbi comforted me and calmed me by telling me that an angel cannot come late.

If anyone can relate to the tale of the *Akeda*, Heschel can. He was often

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ R. PAVEL

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compared to the biblical Abraham. William Sloane Coffin, the charismatic Protestant preacher, called him "Father Abraham" and told Heschel, "I am sure the original Abraham, father of us all, looked just like you." It seems to me that Heschel, who lost his mother and sisters in the Holocaust, can also be compared to Isaac. The Bible does not tell us what traumatic effects Isaac suffered from his ordeal, but we know that he continued to have faith in God. This is also true for Heschel, who continued to believe that God loves us. For Heschel, "The greatest heresy is despair, despair of man's power for goodness, man's power for love."

ON THE WEB

A former Jesuit volunteer reflects on community living.
americamagazine.org

Rosh Hashana is an appropriate time to look to Heschel as a model of faith and hope. The fundamental biblical message, he insisted, is that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and therefore has infinite value and dignity.

When I was a young boy studying at Salanter Yeshiva in the Bronx, I never heard my teachers say that the binding of Isaac was an especially problematic text. They told us instead that it shows how Abraham loved and trusted God above all things; the *Akeda* teaches the world that sacrifice of children must end once and for all. Jonathan Sacks, the chief rabbi of Britain, concurs. He says the most important message of the *Akeda* for Rosh Hashana is "that a civilization is judged by the way it treats its children."

Ultimately, no interpretation of the *Akeda* fully satisfies. I think the greatest lesson of the story is that while it is beyond our capacity to understand fully the way God deals with the world, it is not beyond our capacity to sense God's love and to love God in return. A

Rev. Kevin F. Burke, S.J.

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IDEAS | KATHLEEN DOHERTY FENTY

THE BARD OF ROME?

Shakespeare and the Catholic question

Was Shakespeare a Catholic, a Protestant or an atheist? Does it matter what his faith was?

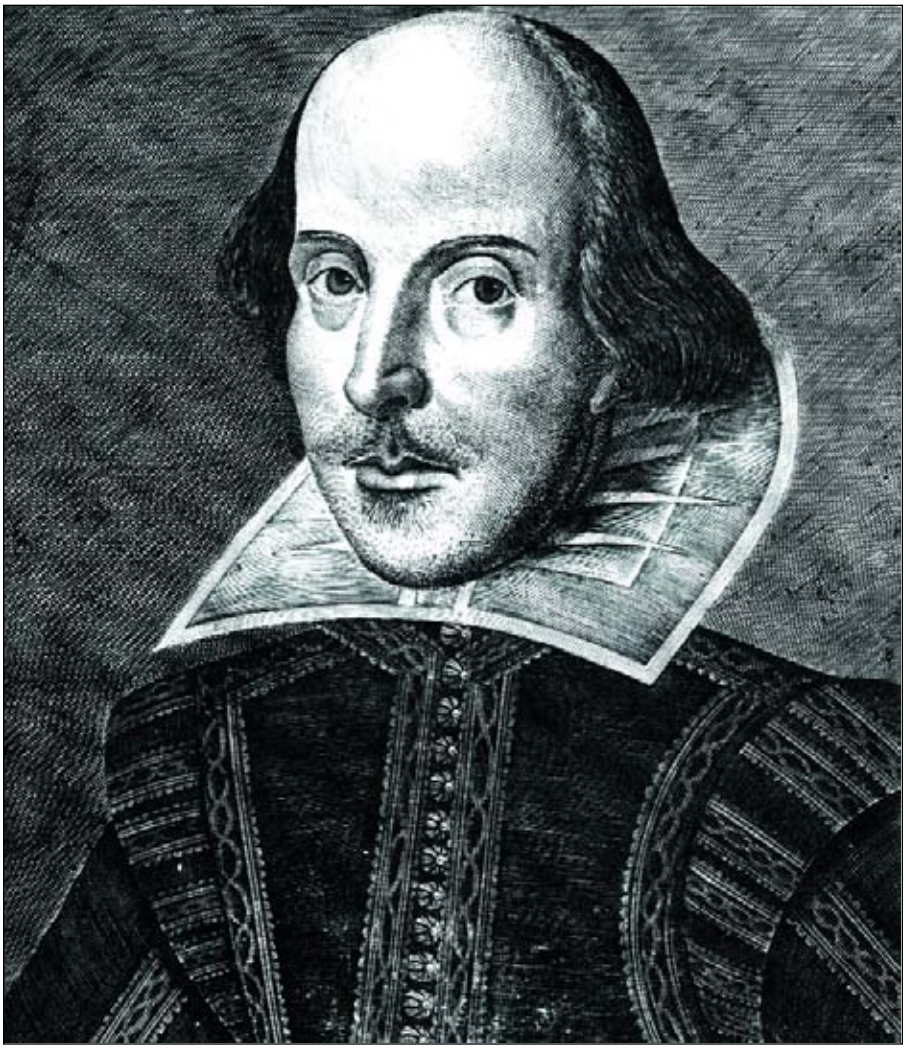
It would have mattered to Shakespeare. For in his lifetime, atheism was equated with immorality, and Catholicism in England was equated with treason. Queen Elizabeth I had executed Edward Arden, a relative of Shakespeare's mother, for his supposed Catholic treachery. Religion was a matter of life or death; and Shakespeare, like everyone else, walked a precarious denominational line.

What were the Bard's religious beliefs? When Shakespeare died in 1616 at age 52, he was buried in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, which would have been an impossibility for a known atheist. Yet questions about his religion arose early, some 70 years after his death, when Richard Davies, an Anglican clergyman, wrote from local legend that the poet had "dyed a Papyst."

The controversy continued. In the 18th century, Samuel Johnson considered Shakespeare a brilliant but irreverent poet. Consider the Bard's lines: "Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once/ And He that might the vantage best have took/ Found out the remedy." So speaks the Franciscan novice Isabella to the cruel judge Angelo in Shakespeare's black comedy "Measure for Measure" (1604). Is the poetry here biblical or merely "universal" in its meaning? A century later Samuel Taylor Coleridge found the Bard's comedic forgiveness of the judge Angelo to be morally abhorrent. While literary critics believed Shakespeare too "fanciful" and "rustic" to be orthodox, many popular authors noted Shakespeare's encyclopedic use of the Bible. In 1899, the Rev. H. S. Bowden collected the evidence in *The Religion of Shakespeare*, using the work of Richard Simpson to compile his pro-Catholic compendium.

It was not until G. Wilson Knight successfully argued in *The Wheel of Fire* (1930) for a Christian and biblical Shakespeare that this view was accepted by what might be called the "Shakespeare establishment." For the first time in over 200 years, the problem of how the poet of "fancy" could also be a serious, Bible-loving Christian was considered solved. Yet this Shakespeare was the Protestant Shakespeare of the British Empire, not the Catholic poet of Father Bowden.

The "Catholic Shakespeare" thesis entered mainstream English criticism with E. A. J. Honigmann's book, *Shakespeare: The Lost Years* (1985). It



ART: ENGRAVING OF SHAKESPEARE FROM HIS FIRST FOLIO. SHUTTERSTOCK/C.

demonstrated how a butcher's son from Warwickshire triumphed in London through connections with an aristocratic Catholic family in Lancashire, without implying that the Bard had a continuing allegiance to Rome. The full development of the Catholic thesis, however, came in the seminal work of Peter Milward S.J. (*Shakespeare's Religious Background*, 1973), with further work by Ian Wilson (*Shakespeare: The Evidence*, 1993), which meticulously researched Shakespeare's literary and political ties to Catholic patrons and politics.

Despite this, the Catholic recusancy thesis—that the plays have a pro-Catholic political subtext—has never received broad acceptance. Is this due to some lingering anti-Catholicism, or does it reflect legitimate concerns?

The answer lies in this: The theater seeks to entertain, preparing the heart and mind for reflection, while the purpose of sermons is to preach and instruct. Drama is never a sermon. And this would apply to the portrayal of Shakespeare as a proselytizing Protestant, papist renegade or atheist subversive. When ideology reduces a living drama to apologetics, voices of protest will inevitably be raised.

The other problem with claiming that Shakespeare was a Catholic recusant is the historical record: He lived and died a member of Holy Trinity Church in Stratford. Other close ties to the Reformed Church include his lodging with Huguenots when in London, and the marriage of his daughter Susanna to a Protestant doctor, John Hall, after she was fined for being a Catholic recusant. That record need not contradict what appears to be sympathy for Catholicism, clearly evident in his plays; but Shakespeare also tried to present an objective approach to Rome. For example, Franciscans are depicted for their honest vocations, although cardinals are notoriously portrayed as murderous cowards.

One possible explanation for this apparent inconsistency may lie in the fact that the English Reformation was still in progress during Shakespeare's lifetime. England remained Catholic in spirit and practice long after 1534, with parts of Lancashire still practicing the "old faith" openly. It is possible that the post-Reformation Holy Trinity Church in Warwickshire was sufficiently traditional to allow a Catholic-sympathizer like Shakespeare to participate. If the Church of England authorities knew of the poet's Stratford affiliation, then the fact that Shakespeare's nonattendance at Puritan-leaning London parishes went unpunished could be explained.

The most promising avenue for appreciating Shakespeare's Catholicity lies not in biography but rather in the recognition of his Catholic imagination, readily discoverable in his plays. Through metaphor, the poet enlarges the sensibilities through an encounter with inspired meaning. Reformed theology had posited an irreparable break between the divine and the human, whereas the Catholic imagination seeks and finds the divine in broken humanity, bridging the gap between nature and grace.

A reference to the passage "Why, all the souls…" from "Measure for Measure" demonstrates how a "Catholic" imagination functions poetically. The speaker, Isabella, is a devout if initially self-righteous novice with the Poor Clares of Vienna. In her first meeting with the Puritan Angelo, she pleads for the life of her brother, who is under a death sentence for impregnating his girlfriend. Angelo argues that mercy is impossible because her brother "is a forfeit of the law." In a Pauline argument, Isabella asserts that all were condemned by sin (Rom 3:23) until the Son of God sacrificed his equality with God to achieve salvation for the world (Rom 3:24-26).

ON THE WEB
Rev. Robert Barron reviews the film "District 9."
americamagazine.org/culture

State of Dementia

You wake without your passport
in a foreign city:
jet-lagged, not sure of
the day, the time.
You have the wrong clothes,
the wrong money.
You do not know the language,
the way to go home.

On the street, people rush about,
busy, important.
They jabber over your head.
You need a bathroom,
don't know how to ask
in this tongue.
You have to
live here now.

MARY DAMON PELTIER

MARY DAMON PELTIER, *a freelance writer, lives in Sharon, Mass. This poem is third runner-up in the Foley Poetry Contest.*

Other lines of hers, less well known, follow a similar theological theme: "How would you be/ If He, which is the top of judgment, should/ But judge you as you are? O think on that,/ And mercy then will breathe within your lips,/ Like man new made." The novice points out that we need to forgive others' sin in order to have our own sins forgiven, and once achieved, the "new man" of Christ drives out the "old Adam" of sin (Rom 5:15-21). It is untenable to call such complex religious ideas "universal."

This interpretation can be understood in the context of the entire play. Isabella desires to prevent the unjustified execution, demonstrating her practical wisdom. Angelo will subsequently attempt to seduce her in exchange for freeing her brother, making Angelo as guilty as the man he condemns. Like the brother, Angelo too will be forgiven in Act V (to the disgust of Coleridge), as the comedic denouement delivers abundant mercy for the lost and fallen.

How does this relate to the historical circumstances? "Measure for Measure" was written in response to the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, where the Puritans sought to have fornication made punishable by death. The end result was that the new king, James I, kept premarital sex a noncapital crime. (Note: the 18-year-old Shakespeare impregnated Ann Hathaway in 1582, but was restored to the Church of England by loyal friends who paid the fine that made it possible for them to marry.)

Today most academics hold the view that Shakespeare had no religion at all. This agnostic thesis became influential after the 1980s, despite the growing evidence of Shakespeare's Catholic family background and the chaotic state of religious identifications in England in the early 1600s.

A resolution of this debate is not to be expected soon, as writers so often look in the Shakespearean mirror and

see their own faces. Critics with no biblical training insist that Shakespeare used the Scriptures only "decoratively," while writers with no professional theater background claim the plays reveal a pro-papal political subtext. With the loss of familiarity with the Bible among academicians and the demise of a theater culture that knows Shakespeare, it is possible that the dictum "What is not understood cannot be recognized" is applicable here.

KATHLEEN DOHERTY FENTY, *whose doctoral dissertation at the University of Birmingham, England, was on Shakespeare and religion, is a research fellow at Boston College in Chestnut Hill, Mass.*

TELEVISION | REGINA NIGRO

THE ROAD TO REDEMPTION

TNT's 'Saving Grace'

If anyone was ever in need of a "last-chance angel," it is Detective Grace Hanadarko (Holly Hunter) on the TNT series "Saving Grace."

After a night of heavy drinking, Grace plows her Porsche into a lamppost—but not before hitting a pedestrian. Stumbling out of her car, Grace gazes helplessly at a man lying motionless in the middle of the street. Desperate, she cries out for God's help. At that moment, Earl (Leon Rippy), more reminiscent of a member of Lynyrd Skynyrd than an angel—with his long gray hair, flannel shirt and down-home twang—appears to Grace. He explains that she's headed for hell; he's there to steer her on the right path, if she's ready to accept the God she's repeatedly rejected. Skeptical and dazed, Grace wakes a moment later to find her Porsche undamaged and all other signs of an accident, including the man she hit, gone.

In the light of day, only mildly shaken by the incident, Grace forgets Earl's warning. She resumes her destructive lifestyle—binge-drinking, one-night stands and an affair with her married partner, Ham (Kenny Johnson). But Earl proves tenacious, visiting Grace often to remind her of her spiritual obligations. Their rapport is charming, amusing, even sly, as Earl chastises Grace like a disapproving father with a wayward teen.

Holly Hunter, foreground, in "Saving Grace"

PHOTO: ERIK HEINILA

Grace is initially resistant, but over the course of the series begins to accept Earl as a part of her life. She turns to him for guidance, while still grappling with her ambivalence about religion. The show, which is in its third season, struggled early on with heavy-handed storytelling, but it has found redemption in the cast's talent and chemistry. Holly Hunter brings intelligence, strength and charm to her role as Grace; she has created a character who is resilient but retains an underlying vulnerability, which appears only when she's assigned to a difficult case, like the rape and murder of a young woman.

The series has seen Grace confront both the wrongs she has committed and the wrongs committed against her. While Earl encourages her to change her ways, he also wants her to cope with the childhood abuse she experienced at the hands of the local parish priest—the root of her self-imposed exile from religion. The revelation of Grace's past casts a new light on her behavior, including her caustic attitude toward her brother Johnny (Tom Irwin), a Catholic priest, whose love for Grace is matched only by his frustration with her. Such *Sturm und Drang* is typical of Grace's relationships. Earl works to help Grace reach a better understanding of herself by encouraging her to look closer at her personal relationships—with her siblings, co-workers, her nephew Clay (Dylan Minnette) and her best friend, Rhetta (Laura San Giacomo).

Earl passionately wants Grace to see her own goodness. Through dreams and symbols, Earl spends most of the first and second seasons inspiring Grace's compassion for a death-row inmate, Leon Cooley (Bokeem Woodbine), someone for whom Grace would normally have little sympathy. Grace is at her best when she sheds her tough exterior in the service of others, revealing, unsurprisingly, that the real saving grace is love and compassion.

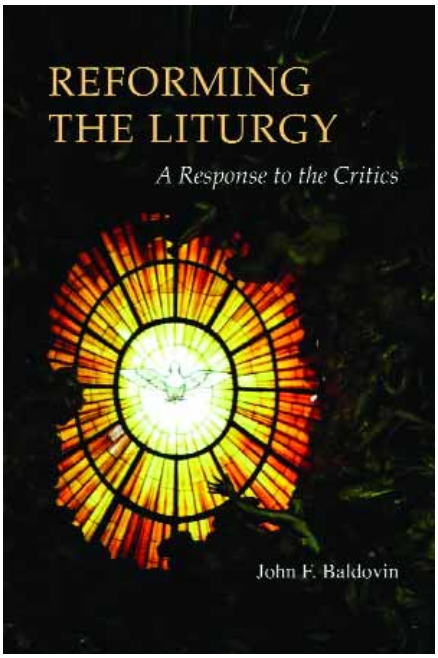
REGINA NIGRO *is assistant to* ***America****'s literary editor.*

ENGAGING THE OPPOSITION

REFORMING THE LITURGY

A Response to the Critics

By John F. Baldovin
Liturgical Press. 192p $29.95
ISBN 9780814662199



The last decade has been an uneasy one for those committed to the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. It opened with the Congregation for Divine Worship's rejection, in 2001, of a new English translation of the Roman Missal more than 20 years in the making. In 2007, two years after his election, Pope Benedict issued *Summorum Pontificum*, which allowed for wider use of the preconciliar Roman Missal of 1962. Most recently, on Jan. 24 of this year, the pope lifted the excommunications of four bishops from the schismatic Society of St. Pius X, known for their ardent opposition to the reformed liturgy.

These actions at the highest levels of the church have found an echo at the grass roots in a movement calling for a "reform of the reform." While supporters of the movement remain a minority among Catholics, they often make up in persistence and commitment what they lack in numbers. Over the last 10 years, a number of books have appeared that take issue with aspects of the reform, including Alcuin Reed's *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, Uwe Michael Lang's *Turning Toward the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer* and, of course, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's *The Spirit of the Liturgy*.

John Baldovin's new book, *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics*, attempts to assess this body of criticism. A liturgical historian who has trained a generation of seminarians and lay ministers, Baldovin, who is a Jesuit priest, is well poised to make a contribution to the debate. More than merely a "response," his book is an excellent field guide, providing an introduction to the best known critics and an in-depth review of the disputed issues.

The material in the book is roughly divided into two parts. In the first, Baldovin provides an introduction to the principal critics of the reformed liturgy, organized by discipline. These include, among others, the philosophers Catherine Pickstock and Jonathan Robinson, the historians Klaus Gamber and Alcuin Reid, and the anthropologists Victor Turner and David Torvell. Baldovin also devotes an entire chapter to the liturgical theology of Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. The last is particularly useful given Benedict's obvious centrality in the contemporary debate over the liturgy.

In the second half of the book, Baldovin looks at the issues at the center of contemporary debates over the liturgy. He provides an assessment of the specific changes sought by many of those seeking to "reform the reform," such as a preference for worship *ad orientem*, a return to the exclusive use of the Roman Canon, a retrieval of many of the prayers of the 1962 Roman Missal and an end to distributing Communion in the hand. Baldovin strives to be evenhanded in his treatment of these topics and grants the critics a number of points. Overall, though, he holds that many of the proposed cures are worse than the disease.

As a liturgical historian, Baldovin is strongest when addressing the ways in which critics of the reformed liturgy use (and sometimes misuse) history. He argues well and persuasively that the liturgical reforms implemented after the Second Vatican Council reflected the will of the council and were strongly supported by Pope Paul VI and the overwhelming majority of the world's bishops. He also criticizes the view—popular among traditionalists—that the reforms departed from certain principles of "organic development" that had governed liturgical reform prior to Vatican II. While conceding that the council's reforms did represent dramatic change, Baldovin questions whether the Roman Rite has ever had the degree of unchanging stability that many critics of the reform seem to assume. He ultimately turns the metaphor of an "organic" liturgical tradition back upon the critics, asking, "Is it not possible or necessary that broken limbs must be reset to become useful again to the whole organism?"

The book is somewhat weaker in dealing with criticisms of the reformed liturgy that come from the perspective of anthropology and ritual studies. Baldovin offers, for example, a strong challenge to the anthropologist Victor Turner's idealization of the pre-conciliar Mass, but he is less successful in challenging Turner's claim that the celebration of the reformed rites often lacks the sense of

liminality proper to ritual worship.

While he is critical of the positions taken by many of the authors he reviews, Baldovin is sympathetic to some of their concerns. He concedes the point that the reformed liturgy can suffer from a surplus of words and poverty of gesture. Baldovin is also skeptical about recent trends in church architecture, commenting with some obvious frustration that "we need to stop designing churches that look like slightly out of date living rooms." More fundamentally, he argues that we must "combat the narcissistic notion that liturgy exists primarily for us to 'get something out of it,'" and recapture the notion that it is first and foremost God's gift and God's action.

These are welcome and necessary words. To the extent that the movement to "reform the reform" is gaining adherents, it is probably less because they are convinced of the timeless value of the 1962 missal and more because of negative experiences with the current rites. Defenders of the reformed liturgy may need to recover the spirit of the late Aidan Kavanaugh, O.S.B., who combined an uncompromising defense of the reformed liturgy with withering criticism of incompetence in its celebration. Baldovin may lack Kavanaugh's rhetorical edge, but his book remains an important step in the right direction.

J. PETER NIXON *is a Catholic journalist who writes regularly about the liturgy. He works in Oakland, Calif.*

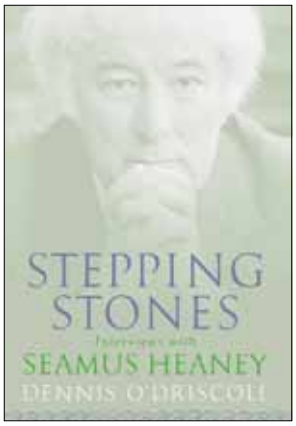
ANDREW J. GARAVEL

AN ANIMATED CONVERSATION

STEPPING STONES
Interviews With Seamus Heaney

By Dennis O'Driscoll
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 560p $32
ISBN 9780374269838

"What attracts you to a poet? A sense that you're in safe hands, artistically speaking, and that the work embodies knowledge of life." So Seamus Heaney explains his affinity for Czeslaw Milosz and other Eastern European writers; but for over 40 years readers have discovered these things in Heaney's own verse: a constant care that "a poem must have the right sound" (a lesson learned first from Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.) along with lines that acknowledge at every turn the givenness of the world, and its sorrow. ("'The deeper register of your understanding, which includes that sense that 'we're going to have to pay for it,' has to be there somehow—even in a celebratory poem.") Despite much attention and many honors (the 1995 Nobel Prize, the bestselling translation of *Beowulf*, and—both blessing and curse—Robert Lowell crowning him the greatest Irish poet since W. B. Yeats), there has never been a full-length study of Heaney's life and work. He will turn 70 this year, and suffered a stroke in 2006 (from which he has recovered completely). Still, as his interviewer Dennis O'Driscoll puts it, *Stepping Stones* represents "a stocktaking, not a summing-up."



Yeats said of Oscar Wilde that he was the only person he ever met who seemed to talk in paragraphs, as if everything he said had been carefully crafted beforehand. The reader initially has a

similar (and slightly jarring) sense here, as the exchanges between Heaney and O'Driscoll take the form of conversation, but are far too shaped to be spontaneous (allusions to Chaucer and T. S. Eliot in one sentence, to James Joyce and Emily Dickinson in another). In fact, O'Driscoll submitted questions over a number of years, and Heaney answered them "principally in writing and by post" in any order and to whatever extent he wished. Nonetheless, it soon feels as if one were listening in on talk between two old friends (there is even some amiable chaffing when it seems Heaney doesn't care for a particular question).

The book begins in a singular fashion: O'Driscoll asks Heaney to take him through his childhood home, the family farmstead at Mossbawn, County Derry, Northern Ireland, giving not only its layout, the outbuildings and furnishings, but the sounds and smells, where things stood in relation to one another and so on. He clearly knows his man. There are few poets to whom the sense of place is more important, and Heaney is more than willing to acknowledge, indeed to honor, that he is the cattle-dealer's son, grounded in the Ulster countryside, yet without romanticizing the facts: "It sounds very idyllic, but it was a small, ordinary, nose-to-the-grindstoney place. A subsistence-level life." His family was nationalist (though not aggressively so) and Catholic (but on good terms with their Protestant neighbors). Here is the beginning of the book's first section, "Bearings," which, in taking us up to the publication of his first volume, *Death of a Naturalist* (1966), locates the poet for us—"locate" being a key term for Heaney, as when O'Driscoll asks him whether he regards his poetry as a way of describing his origins:

> The early-in-life experience has been central to me all right. But

I'd say you aren't so much trying to describe it as trying to locate it. The amount of sensory material stored up or stored down in the brain's and the body's systems is inestimable. It's like a culture at the bottom of a jar, although it doesn't grow, I think, or help anything else to grow unless you find a way to reach it and touch it. But once you do, it's like putting your hand into a nest and finding something beginning to hatch out in your head.

The second and by far the longest section takes up the long process of hatching out: "On the Books," (almost) neatly divided into one chapter for each volume of poetry. One topic was apparently off-limits: Heaney did not want to provide explications of individual poems. (For that, the interested reader can turn to Helen Vendler's *Seamus Heaney*, which would make an excellent companion to this volume.) Instead, he gives background to the works (for example, the grandfather in one of his earliest and most reprinted poems, "Digging," was actually his uncle) and traces his lines of poetic affiliation (he says he does not particularly fret in the shadow of Yeats, while some British and American figures have been far more important: Hopkins above all, along with Lowell, Ted Hughes and Robert Frost). Though the focus is kept squarely on the work, along the way we get the life as well: his marriage to Marie, whom he met at Queen's University, Belfast; teaching at Berkeley and Harvard; pressures from the nationalist community to take a more public stand on "the Troubles" in Northern Ireland; and his enduring the characteristically (though not exclusively) Irish sport of resentful "begrudgery" among writers.

"Coda," the third and final section, covers the period since his illness. Here Heaney speaks of how he has lost his belief in an afterlife (though not the profound sacramental sense his Catholic faith has given him) and of what poetry has taught him: "That there's such a thing as truth and that it can be told/ …that poetry itself has virtue…possessing inherent strength by reason of sheer made-upness…." The title of the book is taken from his Nobel Prize speech, in which he called the poet's vocation "a journey into the wideness of language, a journey where each point of arrival—whether in one's poetry or one's life—turned out to be a stepping stone rather than a destination."

ON THE WEB
James T. Fisher, author of *On the Irish Waterfront*, on the Jesuit labor priests.
americamagazine.org/video

These remarkably rich interviews are indeed stepping stones, leading us to Heaney's poems, again or for the first time.

ANDREW J. GARAVEL, S.J., *is assistant professor of English at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, Calif.*

GEORGE M. ANDERSON

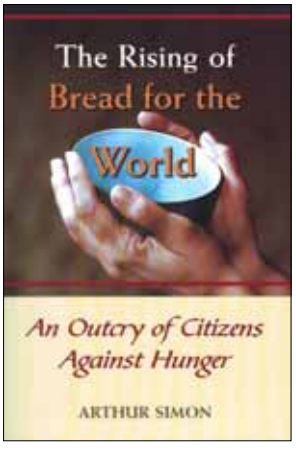
A LOUD, LASTING LOBBY

THE RISING OF BREAD FOR THE WORLD

An Outcry of Citizens Against Hunger

By Arthur Simon
Paulist Press. 176p $16.95 (paperback)
ISBN 9780809146000

A remarkable life that began inconspicuously is how one might characterize the story of Arthur Simon, *The Rising of Bread for the World*. The initially shy son of a Lutheran pastor in Oregon who went on to become a pastor himself, Simon (or simply Art, as many refer to him) is the founder of the citizen-based organization Bread for the World, which has been lobbying for 35 years to eliminate domestic and global hunger. The brother of the late Senator Paul Simon, he has in an indirect sense been a co-worker with him in their battle for justice on behalf of the world's neediest.



Art Simon describes himself early on as "an ordinary pot put to unexpected use." What caused this "ordinary pot" to become a powerhouse of focused energy in combating hunger? It all started when, as a seminarian, he spent time at a Lutheran parish in New York City. That parish was middle class, but Art found time while there to visit one of the city's poorest neighborhoods, the Lower East Side. The visit included a stop at the Catholic Worker, where Dorothy Day was working full tilt on behalf of the destitute. After his ordination in 1959, he eventually became pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in that same neighborhood of crowded tenements, with all the marks of entrenched poverty—including hunger. "I frequently visited families who ran out of food before the end of the month," he writes. Although his parishioners helped meet the immediate food needs of many, the larger solutions went

unachieved.

A breakthrough came one year during Lent. A parish mother suggested "an offering of letters" to their congressman asking for help in meeting the problem of local hunger. The concept of an offering of letters eventually became a key component in the work of Bread for the World. According to its Web site, this can take various forms, from simple letters deposited in church collection plates, to letters written in college dining halls after hunger awareness events, to more sophisticated communications to members of Congress. But they all serve the same purpose: urging those in positions of power to take steps to eradicate hunger. Simon had come to realize that the well-intentioned people in church pews were "largely clueless about the use of citizenship to reduce hunger." In other words, they did not know how to press their Congressional representatives to enact policies benefitting the world's poorest people. For the latter, hunger is a major scourge.

In a sense, the first large-scale "offering of letters" campaign in 1973 marked the real beginning of Bread for the World. As the author puts it, "I wanted to launch Bread for the World not because I was especially well prepared...but because the need was so great." He has done his homework, in researching and writing half a dozen books on various aspects of hunger. Early on, for instance, realizing that he had little understanding of rural hunger in the United States, he spent five weeks visiting Appalachia and southern states, "driving down back roads, knocking on rickety doors and asking people what they faced" as they tried to put food on their often bare tables. The citizens lobby he created stemmed from Christian motivation, and both Catholics as well as Protestants have been involved from the start. Among them have been highly committed religious women,

like Mary Luke Tobin, of the Sisters of Loretto. While Bread for the World has maintained its basic Christian identity, the organization has, in Art's words, welcomed into its membership "people of any faith or no faith."

Bread for the World's efforts have met with both hard-won successes and failures. The latter were particularly evident during the administration of President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, when Reagan's policies were "exceptionally hard on poor people." In President Reagan's first year in office alone, a million people were removed from the food stamp program, one of the most important domestic anti-hunger initiatives. The agriculture secretary at the time, Earl Butz, commented: "Hunger is relative—if your larder is empty, you cut back some." "Cut back on empty?" the author wryly asks.

Art Simon stayed at the helm of Bread for the World until 1991, when David Beckmann, a fellow Lutheran whom he describes as "a missionary economist," succeeded him as president. Art himself remains as president emeritus. The pun in the book's title, "The Rising of Bread for the World," may be lost on a few readers, but those lucky enough to have grown up in households in which the aroma of homemade bread was a reality will understand why the title is appropriate. Lumps of inert dough rise over a number of hours, and once in the oven, emerge as beautifully browned rolls and loaves. The word "rising" thus serves as a reminder that—thanks to Arthur Simon and his collaborators—the work of Bread for the World continues to "rise" in the consciousness of more and more people who realize that hunger is unconscionable in a world with resources sufficient to feed all.

GEORGE M. ANDERSON, S.J., *is an associate editor of* ***America****.*

CLASSIFIED

Books

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LETTERS

Support From the Board

Re: "The Church and the University" (8/31): As Catholics we need to look to the future. We have a unique opportunity to learn from and leverage an event that took place in May on the campus of Notre Dame. In the university's tradition, the president of the United States, Barack Obama, was invited to speak at the commencement and accepted. There the debate began among many as to whether this was appropriate, given the new administration's stance on abortion.

There is no debate as to Notre Dame's position on the sanctity of human life. As Notre Dame's president, John I. Jenkins, C.S.C., has stated many times, including at the commencement, we are unwavering in our support of the Catholic Church's teachings. We oppose President Obama's policies on abortion and embryonic stem cell research.

So what should we learn from this event, and what is the opportunity that it created? The president of the United States came to our campus knowing our position on the sanctity of human life. He was willing to listen to us and was open to dialogue. We also listened to him with respect. The level of national attention to this issue has never been higher. This is the opportunity. In addition to honoring the office of the presidency, we hoped that this invitation would provide an opening for dialogue on those issues on which the Catholic Church and our president are not in agreement. That first step will need to be nurtured.

We must not let this opportunity slip from our grasp. We must work hard at the relationship between our faith and our culture. We cannot take a position that lets the ground lie fallow because we are unwilling to be teachers. It will be a long road. The possibility of meaningful dialogue on vital subjects was increased because of Notre Dame's role as a place where a renewed effort built on courtesy and respect could begin.

During this period some have questioned whether the Notre Dame board of trustees gave any consideration to this matter. A thorough and candid discussion of the invitation to the president to speak and receive an honorary degree occurred. There was no need for a statement or a press release from that meeting because we stayed the course that we were on. It should also be said that the president of Notre Dame, Father Jenkins, had then and has now our total support. From Father Hesburgh to Father Malloy and now Father Jenkins, Notre Dame has been blessed with great leadership.

I would also like to thank Bishop John M. D'Arcy for his leadership and counsel. For 24 years he has served the diocese and supported Notre Dame. We are saddened by his disappointment in Notre Dame and other Catholic colleges throughout the world that subscribed to the landmark *Land O'Lakes Statement* on academic freedom and institutional autonomy. As the bishop has stated, "Notre Dame is a splendid place."

RICHARD C. NOTEBAERT
Chairman, Board of Trustees
University of Notre Dame
South Bend, Ind.

More Dialogue

No one doubts the authority of bishops to pronounce on moral issues. Bishop John D'Arcy's complaint is that Notre Dame has "honored" the president of the United States, although he does not accept the church's teachings regarding abortion.

I myself "honor" many opponents of the church's teaching on abortion by inviting them to my home. In doing so, I do not express any dissent from the church's teaching. On occasion, while

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CARTOON BY HARLEY SCHWADRON

they are there, we discourse on the subject of abortion, and this provides me with an opportunity to articulate the church's position. Maybe, seeing my resolve, they may soften their hearts.

SUSAN M. SMITH
Wallingford, Pa.

A Remarkable Bishop

I applaud Bishop D'Arcy for his article. During his time as bishop of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend he has demonstrated remarkable leadership and strength, especially on issues of morality. I firmly agree that it is due to the work of the passionate student body of Notre Dame that the Catholicity of the university has remained intact. Notre Dame's first priority, as with all Catholic institutions of higher education, is to be a witness to the truth of the Gospel.

MONICA NISTLER
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Condemnation or Dialogue

There is an unfortunate tendency among many to prefer to be "right rather than effective." The two articles in **America** by Bishop John M. D'Arcy and Archbishop John R. Quinn deal with this very conundrum—when is "witnessing" counter to Christ's directive to love above all else.

My beloved Benedictine college, Saint Vincent, invited President Bush to give the commencement address. Many at the college felt this was inappropriate; they claimed he did not emulate Benedictine virtues. President Bush was invited on the Benedictine principle of "hospitality," which welcomes anyone who comes to the monastery.

And so I tend to agree with Archbishop Quinn, Pope John Paul II and the Second Vatican Council's *Christus Dominus* (No. 13). We had an opportunity for dialogue with someone we disagree with on this issue but agree with on many issues of social justice.

Let's hope Obama's visit to Notre

Dame will be the start of a determined effort to gain mutual understanding of how to promote reverence for all life.

CHARLES F. KELLER
Los Alamos, N.M.

Humbly Human

Bishop D'Arcy's take on the Obama-University of Notre Dame fiasco offers at least this practitioner of the faith such a balanced and intelligent, at the same time humbly human, range of insights as to all but restore trust in our hierarchy's grasp of what its "world's most important assignment" needs to consist of.

JAMES C. G. CONNIFF
Upper Montclair, N.J.

Truly Ecumenical

Thanks to Archbishop Quinn. Civic respect and tolerance are essential values in the Christian witness. We have learned to be ecumenical with those of other religions. We must be ecumenical also with those who do not share our moral values.

MICHAEL McGUCKIAN, S.J.
Galway, Eire

Teaching Mission

What a pity that Archbishop Quinn's remarks were not presented and discussed at the bishops' meeting! I hope that this can be remedied at the next one, because his recommendation is critical to the teaching mission of the church.

While it is important to speak the truth, how it is spoken and with what respect for the audience dramatically affects how the message is received.

When the bishops are perceived as closed-minded, partisan and arrogant, their teaching on other justice issues will be ignored as well.

PEGGY SAUNDERS
San Carlos, Calif.

Support and Oppose

Is there anyone in the United States, Catholic or not, who believes that the University of Notre Dame, its admin-

istration, faculty or student body support abortion? Would the bishop deny an honorary degree to someone who supports the death penalty? Would he deny such to George Weigel, who opposes the church's position on the definition of a just war? These matters are also part of the "Catholic faith in all of its fullness" and are also "life" issues.

Let the church and its related universities continue to support the president on those life and social justice issues on which we agree and continue to oppose him on the others.

ROBERT M. ROWDEN
San Rafael, Calif.

Dignity, Logic, Charity

Bishop D'Arcy's letter is a classic, comparable in dignity and stature with Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter From Birmingham Jail*. Without a scintilla of meanness and with a heart full of affection for Notre Dame, he makes his case with dignity, logic and charity. Three cheers for the good bishop!

JOHN McCARTHY
Weston, Mass.

The Real Question

Bishop D'Arcy has gotten right to the point. The question is, What is the relationship between the Catholic University and the local bishop? Does the role of the bishop apply inside the gates of the university?

The actions of the president and board of Notre Dame have not been consistent with a Catholic identity. Notre Dame is free to honor whomever it wants, but it cannot be Catholic and not-Catholic at the same time.

SUSAN HUBBARD
Bentonville, Ark.

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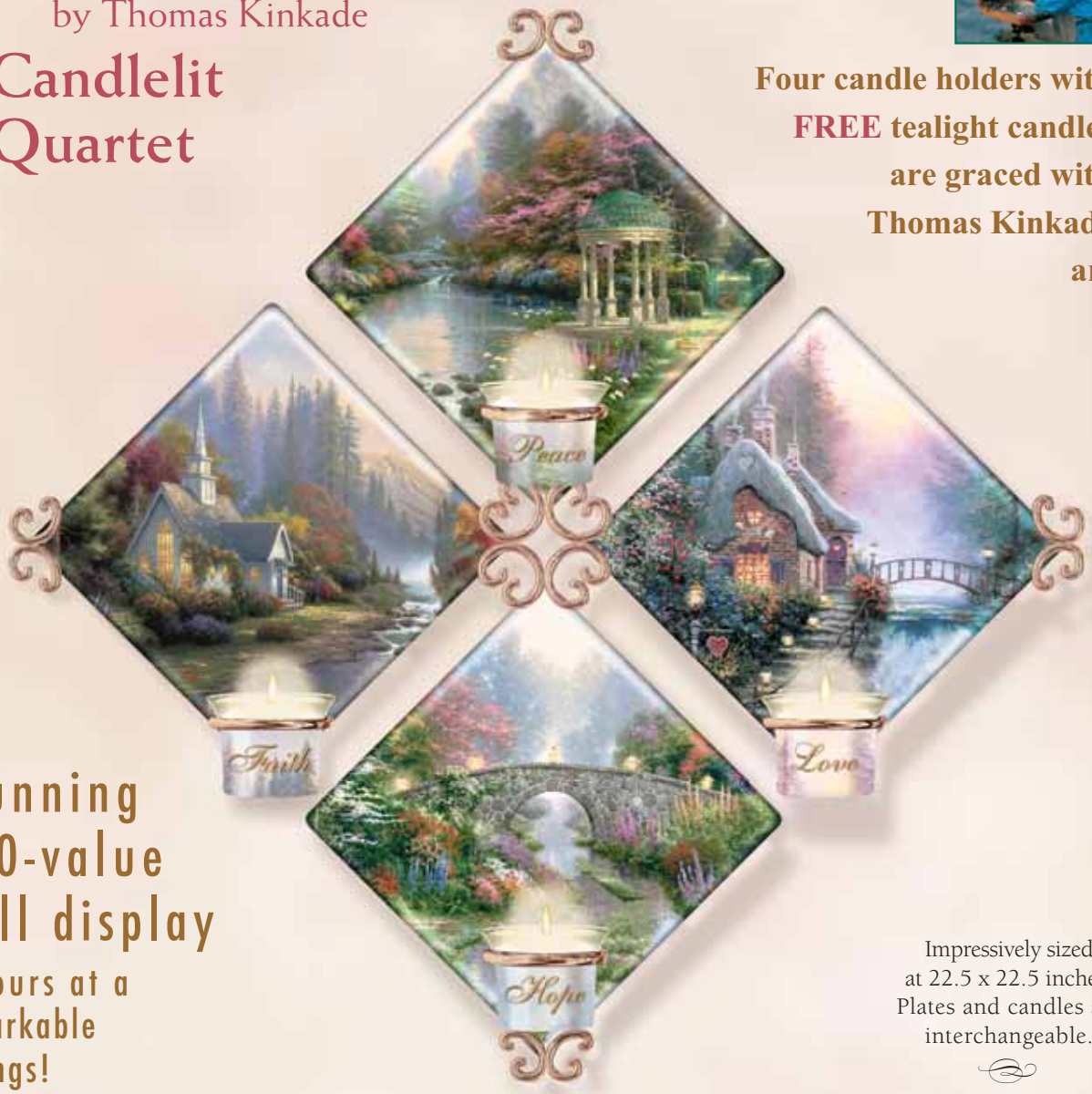

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Gifts and Status; True Authority

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), SEPT. 20, 2009

Readings: Wis 2:12, 17-20; Ps 54:3–8; Jas 3:16–4:3; Mk 9:30-37

"Taking a child, he placed it in their midst" (Mk 9:36)

In some faith communities, the same people are called upon time after time to serve on the most influential committees and make all the important decisions. They may be tried and true in terms of the wisdom they have to offer, or they may be generous donors who deserve a say in what is done with their contribution. Certain other people are always passed over. They themselves may not recognize the gifts they have to offer until someone calls them forth and helps them develop their talents. This is what Jesus does in today's Gospel.

While his disciples are wrangling over who is the greatest among them, Jesus turns to those who are left out, wraps his arms around one, and pulls him or her into the very center of the circle. Jesus teaches his disciples that the one who appears most vulnerable and seems to need the greatest amount of care can also be the one who has the most to teach us about what it is to be Christlike and God-like.

This teaching is especially ironic because Jesus has just finished telling his disciples that he will be killed and then rise from the dead. They miss the import. Instead, the Twelve are worried about who is first in his affections and in the exercise of his mission.

For most disciples the temptation is not to seek honor and glory and high positions. Having interiorized Jesus' mandate to be "servant of all," we may find ourselves falling prey to the subtle desire to become the greatest of servants—the one who sits on the most committees, spends the most hours in prayer, teaches the greatest number of students, preaches the best homilies. Jesus redirects his disciples' attention to those who are most vulnerable and whose gifts are undervalued and least developed. Those of us who would be good leaders in the pattern of Jesus must turn to those of lowest status, embrace them and bring them into the midst of the circle.

In this Gospel passage Jesus is addressing disciples who have some measure of power, privilege and status; he invites them to a leadership style based on relinquishment and service to all, especially the most needy. By contrast, Jesus' leadership empowers those who are forced into positions of servitude in society and places them at the center.

This manner of acting diffuses the jealousy and selfish ambition that James decries in the second reading. James chronicles all kinds of undesirable results that come from choices based on self-interest. The first reading, by contrast, like the Gospel, speaks about a manner of leadership by persons devoted to justice and peace-building and warns of the negative consequences that befall them. It exposes the thinking of wicked ones who resent an upright person who speaks the truth to them about the need to mend their ways. They would sooner kill than heed such a messenger. They plot to torture and kill the upright one, testing not only the genuineness of the just one, but even putting God's faithfulness on trial.

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- What opportunities do you have to draw into your circle one who is usually overlooked?
- Ask the Spirit to purify in you any desires for greatness and recognition.

. . .

- When have you experienced a healing word or touch from one who was not an authorized minister?
- How does the process of authorizing ministers safeguard the church?

ART: TAD DUNNE

They mistakenly think that the proof of intimacy with God is preservation from harm. St. Teresa of Ávila remarked on this paradox, complaining to God about the trials and tribulations she had to endure on account of her closeness to God, "If this is how you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few!" That God upholds the faithful, even if the manner of doing so is inscrutable to us, is affirmed in today's responsorial psalm.

BARBARA E. REID, O.P., *a member of the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich., is a professor of New Testament studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Ill., where she has been named vice president and academic dean.*

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B), SEPT. 27, 2009

Readings: Nm 11:25-29; Ps 19:8–14; Jas 5:1-6; Mk 38–48

"Would that the Lord might bestow the Spirit on them all!" (Nm 11:29)

Presidents of nations and other leaders with wide influence usually have a designated spokesperson who makes sure that the leader's message is conveyed accurately and consistently. The leader exercises a measure of control, ensuring that the spokesperson follows the script, and that no one who is unauthorized is given credence. That is not necessarily the way it is in ministry, however.

In both the first reading and in the Gospel, individuals who are not authorized by Moses and by Jesus, respectively, exercise a ministry akin to the leaders without their prior approbation. Take Eldad and Medad; they had not gone out to the tent of meeting along with the other 70, upon whom God bestowed a share of the spirit that was upon Moses. Nonetheless, the spirit came to rest upon them, too; like the others, they began to speak prophetically in the camp.

This was most distressing to Joshua, who insisted that they be stopped. The text does not elaborate on Joshua's motives. Was he resentful, because he had trained at Moses' side from his youth and followed carefully all the directives, whereas these two appeared suddenly and began to minister with the others? Moses assures Joshua that the prophesying of Eldad and Medad in no way diminishes Moses' own authority as a prophet.

In fact, it was Moses' own complaint to God about his too heavy burden of leadership that prompted God to bestow the Spirit on others who could lighten the load. Moses exclaims his wish that all the people would prophesy in God's spirit. He recognizes that while not all are officially authorized to prophesy, all do have a measure of the prophetic gift to be shared. The community, moreover, under the guidance of the Spirit, has a responsibility to choose, prepare and authorize its spokespersons. But even the best and most careful process can exclude some whose gifts do not elude the Spirit, who always blows where she will.

A similar scene is played out in the Gospel, where Jesus' disciples are upset about an exorcist who claims Jesus' authority as he casts out demons. Jesus insists that the disciples stop trying to prevent the exorcist from exercising his ministry, even though he is not an official follower of Jesus.

It is curious that in both instances, those who want to be officially recognized ministers are sadly focused on a perceived threat to their own authority, rather than on the recipients of the ministry.

Joshua might have asked: What is the effect of the prophetic word spoken by the two who were not authorized? Is it unleashing God's freeing love in the hearers? Likewise, the disciples might have asked: Was the other exorcist freeing people from tormenting forces that blocked their ability to love and be loved? A word of approval from the wise leaders, Moses and Jesus, served to re-orient their followers toward the important matter of ensuring that the pressing needs of their people be addressed by whomever the Spirit empowered to do so. Jesus also directs his disciples to reflect on the ministry they receive from others. When they know themselves as needy, they can learn, by accepting the gift of a cup of water, to shift their attention away from the prerogatives of credentialed ministry toward the neediness of those to whom their service is rendered.

BARBARA E. REID

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