America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY JUNE 7-14, 2010 $3.50

Britain's Surprise Coalition

AUSTEN IVEREIGH • MATT MALONE

ROGER MAHONY ON IMMIGRATION LAW

ALSO: THE 2010 FOLEY AWARD POEM

OF MANY THINGS

With summer close and American vacationers heading abroad even in these recessionary times, my eye caught sight of a travel book shelved down the hall from my office at **America**. *Little Women Abroad: The Alcott Sisters' Letters From Europe, 1870-1871* met my hopes for taking a trip with them.

The European tour of Louisa May, her artist sister, also named May, and a friend was hardly the kind typified by such newly rich Jamesian characters as the American Daisy Miller, with their sojourns in sumptuous hotels. The Alcotts stayed initially in small boarding houses (*pensions*); and although they did eventually reach Florence and Rome, they passed their first two months in the French town of Dinan. The tenor of their visit there was quiet. "Nothing very astonishing has happened," Louisa writes contentedly to the family back home, but that suited Louisa's needs. Exhausted by her writing efforts, and suffering from rheumatism ("my wretched bones...never stop aching," she writes), a local doctor prescribed "a little opium" to help her sleep.

Famous as the author of *Little Women*, Louisa May's earnings helped with the daily expenses of the family back in Concord, Mass. But she urged them not to neglect their needs: "Don't go poor...or I shan't feel I had any right to be here so idle," she says in one good-natured letter. Meals at the *pension* in Dinan were enormous. In one of her own letters home, May speaks of breakfast as consisting of "omulette [sic], such as only the French can make, cold meat chops, toast, tea and oatmeal pudding." Not surprisingly, they claimed to grow "perceptibly fat from day to day."

They were delighted at the modest cost of the *pension*, which included a salon of their own where they wrote their letters and a "sleeping room" with canopied beds. The book includes a sketch of that and the salon, along with one of the landlady, a servant and other boarders.

Since there were several dressmakers in Dinan, the sisters took advantage of the low cost of living by ordering fabric from Paris and then having dresses locally made. So numerous were their purchases, in fact, that on reaching Tours, they bought a large trunk, "for things accumulate fearfully and we have no room now without crushing our clothes." In major tourist cities like Geneva, lodging costs rose "for we have to stop at good hotels being women"—a telling comment on the perceived dangers of travel abroad for unaccompanied women in 19th-century Europe.

As Protestants, the Alcotts were dismissive of the "good deal of mumbo jumbo" spoken by Catholic priests at one church they visited, though they spoke admiringly of "a boy with a lovely voice up in the choir like a little angel among the clouds." During a train ride, they sat opposite "a little priest, so young that we called him Rev. Boy." Louisa May adds with amusement that he stole sly looks at "my buckled shoes which were like his own and seemed to strike him as a liberty on my part."

Wherever English-speaking people crossed their paths, the Alcott name, well known even abroad by then, attracted attention. At a small town in Switzerland, May wrote: "Lu's fame follows her even here...for yesterday a New York lady and her two stylish daughters were quite excited on looking over the hotel-book to see Miss Alcott's name, and...enquired if it was the Miss Alcott who wrote 'Little Women,'" and were much impressed when they found it was "the lion." But when the Franco-Prussian war broke out, they decided to start for home, where Louisa May would continue her writing career until her death at 56. A brief life, even for those times. Her work, though, clearly remains in the public eye today, as the shelves of schools and public libraries here and abroad can testify.

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Cover: Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron, left, talks to Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg on the steps of 10 Downing Street in London on May 12, 2010. Reuters/Cathal McNaughton

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Pastoring the South Shore

Hingham is a town on Boston's tony South Shore, whose Main Street was once called by Eleanor Roosevelt the most beautiful street in the country. It is an attractive town. Recently, however, the town was the scene of a not-so-attractive controversy. The pastor of Hingham's St. Paul's Parish forbade an 8-year-old boy from entering the parish elementary school because his parents are lesbian. The couple was told by the pastor that their relationship was "in discord with the teachings of the Catholic Church."

The Archdiocese of Boston addressed the situation, which seems to have taken it by surprise, with wisdom and care. Initially, Mary Grassa O'Neill, the superintendent of Catholic schools, said, "The archdiocese does not prohibit children of same-sex parents from attending Catholic schools. We will work in the coming weeks to develop a policy to eliminate any misunderstandings in the future." She also offered to find another school that would welcome the child. Later Cardinal Sean O'Malley, archbishop of Boston, praised the Hingham priest as one of the best pastors in his diocese, but also wrote the following on his blog: "Catholic schools exist for the good of the children and our admission standards must reflect that. We have never had categories of people who were excluded." Going forward, Cardinal O'Malley promised, the archdiocese would "formulate policies and practices to deal with these complex pastoral matters." Their first concern, he wrote, "is the welfare of the children involved."

Overall, the archdiocese adopted a wise, compassionate and pastoral approach to a question that will increasingly face many Catholic schools, to which children come from all sorts of family situations.

No Bailout for Teens

Summer is here, but summer jobs and entry-level jobs for teens are in crushingly short supply. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than six million youths age 16 to 19 are seeking work, but fewer than one in three currently holds a job. As measured against the past, a smaller percentage of U.S. teenagers are working this year than in any year since 1948, when the government began collecting employment data.

Although the national rate of unemployment is poised to reach (or supersede) 10 percent over the next few months, teenage joblessness is more than twice that rate, having grown to 25.4 percent from 21.8 percent between April 2009 and April 2010. And for black teenagers, unemployment stands at 37.3 percent. This dismal situation shortchanges teenagers, deprives them of daily structure, vital experience, job skills and income. Not all teenage wages are used for incidentals; some teens help support their parents and siblings, and more than a few teenagers are parents with their own families to provide for.

The federal stimulus that subsidized a mere 7,000 jobs for youths last year has not been replenished. The House passed a youth jobs bill, but a similar Senate bill was defeated. Senators Patty Murray of Washington and John Kerry of Massachusetts proposed $1.3 billion of federal spending to create 500,000 jobs for teenagers. But the Senate could not agree on the spending cuts needed to pay for the bill. The Congressional Black Caucus, knowing that joblessness causes stress and can spark violence, especially in hot inner cities, argued that teen joblessness was an "emergency" that should exempt it from the "pay as you go" rule. That argument did not wash either. The rebuttal was ironic: those who voted against the jobs bill did not want to burden our children with a bigger national debt.

Words, Words, Words

How much is a word worth? If it is the name of a new drug on the market, it could be several hundred thousand dollars. Some companies make it their business to invent, test and trademark brand names. Remember when Esso became Exxon? The Chevrolet Nova initially did not sell well in Mexico, because there No Va means No Go. But there is an Acura, an Infiniti, an Impala and a Lexus.

In the beginning, God made the creatures and gave Adam the power to name them. "The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal in the field" (Gn 2:20). God also numbered and named the stars (Is 40:16). Quite a task, since there are billions and billions of stars!

Now we mere mortals create thousands of new products and name them. Over 30,000 prescription drugs are trademarked in the United States alone. Eventually many of these brand names will make it into our dictionaries.

Naming a child is another creative act. New names and new spellings emerge. The letter K (Katherine, Katelyn) is much more popular than C. While we continually add new words to the dictionary, do words ever drop out? The Oxford English Dictionary lists 171,476 words in current use and 47,156 obsolete words. It is good that unusual and dying words are cataloged, because they too are part of our heritage; and surely someone at some time will want to know what a typewriter or a phonograph needle was.

‘Read Him His Rights’

Television police dramas are crowded with scenes in which the hardened detective pushes a suspect up against an alley wall and intones, “You have the right to remain silent....” This is the familiar language of the so-called Miranda warning, used to ensure that people arrested in the United States have at least a minimal understanding of their rights when they are facing criminal prosecution, above all the right to “clam up” and “lawyer up.” The warning obviously helps protect the rights of the suspect, but, worth remembering, it also clears the path for police to use at trial any incriminating information they gather during interrogation.

Since its first use after the U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case Miranda v. Arizona in 1966, the warning represents the first line of a criminal suspect’s defense even as it stands as the last line of protection for U.S. civil liberties. The era of the police procedural drama on television helped familiarize the entire nation with Miranda and what it meant.

Now a different kind of television drama is contributing to efforts to water it down. This one tantalizes with easy resolutions of terrorist threats at the hands of brutal if effective operatives dispatched by murky government agencies. Call it the Jack Bauer effect. In the imagined landscape of the show “24,” the bad guys of course do not deserve the protection offered by Miranda, and the civil liberty it protects puts an unnecessary burden on investigators at the same time that it increases the threat to public safety.

That indictment of Miranda makes good TV drama, but it has little to do with events in the real world. In two nonfictional attempted terror strikes on U.S. soil, both terror suspects were properly Mirandized. The Christmas bomber, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, after initially exercising his right to remain silent, has become a veritable font of information about his training and the terror network that activated him. The similarly Mirandized Times Square bomber, Faisal Shahzad—a U.S. citizen, it should be remembered—has likewise been an eager source of information for U.S. antiterror efforts. So which reality should we refer to when constructing public policy: Jack Bauer’s fantasy land of suspended civil liberties and intelligence extracted by torture or the real-world experience of the interrogations of Shahzad and Abdulmutallab, which have yielded a bonanza of good information for antiterror efforts?

Nonetheless Attorney General Eric Holder has begun sending up trial balloon proposals for updating Miranda. Following the arrest of Shahzad, he and the Obama administration were roundly criticized because arresting officers followed the law and informed Shazad of his rights. Now Holder claims to be interested in seeking “necessary flexibility” to gather information from terror suspects by having Congress rework the Miranda rules. The Obama administration appears poised to fix a problem terror investigators do not have by revisiting a premier element of a civil liberty that citizens of a mature democracy should be able to take for granted. Let’s remember that a Supreme Court decision from 1984 already offers a public safety exception to Miranda. Mr. Holder has said that the Obama administration will seek only to clarify that ruling—a commitment to which it must be firmly held if it cannot be dissuaded from messing with Miranda in the first place.

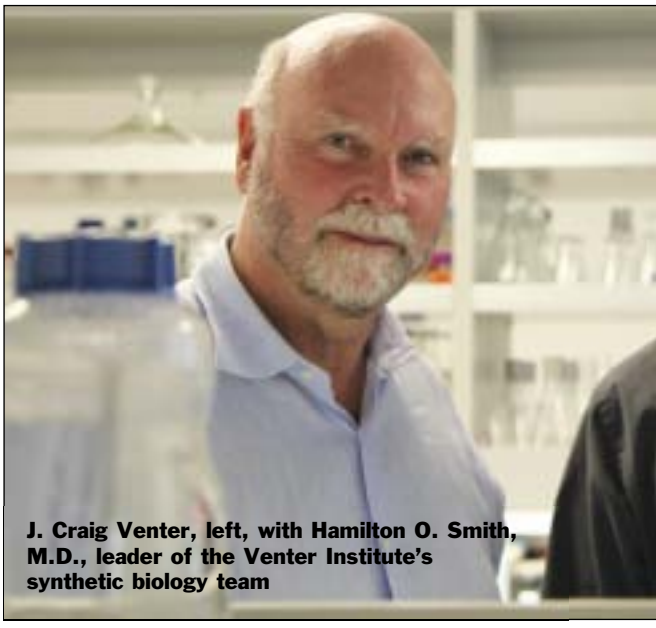
As a candidate the president often remarked that the nation need not surrender its cultural values in order to defeat global terror, but since assuming office he has adopted many of the extraordinary powers first claimed for the president in the Bush era. The Obama administration has continued or accelerated information-gathering techniques that have raised concerns among civil libertarians, and it now proposes to reconsider Miranda’s unique role in U.S. jurisprudence. How much weaker can we make Miranda before we diminish the liberty of all Americans in an effort to thwart those who threaten them?

We have already surrendered much, and perhaps more that we still do not know about, in the effort against global terror networks. But people all over the world still hold the American judicial system in high esteem. Part of the reason the parents of the failed Christmas bomber Abdulmutallab were so willing to cooperate in his interrogation—his father tipped off American officials about the possible threat from their son—was their high regard for the U.S. legal system and their confidence that their son would be treated fairly and humanely.

Let’s not give them, and free people everywhere who may wish to assist the United States against terrorism in the future, reason to suspect that America is wavering in its commitment to fairness and the rule of law out of a desire to achieve maximum security. Let us not write off so easily a simple police procedure that has helped protect American civil liberties for decades.

BIOETHICS

Vatican Greets First Synthetic Cell With Caution


J. Craig Venter, left, with Hamilton O. Smith, M.D., leader of the Venter Institute's synthetic biology team

The successful development of a synthetic cell can have many practical applications, but the technology must be regulated, said the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, commenting on a recent and long-sought scientific breakthrough in the United States that has already provoked a vigorous debate among bioethicists. After almost 15 years of work and the expenditure of $40 million, researchers at the J. Craig Venter Institute, a not-for-profit genomic research organization, announced on May 20 that they had successfully constructed the first self-replicating, synthetic bacterial cell. The synthetic cell is proof of the principle that genomes can be designed on a computer, chemically made in a laboratory and transplanted into a recipient cell to produce a new self-replicating cell controlled only by the synthetic genome.

The development was a source of alarm to some. Bishop Domenico Mogavero of Mazara del Vallo, chairman of the Italian bishops' legal affairs committee, said that the new form of life "is a potential time bomb, a dangerous double-edged sword for which it is impossible to imagine the consequences." Bishop Mogavero said, "Pretending to be God and parroting his power of creation is an enormous risk that can plunge men into barbarity."

The breakthrough is significant because scientists believe such synthetic cells could lead to the development of many important applications and products, including biofuels and vaccines and new pharmaceutical, water purification and food products.

HEALTH CARE

Cardinal Backs Bipartisan Fix For Health Care Reform Act

A bipartisan bill before the House of Representatives would bring the new health care reform law "into line with policies on abortion and conscience rights that have long prevailed in other federal health programs," said the head of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities. In a letter on May 20 to House members, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo of Galveston-Houston urged passage of H.R. 5111, legislation proposed by two representatives, Joseph Pitts, a Pennsylvania Republican, and Dan Lipinski, Democrat of Illinois, and co-sponsored by 91 other House members. "Efforts to ensure that our health care system serves the life, health and conscience of all will be a legislative goal of the Catholic bishops in the months to come," Cardinal DiNardo said, adding that the Pitts-Lipinski proposal makes "a significant contribution to this important task."

The cardinal warned, however, that if "these genuine problems are not addressed in their own right, they will be taken up and used as ammunition by those who favor repealing [the health reform law] outright, which would eliminate the positive as well as negative aspects of the new law."

In introducing the Protect Life Act on April 22, Pitts said that the legislation signed by President Obama lacked "critical safeguards" that had been approved earlier by the House. "The new health care law is riddled with loopholes that allow taxpayer subsidies for coverage that includes abortion," he said. "My new bill would extend longstanding policy by preventing federal dollars from being used to pay for abortion coverage."

Cardinal DiNardo said the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, signed into law on March 23, was "an important step toward ensuring access to health coverage for all Americans" but was "profoundly flawed in its treatment of abortion, conscience rights and fairness to immigrants." He also

FROM CNS AND OTHER SOURCES

J. Craig Venter, the institute's founder and president, said, "We have been consumed by this research, but we have also been equally focused on addressing the societal implications of what we believe will be one of the most powerful technologies and industrial drivers for societal good.

"Synthetic biology certainly raises deep philosophical and moral questions about the human relationship to nature," said Gregory Kaebnick, a Hastings Center scholar managing a project that is reviewing the ethical implications of the emerging field. "If by 'nature' we mean the world around us, more or less as we found it, we may well decide that synthetic biology does not really change the human relationship to nature—and may even help us preserve what is left of it," he said.

Thomas H. Murray, president of the Hastings Center and the project's principal investigator, said, "We have come up against similar problems in other domains—most notably, in work on nanotechnology and gene transfer technology—but synthetic biology poses them especially sharply and pressingly."

Venter's creation has produced "an interesting result," which could have many applications, but the new technology "must have rules just like everything that lies at the heart of life," L'Osservatore Romano said on May 23. "Genetic engineering can be used for good," particularly in treating genetic diseases, it said. But caution must be exercised, as "many people in fact are concerned about the possible future developments of genetically modified organisms." L'Osservatore Romano emphasized that Venter's scientists had not created life, but had "substituted one of its engines."

Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, president of the Italian bishops' conference, said that the development of the first synthetic cell was a "further sign of human intelligence, which is a great gift of God." However, with intelligence comes responsibility, he said. Therefore, any intellectual or scientific advancement "must always measure up to an ethical standard."

said the executive order signed by President Obama on March 24 "does not address, or claim to address, several of the problems."

Cardinal DiNardo said the Protect Life Act would ensure that all funds "authorized or appropriated" by the new health reform law would be covered by the Hyde Amendment, which limits federal funding of abortions to cases of rape, incest and danger to the mother's life and would prevent the use of federal funds to subsidize health plans that cover abortions beyond those permitted by Hyde. Cardinal DiNardo said the bill restores a conscience provision approved by the House last November to ensure that federal, state and local governmental entities receiving federal funds may not discriminate against health care providers who decline to participate in abortions and stipulates that state laws restricting abortion or protecting conscience rights will not be pre-empted by the federal health reform law.

The U.S.C.C.B.'s interpretation of the reform act and the necessity of this attempt to address its purported shortcomings were challenged by the legal scholar Timothy Stoltzfus Jost. In an article on the Commonweal magazine Web site, Jost wrote: "From a pro-life perspective, there is nothing objectionable in H.R. 5111, but the U.S.C.C.B. is wrong to claim that the bill is necessary to prevent federal funding of abortion and to ensure conscience protections in health reform. Under [the health care reform act], federal funds cannot be used to pay for abortion and the consciences of health-care providers are protected."

Kristan Hawkins, executive director of Students for Life, during a 2009 news conference on Capitol Hill

Honduras Urged to Protect Journalists

A group of U.N. human rights experts urged the Honduran government to take immediate action to end violence against journalists. Seven media professionals have been killed during April and May alone, and several others have been threatened. "We urge the government to take all necessary measures to thoroughly investigate these killings and threats, prosecute those responsible and ensure the physical and psychological integrity of all journalists under threat," the U.N. special rapporteurs said in a statement issued in Geneva on May 10. "In particular, we call upon the government to establish an independent inquiry aimed at shedding light on these issues, as well as at identifying measures that could be taken to better protect journalists." Honduran authorities classified a report on the killings, but Public Security Minister Oscar Álvarez insisted that they were not motivated by politics or ideology.

U.S.C.C.B. Withdraws From Rights Group

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has withdrawn from the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, citing the group's "expanded and broadened agenda." In announcing the withdrawal on May 19, Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, N.Y., chairman of the bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Peace, pointed to the rights group's support of the nomination of Elena Kagan to the U.S. Supreme Court as the most recent example of how the concerns of the two organizations have diverged. The civil rights conference, said Bishop Murphy, "has moved beyond advocacy of traditional civil rights to advocacy of positions which do not reflect the principles and policies of the bishops' conference." Traditionally, the bishops have been neutral on court nominees, said Mary Ann Walsh, R.S.M., who is director of media relations for the bishops' conference. Kagan, now the U.S. solicitor general, was nominated by President Obama on May 10 to replace the retiring Justice John Paul Stevens.

Sister Excommunicated Over Abortion

Margaret Mary McBride, a member of the Sisters of Mercy who concurred in an ethics committee's decision to abort the fetus of a gravely ill woman at St. Joseph's Hospital in Phoenix, Ariz., was "automatically excommunicated by that action," said Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of Phoenix in a statement on May 14. The patient, who has not been identified, was 11 weeks pregnant and suffering from pulmonary hypertension, a condition that the hospital said carried a near-certain risk of death for the mother if the pregnancy continued. "If there had been a way to save the pregnancy and still prevent the death of the mother, we would have done it. We are convinced there was not," said a letter to Bishop Olmsted on May 17 from top officials at Catholic Healthcare West, the San Francisco-based health system to which the hospital belongs. But the bishop said that "the direct killing of an unborn child is always immoral, no matter the circumstances, and it cannot be permitted in any institution that claims to be authentically Catholic."

NEWS BRIEFS

Pope Benedict XVI with Hissa al-Otaiba

Brazilian bishops condemned the release of the rancher **Regivaldo Galvão** while he appeals his 30-year sentence for the assassination of U.S.-born Sister Dorothy Stang in 2005. ✦ **British pro-life groups** vowed to take all legal steps possible to halt the broadcast of advertisements for abortion services on U.K. television. ✦ "I assure you of the desire of the Catholic Christians present in your country to contribute to the well-being of your society, to live God-fearing lives and to respect the dignity of all peoples and religions," Pope Benedict XVI told **Hissa Abdulla Ahmed al-Otaiba**, the first ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the Vatican. ✦ **Matt Wessel**, a liturgical musician and composer from Milwaukee, Wis., has launched the Web site www.holymeasures.com to allow composers to sell their own work directly. ✦ On May 19, the **bishops of Belgium** sought forgiveness from victims of sexual abuse by priests and promised steps to curb the problem in the future. ✦ Polish astronomer **Nicolaus Copernicus**, buried in an unmarked grave nearly 500 years ago because the church believed his theories were heretical, was reburied and honored in a ceremony at Frombork Cathedral in northern Poland on May 22.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE

Answer the Call

My 1-year-old and 3-year-old love my cellphone. "Hello? Hello? Beep, beep. Yeah!" Its lights and sounds delight them. Our 6-year-old is not a fan. When she was younger she threw a cellphone in the trash, another in the toilet and used any opportunity to hide them. They were the enemy, disrupting our home with calls from work, hurting more than helping, she thought.

I share her concerns, but mine go beyond the work/family balance and include the lives that hang in the balance because of cellphone production. Cellphones, laptop computers and other consumer electronic devices use coltan (tantalum) and other minerals (tin, tungsten, gold) in their circuitry. But presently the unregulated, nontransparent trade in minerals fuels the horrific war in the Congo. Rebels fight for control of the mines and profits. They rape and mutilate young girls and women to destroy communities and drive people away from the mine areas, in what the United Nations deems war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The International Rescue Committee estimates nearly six million people have died in the conflict in the Congo. More than a million refugees and internally displaced persons have been forced from their homes. The price of our phones is higher than we think.

Recently, I fished the phone away from the kids and slipped out the door. I was on my way to the Capitol to lobby members of Congress to support S. 891 and H.R. 4128, bills that would increase the transparency of the global supply chain so our cellphone purchases could help the people of Congo rather than hurt them. I called Jerry Ernst, organizer of our delegation, many of whom are parishioners from St. Camillus parish in Silver Spring, Md. Jerry and his wife, Sherelyn, became active on this issue when their daughter Amy, a rape counselor, began working with child rape victims in eastern Congo through the Crosier, a Catholic religious order. On her blog (http://theking effect.blogspot.com), Amy describes the girl-mothers with whom she works.

> Unregulated trade in minerals fuels the horrific war in the Congo.

Jerry fielded multiple calls to shepherd us on the Hill. Beatrice Mundela and Iyofe Christine Kankwenda, parishioners who are members of the Congolese diaspora, speak softly but powerfully about the violence their communities are enduring. "We are afraid to pick up phone calls from home," Iyofe says, "afraid to hear what has happened." George Alula, a Congolese presidential candidate in 2006, distributed copies of his book in DVD format, *The Ignored Economic Genocide*. Jacek Orzechowski, O.F.M., delivered letters and pictures from St. Camillus schoolchildren urging action. I prayed silently as we trudged through the rain from one Congressional office to another: "Ask and ye shall receive."

While we walked the halls of Congress, others took the message to the Internet. The human rights activist Lisa Shannon, the author of *A Thousand Sisters* and founder of Run for Congo Women, organized protests at Intel's Oregon headquarters (Intel opposes the legislation) and brought jars of pennies representing the estimated one penny per product it would cost to audit supply chains to make products conflict-mineral free. They inundated Intel's Facebook page with requests to make products free of conflict minerals. Intel responded clumsily, closing its Facebook page to posts on May 19.

What can you do? Write your Congressional representatives and ask them to support the bills. Write, send e-mail, post on Facebook and Twitter to the makers of your cellphones, laptops and Intel, and let them know that you want your products free of conflict minerals. Organize a group to lobby members of Congress. Join the Catholics Confront Global Poverty initiative sponsored by Catholic Relief Services and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/). Interviews with members of our delegation are available at http://crs-blog.org/congo-crisis-delegates-stories-inspire.

Consumer transparency and advocacy campaigns have succeeded in the past, from dolphin-free tuna to conflict-free diamonds. We can do it again. Together we can put the warlords out of business and return the profits from the mineral trade to the Congolese people. Then I'll join my kids in their enthusiasm for cellphones.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE, *during her sabbatical from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., is a fellow at the Commission on International Religious Freedom.*

David Cameron, lower left, and Nick Clegg, center, with members of the new cabinet in the garden of 10 Downing Street, May 13, 2010.

PHOTO: REUTERS/ANDREW WINNING

CAN A NEW PARTNERSHIP SOLVE THE U.K.'S OLD PROBLEMS?

Britain's Surprise Coalition

BY AUSTEN IVEREIGH

"The British people have spoken," said a commentator on May 7, 2010, as the final votes in Britain's general election were counted, "but it's going to take a while to work out what they're trying to say." And so it proved. The Conservatives had won the most seats (306), but not a governing majority (326). Labour had lost, but not as badly (258) as feared. The Liberal Democrats, whose unprecedented bounce during the election campaign should have robbed seats from the bigger parties, did little better (57) than in previous elections. The little parties—the Greens, anti-Europeans and nationalists—did even worse (28).

With an inconclusive vote, Parliament was hung. Gordon Brown remained prime minister, but power drained from under him and dangled over the other contenders, never quite landing. In that febrile, limbo time, as the party delegations went in and out of each other's offices, what happened was pure politics of a sort that has not occurred in generations. The result is both impressive and unprecedented.

Days after the vote, Britain had its first coalition government in 65 years, a merger of David Cameron's Conservatives and Nick Clegg's Liberal Democrats. Soon after the Queen invited Cameron to form the new government, he and Mr. Clegg appeared together on the lawn in Downing Street to declare that party differences had been put aside in the national interest in order to enable the strong, stable and determined leadership needed to address Britain's big challenges. Mr. Cameron listed them: to safeguard national security, tackle the debt crisis, repair the broken political system and build a stronger society.

"But we're not just announcing a new government," said the prime minister, with Mr. Clegg smiling beside him, "but a new politics." There was talk of a shift in the political landscape, a new "progressive partnership" that would enable a green economy, civil liberties, a big society where family and communities matter, where power is devolved to the people and politics is again "clean, open and plural." Theirs, Mr. Clegg said, would be a "bold and reforming government."

AUSTEN IVEREIGH *is European correspondent for* ***America*** *and author of* Faithful Citizens: A Practical Guide to Community Organizing and Catholic Social Teaching *(Darton, Longman & Todd).*

Commentators were silenced by the sheer audacity of what was being announced: not just a series of policy agreements and compromises—with Liberals installed at every level of government, including five ministerial posts—but something greater than the sum of two oddly shaped, differently sized parts. Like skeptics at a wedding, some said the partnership was misbegotten and could not possibly last; a Liberal-Labour pact maybe, they muttered, but surely not a Liberal-Conservative one. Yet the Clegg-Cameron body language confounded the critics: the coalition may have been forced on them by circumstance, but circumstance had bred a new offspring. "We looked at the option of a minority government backed with a confidence-and-supply agreement," Prime Minister Cameron told journalists, "and thought: 'This is so uninspiring....it's not going to achieve what we came into politics to achieve. Let's aim for something bigger and better.'" For Mr. Clegg it was about obeying the mandate from the ballot box: "They told us no party deserved an outright majority. Yet at the same time it's obvious we need stability. The only way you create stability is by creating a coalition with a common purpose."

Cameron's vision of an invigorated civil society represents potentially one of the most important shifts in British political thinking in a generation.

Coalition Plans

What draws together Liberals and Conservatives, it turns out, is a shared rejection of the statist managerialism of the Blair-Brown era, when the dizzy expansion of deregulated financial markets paid for a socially progressive, technocratic and increasingly bossy state. The two major crises of the Brown era—the September 2008 banking collapse and the 2009 parliamentary expenses scandal—were symptomatic of the bubble of unaccountability in which both state and market rotted. The reformist, "Cleggeron" plans are to return power to the people, protect civil liberties, build a "big society" and regulate the banks. It is hard to imagine that narrative were it not for the backdrop of these crises, which provided an opportunity and justification for the remarkable new hybrid in Downing Street. This explains the focus in the coalition agreement on political (not just electoral) reform: to restore trust between governors and governed; to expand individual freedoms and restrict state power; and to regulate and reform banks.

On the economy, the two parties have agreed that the priority is to reduce rapidly the gargantuan deficit to restore the confidence of the financial markets, while ensuring that the pain of the cuts and the tax increases are borne as far as possible by the better-off. The coalition agreement promises to reform the financial sector through a bank tax, to curb "unacceptable" bonuses and increase the flow of credit to small businesses, while investigating the separation of retail and investment banking to put a stop to "casino" practices.

Far more radical and unexpected are the agreed political reforms, the area where the Lib-Dem influence has made itself felt. There will be fixed parliamentary terms, removing the government's power to call an election when the date best suits it electorally. And the House of Lords finally will be replaced by a second chamber elected by a proportional voting system. The government also promises a referendum on reforming Britain's current voting system, which gives the two main parties a massive advantage over the others. In this election, for example, the Conservatives won 306 seats on the basis of a 36-percent share of the vote, but the Lib-Dems got just 57 seats on a 23-percent vote share. The proposed new system will be less proportional than the Lib-Dems would like, but fewer, more equal-sized constituencies and an "alternative vote" system, in which electors rank candidates by preference and M.P.s have to gain at least 50 percent of the votes, amounts to the biggest shake-up in Britain's antique electoral system since the 19th century.

The 'Big Society'

If political and electoral reforms are the Liberal Democrats' distinctive contribution to the new government's agenda (and Mr. Clegg says he is taking "personal responsibility" for them), the prime minister wants to be judged on what he calls the "Big Society."

Derided and misunderstood by both left and right, Mr. Cameron's vision of an invigorated civil society never quite took off during the election campaign. Yet it represents, potentially, one of the most important shifts in British political thinking in a generation. Catholics will see in it a reflection of the call for "subsidiarity" in the church's social encyclicals and the "civil-society principle" emphasized in papal encyclicals from "Quadragesimo Anno" to "Caritas in Veritate." In Catholic social teaching, the way out of the tragic cycle of Western modernity, in which unfettered markets break up communities and force the state to expand in order to pick up the social tab, is through an expanded civil society. Such a civil society would be able to hold the state and market to account, shaping and limiting them both.

The most important aspect of the new government's Big Society agenda is that civil society is recognized at all. Labour largely saw only the state and the market; "communities" were seen as vehicles for social cohesion that needed "managing." Charities and churches were part of the "third

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sector," a term that Mr. Cameron believes is inherently disparaging. The changed attitude of this government is reflected in its new Office for Civil Society, with its own minister.

The Conservatives' "Big Society" vision looks to expand the power of neighborhoods and communities to tackle social problems, agitating public authorities to secure gains for ordinary people. Remarkably for a Conservative prime minister, Mr. Cameron cites community organizing, first developed by Saul Alinsky in Chicago during the Depression, as the means.

The Conservatives' Big Society paper describes community organizing as "a well-established methodology for building communities, strengthening ties between social groups and helping people to come together to address common challenges." It goes on to mention the organization I work for, Citizens UK, as the main resource for training in community organizing. (Citizens UK is the largest affiliate outside the United States of Alinksy's Industrial Areas Foundation.) Here is where church social teaching and the Conservatives' big-society idea potentially meet. For Citizens UK is made up principally of church congregations. There are more than 120 in London Citizens, which was founded by Catholics led by the bishop of east London in the 1980s, with the support of Cardinal Basil Hume.

ON THE WEB
Austen Ivereigh blogs weekly from Europe.
americamagazine.org/things

When Mr. Cameron visited London Citizens in early April, he told us he recognized that government could not fund community organizing directly because then the organizers would become agents of the state, rather than civil society. He asked, "How could government better enable you to do what you do?" The main thing, we told him, was to listen to the concerns of civil society and to act on them where state action is called for. We suggested that a future prime minister attend our assemblies and respond to agendas agreed upon in the process of grass-roots democracy, which such organizing facilitates. After all, if the prime minister addressed the Confederation of British Industry each year, why not do the same for civil society? Mr. Cameron thought about it: "You mean a kind of Confederation of Civil Society? Sounds perfectly practical!"

That meeting led to Mr. Cameron's agreeing to attend a Citizens UK general election assembly just three days before the nation went to the polls. Once Mr. Cameron accepted, Mr. Clegg and Gordon Brown also agreed. Unlike the three staged televised debates, during which the leaders answered individual questions, the three men responded in 10-minute speeches to five calls in a "people's manifesto": 1) for community land trusts, 2) an end to the detention of children in immigration centers, 3) the paying of a "living wage" to all government employees, 4) a cap on usurious interest rates and 5) a pathway to citizenship for long-term undocumented migrants. As a result of that assembly, the new coalition government has agreed to end the detention of children—a clear victory and proof of what can happen when government makes itself directly accountable to a mobilized civil society. All three leaders promised to meet Citizens UK each year and attend two assemblies over the course of a five-year parliamentary term.

It is early in the new government; its plans for the Big Society are far from clear. Does the prime minister genuinely want to be held accountable to a vigorous, politicized civil society? Does he want neighborhood groups to "do politics" or just to build cafes and swimming pools? Early signs are ambiguous, as are his plans for government to fund community organizing.

But so far, Britain's coalition government has proved impressive in its ability to think big. One surprise has followed another: a coalition government made up of unlikely partners has found a common vision; a radical, reforming agenda heralds far-reaching changes in British democracy and the taming of unruly banks; and, at last, the importance of civil society has been recognized by government in terms Pope Benedict XVI will understand when he visits Britain in September. A

Still Special?

The U.S.-British relationship enters a new era.

BY MATT MALONE

Deep beneath Queen Elizabeth II's treasury building, in the heart of London's government district, there is a small, dusty room with an "occupied/unoccupied" door indicator like those found on airplane lavatories. To the very few wartime visitors to Winston Churchill's bunker, this "Transatlantic Telephone Room," as it is now known, was deceptively called the prime minister's loo. That was enough to keep most people out, permitting Churchill to speak freely and secretly to the president of the United States. In this three-foot by five-foot space, the so-called "special relationship" between Britain and the United States was born.

David Cameron talks from No. 10 to U.S. President Barack Obama on May 11, 2010.

In the ensuing 60 years, from Normandy and North Africa to Iraq and Afghanistan, that wartime relationship has evolved into the closest political, military and diplomatic alliance in history. As James Wither of the European Center for Security Studies has noted, while both countries maintain close relations with several powers, the level of cooperation between the United States and Britain is without parallel: joint military planning and operations, shared nuclear weapons technology and mutual intelligence gathering are among many coordinated initiatives.

It was no coincidence, then, that the first telephone call David Cameron received upon becoming prime minister in May was from President Barack Obama. Within an hour of his arrival at 10 Downing Street, the new prime minister was told that the United States has "no closer friend and ally than the United Kingdom." Mr. Obama later said he had also "reaffirmed the extraordinary special relationship between the United States and Great Britain, one that outlasts any individual party, any individual leader. It is built up over centuries and it's not going to go away." "Centuries" is probably pushing it (since the United States has gone to war with Britain twice in the last two-and-a-half centuries), but one gets the point.

Still, one cannot help but think that all this talk about the special relationship is for the benefit of Britain's political classes—that the special relationship means more to the junior partner than to the senior one. Such is the nature of most partnerships. That the United States could get along without Britain's help is a debatable question, but it is obvious that Britain could not exercise its disproportionate influence in global politics without its close ties to Washington. Its close U.S. ties and permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council give Britain "the ability to hit above its weight" in the diplomatic ring, writes Frederick S. Kempe of the Atlantic Council. Accordingly, every major political party expresses its belief in the special relationship and every British government attends to it.

Expected Changes

One can expect much the same from the new government,

MATT MALONE, S.J., *a former associate editor of* ***America****, writes from London.*

PHOTO: REUTERS/ANDREW PARSONS

yet a few new variables have been added to the equation. The British budget deficit, now approaching a Greece-like proportion of gross domestic product, is squeezing public spending, and the defense budget will likely be the first casualty. As Mr. Wither has noted, "further reductions in Britain's military capabilities are likely to erode the perceived value of the partnership." This is the first time since World War II that Britain has been governed by a coalition. While the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats share a stated commitment to the special relationship, they differ sharply over foreign policy. The Liberal Democrats opposed the war in Iraq and have called on the government to scrap a replacement for the Trident nuclear deterrent, though they have now promised to sit on their hands should it come to a vote. The Liberal Democrats are also much more sympathetic to Europe than are the Conservatives, much more willing to see the good that Brussels may be up to.

ON THE WEB
A review of HBO's "The Special Relationship."
americamagazine.org/culture

The Lib-Dems, of course, are themselves a junior partner. David Cameron and the new Conservative foreign secretary, William Hague, will largely set the foreign policy agenda. Both men were clear about their priorities during the campaign: a renewed emphasis on the Transatlantic relationship and its influence in NATO and a European strategy that puts the brakes on any further surrender of British sovereignty. Yet the government is also hedging its bets in the event that the special relationship becomes markedly less special. David Cameron once said, "For too long, politics in this country has been obsessed with Europe and America." He is now talking about reaching out to the so-called "ignored powers," according to Kempe, "including the Gulf, Latin America, and North Africa." There is now talk of a new special relationship with India.

The coalition government will also be up against a widespread perception among Britons that the Labour government was too cozy with the United States. Nick Clegg, the Liberal Democrat leader and new deputy prime minister, summed it up best when he said that "we still too readily put ourselves in a position of unthinking subservience to American interests." Most Britons think Tony Blair made the British bulldog look too much like America's poodle. That's hardly an original insult in British politics, but it reveals the tension at the heart of the special relationship: How does Britain maintain its independence, its global prestige and influence, its loyalty to the new Europe, its economic and political ties to the world's emerging powers and, at the same time, its unparalleled relationship with the United States? It is not obvious. Perhaps even Churchill might have found that task a bit daunting. A

Thank You, Arizona!

An ill-conceived law could reinvigorate immigration reform.

BY ROGER MAHONY

On March 21, 2010, I addressed some 250,000 people gathered on the Mall in Washington, D.C., for a rally in support of comprehensive immigration reform. In my remarks, I pledged that the Catholic Church would never stop advocating for our immigrant brothers and sisters and that we would continue to defend their right to be full members of our communities and nation.

That same day, as you may remember, our country's Congressional legislators were voting on landmark health care reform legislation. It was the culmination of a partisan battle that left both sides bitter and exhausted. And so, in conversation with a few key legislators and their aides the next day, I was disappointed but not altogether surprised to discover that a bipartisan push for comprehensive immigration reform seemed yet again to be drifting off the legislative agenda and into a fog of uncertainty and inaction.

Thank you, Arizona!

With the stroke of her pen, Arizona's Governor Jan Brewer not only signed into law the country's most retrogressive, mean-spirited and useless anti-immigrant legislation; she also helped to reinvigorate the comprehensive immigration reform movement and has made clear the consequences of the failure to fix our nation's broken immigration system. As President Obama said on April 23 at a naturalization ceremony for active duty service members: "Our failure to act responsibly at the federal level will only open the door to irresponsibility by others. And that includes, for example, the recent efforts in Arizona, which threaten to undermine basic notions of fairness that we cherish as Americans."

One main section of the Arizona law illustrates the disappointment so many of us feel at this time. Article 8, Section 2, Paragraph B of S.B. 1070 sums it up in its vague and vexing language:

> For *any lawful contact* made by a law enforcement official or agency of this state or a county, city, town or other political subdivision of this state *where reasonable suspicion exists that the person is an alien who is unlawfully present in the United States, a reasonable attempt shall be made, when practicable, to determine the immigration status of the persons*. The person's immigration status shall be verified with the federal government pursuant to 8 United States Code section 1373(c) [emphasis added].

On the night of Thursday, April 29, H.B. 2162 was hurriedly passed in Arizona because of the torrent of opposition generated across the country in regard to S.B. 1070.

People rally in the "March for America" demonstration for comprehensive immigration reform March 21 on the National Mall in Washington.

PHOTO: CNS/NANCY WIECHEC

CARDINAL ROGER MAHONY, *Archbishop of Los Angeles, delivered this address at Fordham University on May 3, 2010, at a forum co-sponsored by* **America** *and the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture. This is an edited excerpt; the full address appears on* ***America****'s Web site, www.americamagazine.org.*

The "reasonable suspicion" language remains as quoted above, but the "lawful contact" wording was changed to focus upon secondary enforcement. But the changes could actually result in more people being questioned about their legal status when the police are enforcing any state or local law or even local ordinances. Does this mean that simple infractions such as overgrown yards, parking on streets and nonfunctioning cars in driveways could spark a check on legal status?

The obvious fear is that untold numbers of people will be challenged to prove their legal status in our country—sending further fear and fright across the immigrant community. Neither the governor nor any major Arizona official has been willing to publish a one-page set of criteria to guide law enforcement personnel on what "reasonable suspicion" means in the field.

So it is with a renewed sense of energy and urgency that I address you. I begin with a few theological musings that reflect our church's concern for the immigrant and the stranger. Then I share something of my sense of where things are politically regarding the prospects for comprehensive immigration reform legislation. I conclude with an invitation for all of us to view our immigrant peoples no longer as strangers or statistics, but to see and hear them as real, flesh-and-blood human beings—neighbors, family members—whose lives are adversely affected every day that our leaders fail to enact just and fair immigration reform.

Hearing the Stranger

Speaking of hearing and of justice, it is intriguing that in the Bible injustice is often discussed as a serious "hearing problem."

In the biblical tradition, injustice is often treated as being related to two kinds of hearing problems. The first problem is not only our own inability or even unwillingness to hear the cries of suffering from our own brothers and sisters. That is bad enough. Just as serious is the second biblical hearing problem. This is the fact that Scripture teaches that God most certainly does hear the cries of suffering. This, too, can be serious for us, because both biblical hearing problems have serious implications for how we think about suffering.

What does Scripture tell us about these problems?

The first act of violent injustice was Cain's murder of his brother, Abel. Genesis portrays God demanding an explanation from Cain: "And the Lord said, 'What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!'" (Gn 4:10). The text suggests that God "hears" the blood of oppression and suffering.

It is precisely God's hearing the cries of injustice that led the Israelites to "cry to God" in their suffering as slaves and alien workers in Egypt: "After a long time the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned under their slavery and cried out. Out of the slavery their cry for help rose up to God" (Ex 2:23).

The Bible teaches that God's hearing began the great act of liberation that gives birth to God's people. Israel is created from this redemption from the oppression of slavery. Pharaoh's hearing problem had its consequences. Moses, according to the tradition, warns us that God will certainly hear the prayers of those we might oppress or abuse: "You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry" (Ex 22:21-23).

The writer of Proverbs states that we must also listen to the cries of the poor, or God will close off God's ears to our own cries. In a very powerful sense, when it comes to the prayers of the suffering, our hearing problems will become God's hearing problems when it comes to our own prayers: "If you close your ear to the cry of the poor, you will cry out and not be heard" (Prv 21:13).

The earliest Christians witness to this same hearing problem. The New Testament also teaches that the leader of the first Jerusalem church, St. James, sometimes referred to as James the Just, spoke about this: "Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts" (Jas 5:4).

How pertinent are the words of James. Who, in fact, "mows the fields" of California and this nation today? Who, in fact, are the harvesters whose wages we have underpaid, whose provisions for health care we have resented, despite their back-breaking work to provide for our dinner tables?

Achieving Immigration Reform

The horrific new anti-immigrant law in Arizona presents a new opportunity for our federal officials to rise above the political divisions and posturing that killed reform legislation in 2006 and 2007. Republicans and Democrats recognize the important growth and strength of the Latino vote. Both parties are scrambling to claim it but have yet to take action.

Right now in Congress, the Democratic leadership is preparing legislation for introduction. New York's Senator Charles Schumer is taking the lead on this and has been working hard to achieve a bipartisan consensus. I call upon both parties to go that extra mile to reach an agreement that can pass Congress and be signed by the president—sooner rather than later.

The central feature of reform should be to bring the 12 million undocumented immigrants out of the shadows and offer them a secure path to legal status. In return, these immigrants must learn English, pay a fine and work for several years before earning the right to receive permanent legal status. Some have described this grueling journey as amnesty. They are wrong. What is being proposed is a path

forward that will require enormous sacrifices on the part of the immigrants every step of the way. Another feature of reform would provide for a new worker visa program that would allow more migrant workers to enter the United States legally; improvements to our family-based reunification system should also be included in any reform bill.

Enacting comprehensive immigration reform also makes economic sense. In January, the Center for American Progress released a report, "Raising the Floor for American Workers: The Economic Benefits of Comprehensive Immigration Reform," by Raúl Hinojosa-Ojeda, showing that enforcement-only policies actually perpetuate unauthorized migration and exert downward pressure on already low wages. By contrast, immigration policies that result in worker empowerment, legal status and labor rights would exert upward pressure on all wages, yielding at least $1.5 trillion in cumulative U.S. gross domestic product over 10 years.

In March, a statewide survey by the Public Policy Institute of California revealed that 70 percent of Californians said illegal immigrants who have been living and working in the United States for at least two years should be allowed to keep their jobs and eventually apply for legal status. Fifty-four percent believed that immigrants were a benefit to California because of their hard work and job skills.

Attitudes toward immigrants are beginning to change, but we need to do more to ensure that we do not become a nation that treats those who "look foreign" as suspect, to be investigated, even arrested, merely on the basis of their appearance.

This is where Catholic leaders and institutions like Fordham University come into the equation. We need to continue to educate Catholics who are ambivalent or undecided about immigration reform. We need to urge them to "come out of the shadows" themselves and become involved in the solution.

The Catholic community is central to victory and justice on this issue. We are an immigrant church ourselves, since the founding days of the republic. The immigrant experience is our own, having come to these shores from all parts of the world. We should be front and center in leading the charge for immigration reform—not only because it is a matter of justice but also because it is part of our identity, of what we are as a church. Our Lord Jesus Christ was himself an itinerant preacher with "no place to lay his head" and a refugee who fled the terror of Herod. When we welcome the newcomer, in person or through our advocacy efforts, we welcome him. As we have seen, Scripture is clear that even when we do not hear the cry of the immigrant, God most certainly does.

Author's Note: I have begun to interview personally our undocumented brothers and sisters. Some of the interviews are already available for viewing at www.facesofimmigrants.org. A

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

NOT SO MERRIE

Ridley Scott's 'Robin Hood'

Dark, dank and exquisitely dreary, Ridley Scott's new film "Robin Hood" is set in an England of ignorance, pestilence, filth, wholesale slaughter, creative mayhem and bad dentistry. Make that no dentistry. The Third Crusade has bankrupted the kingdom. Taxes are going up, and there's not a tea bag in sight. There's no question about it: Sir Ridley knows how to party like it's 1199.

You have to give Scott some leeway even for such an enormous misfire of a movie. He approached the legend of Robin Hood—a k a Robin of Loxley, Robin of Sherwood, champion of the poor, scourge of the rich—with a devotion to medieval detail and an unvarnished vision of what 12th-century life was like, namely miserable. Of course, had he delivered the kind of gleefully heroic Technicolor fairy tale Michael Curtiz and William Keighley directed back in 1938, it wouldn't have worked. Modern audiences want their history unembellished and their epics drenched in verisimilitude. We know that Hollywood can create, or recreate, just about anything, and we're simply too hip for men in tights—though I watch the Errol Flynn version every time it's on television.

But the other reason a Flynn-style "Hood" would not have clicked is that it's been done, and done about as well as it could be. Which raises the question: Why did Scott feel compelled to make another "Robin Hood" at all? Mel Brooks turned the tale into a comedy ("Robin Hood: Men in Tights"). "Robin and Marian," starring Sean Connery and Audrey Hepburn, was a bittersweet love story. Could Scott have become obsessed with the idea of making a version that was positively

Russell Crowe, foreground, in 'Robin Hood'

joyless? Yes, that must have been it.

Scott's "Robin Hood" may not be any fun, but it certainly has its political instincts in the proper place and toys with both the standard Robin Hood legend and English history in order to get all the pieces just so.

Having expended 10 years and most of his country's money on the Third Crusade, Richard the Lionheart (Danny Huston) is plundering his way back to England through France with an army that includes a lowly archer named Robin Longstride (Russell Crowe). Longstride doesn't have many conversations with the king, but when he gets the chance he has the audacity to upbraid his monarch for the slaughter of 2,700 Muslim hostages at Acre (a historical fact).

Not sharing, apparently, the typical Anglo-Christian Crusader's attitudes toward Islam, the progressive Robin is put in the stocks with his not-yet-Merrie Men, who remain locked up throughout the pivotal battle in which Richard receives an arrow through the throat.

Scott is not above the billboard-sized image: A broadsword, the design of which Constantine intended as a symbol of the cross that would physically and theologically defeat the heathens of Jerusalem, is seen wobbling hilt-up in the muck of France and in kingly misadventure.

The king is dead—or so it seems. There is definitely going to be a sequel, and if there is any historical fealty in the soul of this would-be movie franchise, Richard has to come back to England and replace the dubious usurper, his brother John (Oscar Isaac). But Robin and his band take the opportunity to split and head for England. En route they encounter the noble victims of an ambush led by the nefarious Godfrey (Mark Strong). Godfrey has been sent by Prince John to kill Richard, who is already dead (or so it seems). One of the dying men, Sir Robert Loxley (Douglas Hodge), entrusts his sword to Robin and asks him to take it home to his father. Robin takes the sword, the assignment and Loxley's identity too.

Crowe plays Robin Hood as if he were suffering post-traumatic stress disorder. And apparently he is: childhood visions of his father's death pop into his head occasionally, and only time will clear up the mystery of Robin's interesting origins. In the meantime, being a Loxley comes with perks—a home in Nottingham shared by the real Loxley's blind father Walter (a terrific Max von Sydow) and widow, the Lady Marian (Cate Blanchett).

Marian has spent 10 years waiting for her husband to return; the Crusade is now about as politically popular as off-shore drilling is today. She has become a sour, petulant and plow-hardened woman whose food is being stolen by the 13th-century version of a street gang. She works a farm she knows she will lose once her father-in-law is dead; she's a woman after all. (When she puts on the chain mail and takes up the sword, it is all you can do not to laugh at the tortured correctness of it.) She is also, by the way, a pill. But hey, if you want a good time, call Olivia de Havilland. This is a serious "Robin Hood."

One is tempted to call this film a middle-aged "Robin Hood." Not only would it be a stretch to call Marian "Maid," but given that 13th-century Brits could expect to live to about 35, it's positively geriatric. In real life, Crowe and Blanchett are well into their 40s and von Sydow is 81. Granted, their characters live a slightly better life than the peasants around them (some of whose English faces look like the end result of a straight genetic line back to the Dark Ages), but they are on borrowed time. Perhaps that's why they are so dour.

The plot involves John taking the crown and putting his trust in the untrustworthy Godfrey, who conspires with the French to attack England while that country is consumed by a civil war that doesn't happen (not for a few hundred years). Rallying peasant and noble alike behind a proto-Magna Carta, which the historic John did indeed sign in 1215, Robin and William Marshal (William Hurt) mount a counterattack on a Channel beach in a scene that suggests a mash-up of "Saving Private Ryan" and "Braveheart."

For all his legendary image-making (in "Alien," "Blade Runner" and other films), Scott borrows heavily from Mel Gibson's peculiar gift for cinematic violence, suggesting scenes not just from "Braveheart" but "The Patriot." Lacking the wacky Gibson himself, however, and being stuck with the lugubrious Crowe, "Robin Hood" lacks the spark it might have had, even in the midst of chaos, mayhem and, again, bad teeth.

JOHN ANDERSON *is a film critic for Variety and The Washington Post and a regular contributor to The New York Times's Arts & Leisure section.*

PHOTO: ©2010 UNIVERSAL STUDIOS/ DAVID APPLEBY

POETRY | JAMES S. TORRENS

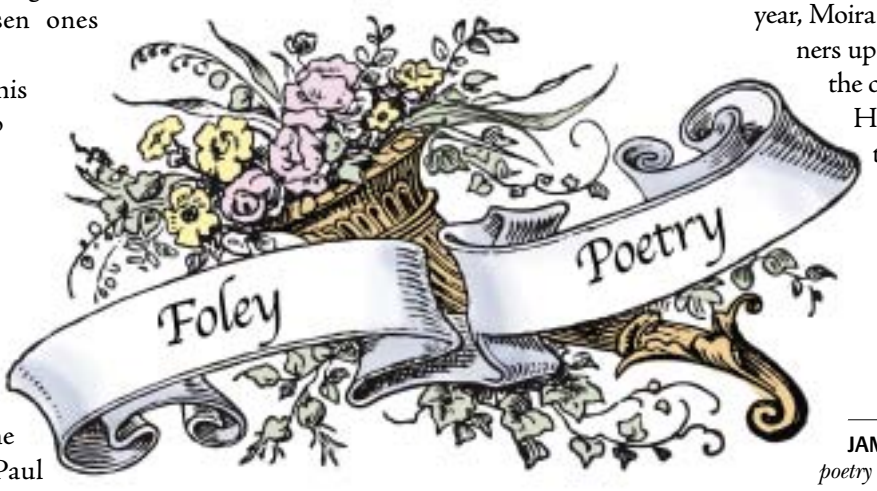
THE FOLEY CORNUCOPIA 2010

Once more the Foley poetry contest has run its three-month course, a thin flow of entries during most of that time but a veritable spate (about 400 poems) in the final week. As judge, along with William Rewak, S.J., of Loyola Marymount University, and Professor Claudia MonPere McIsaac, of Santa Clara University, I welcomed submissions from faraway places, including Goa and Andhra Pradesh in India, Sint Marten (Netherlands Antilles) and Antigua in the Caribbean, Yangon in Myanmar and Kibbutz Kramin in Israel.

I like to harvest striking lines or expressions. Kathy Arens tries to pair off the opposing forces, chaos and faith, with her title "Random Purpose." The Rev. Stephen B. Perzan, a priest from Philadelphia in his 60th year at the altar, finds himself "looking down the aisle of life." Bradford Manderfield calls the stop sign at an intersection "the icon of obedience." One of many religious sisters, Jeanne Morin, S.N.J.M., celebrating "the gentle curve of Mother Earth," informs us it is called "The Compassionate Curve." I was happy to learn that. Another sister, Jerilyn Hunihan, A.S.C.J., a counselor to prisoners detained and awaiting sentence, writes of "the risen ones behind bars."

The poems in this yearly cascade keep reminding me how precious life is. They are full of grief shared, outrage vented, memories cherished and piety outpoured. The sun does not shine evenly in all. Paul Poskozim, considering "dark shadows of the mind," calls them "brain waves crashing on the shores of time." Anna Rebecca Wood says of all the acrimony today: "Gnashing of teeth turns national creed." Monty Joynes, a veteran of past wars, muses on the enlistment for present combat: "Boys will again/ experience a ruthlessness they/ cannot anticipate and/ killing and death will change them." L. E. Bryan, writing of Vietnam in 1966, remembers "smoking till we were high enough to be at peace with war."

Kenneth Stier Jr., in "Loons," addresses "your lonely wails, your banshee cries/ your joyous in-flight tremolos" and concludes, "You are a metaphor of me." In her poem "If Only," 10-year-old Courtney Bogani offers us this stanza: "If I could only have the talent/ To make people smile when they are ill/ I'd say, 'Today will be amazing.'/ And then I would make them food fresh off the grill." Good start! A retired bishop, Sylvester Ryan of Monterey, serves up "a thought": "When Jesus offered a drink of living water/ to the woman at the well,/ was it more a torrent he had in mind/ sweeping her away toward/ fathoms of mercy/ where she could just—plunge?"



ART: SHUTTERSTOCK/AMERICA

What concerns me in any poem is the quality of imagination and distinction of wording, of course, but also the question, Will it have some recognizable pace? By this I mean rhythm, or linkage of sounds, i.e., music of its own. I find much fine writing in the Foley poems—profiles, stories, vivid memories, commentary. I just wish more of them would somehow sing.

Helen Vendler, editor of *The Harvard Book of Contemporary American Poetry* (1985), reminds us in her Introduction to that anthology that poetry, as distinct from prose, "pulls us up, even if gently, at the end of each line." Poetry, she says, "insists on a spooling, a form of repetition, the reinscribing of a groove, the returning upon an orbit already traced." This insight makes me regret the increasing resort of our poets to the centering command on the computer. The maneuver offers symmetry and makes for a neat look, but to my old-fashioned mind, it switches attention from the aural to the visual.

That being said, I conclude with this tiny and fine poem from the Foley cornucopia by Regina Widney of Contaro, Ariz.:

Sit with me, Martha
Table is cleared, dishes done
Sit with me awhile

Congratulations to our winner this year, Moira Linehan, and to the runners up whom we will publish in the course of the year—Maria Hummel, "Villanelle for the Children's Ward"; Anne Bruner, "In the Light"; and M. B. Powell, "Of the Tibetan Lion Dog." Because of high quality, final choices were difficult.

JAMES S. TORRENS, S.J., *is poetry editor of* ***America****.*

The editors of **America** are pleased to present the winner of the 2010 Foley Poetry Award, given in honor of William T. Foley, M.D.

Last Wishes

When I go to leave this world, how do I
take with me the grace it held out, it held
onto, when I go, that momentary grace
I caught now and again as I'd look up,
look out? Once, late afternoon, a March wind
swaying the elm, the shadows Matisse's

blue cut-outs, thighs thick as limbs dancing
over the rumpled snow on such delicate
pointed feet. Once, columns of snow swirling
across my pond and I saw stampeding
horses, saw again those sheep outside Dingle,
a dog driving them, left then right, lower

to upper field. When I go, that streaming once
more mine. Or when I go, the sudden rising
of hundreds of swallows banking as one,
then banking again. That nearly closed arc
of an Arctic tern's wing turning in flight.
When, when to the next wherever I'm going—

mound, mountain, lap of God—let my leaving
be its own imprint of grace: the eagle
I once saw drift down over a river,
extend its talons, graze the water, and lift.
The imprint of that long, slow swoop—what's first
and last remembered when I go. Then, only then,
the shock of it: prize fish taken out of its world.

MOIRA LINEHAN

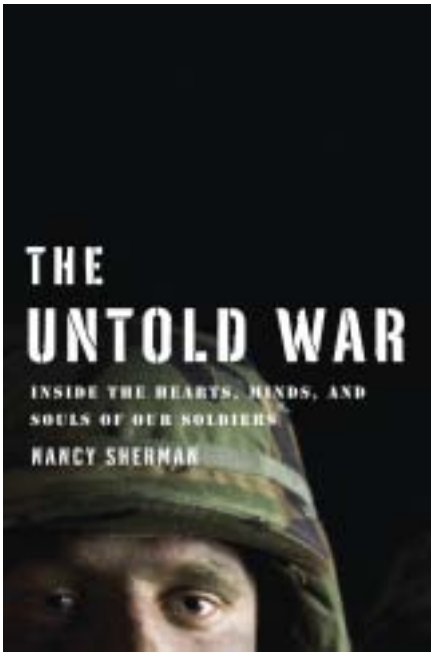
MOIRA LINEHAN, *after careers as a high school English teacher and administrator in high-tech and academic settings, now writes and leads workshops on poetry-writing in the Boston area.*

BOOKS | JAMES R. CONROY

TO HELL AND BACK

THE UNTOLD WAR
Inside the Hearts, Minds, and Souls of Our Soldiers

By Nancy Sherman
W. W. Norton. 338p $27.95



Based on numerous personal interviews, this significant book lays bare the experience of recent and veteran soldiers with the assistance of Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Freud, among others. Nancy Sherman—University Professor at Georgetown University—focuses on "the inner battles soldiers wage." Privileged conversations with men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan mixed with stories of veterans whose wars reach back decades provide an undeniable breadth and depth of credible testimony.

The Untold War is no ordinary reflection on war. What makes this book unusual is the sometimes grueling encounter with the Stoic and ancient philosophers. Sherman combines her expertise in ancient ethics and military ethics with her more recently acquired skills in psychoanalysis. She does not shirk her responsibility to ask what "the good" is even as she does good for those she encounters.

As I pressed into the book, I often found myself saying, "Please don't go there." But go there Sherman does: to the battlefield, the field hospital, to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. The narratives ring true as warriors' experiences of guilt, grief, torture, death in combat and suicide are presented honestly and without varnish. The author visits the homes of returned soldiers who are scarred physically and psychologically. Early on Sherman explains the soldier's dilemma. To become an effective soldier a civilian must be transformed into a warrior and taught how to kill with calm, violent efficiency. Her description of "resocialization that begins in boot camp" reminded me of my basic training for Vietnam, when a bigger-than-life staff sergeant taught us that the spirit of the bayonet is to kill. Our sergeant vowed to make us lethal with a bayonet affixed to an M16, as well as in hand-to-hand combat. Training requires proficiency in weapons and communication to coordinate air strikes or artillery bombardment. It intentionally desensitizes a young man or woman in order to make possible the transition from civilian to warrior. But what is going on in the warrior's mind and psyche? What changes and compromises must a young person make in order to kill?

In a chapter on aspects of guilt, Sherman recounts in poignant (and graphic) detail the harrowing experience of Army Major John Prior, whose guilt over the accidental death of a soldier under his command continues to weigh heavily on him today. And the reader comes to understand the depth of his anguish. We see horror and guilt as he wonders, "What if had I done this and not that?" The truth is hard. Over and over again, the reader winces because Sherman takes us deeply into a soldier's pain and confusion, seeing firsthand the lingering effects of war experience.

A soldier's sense of betrayal ranges from being misled and lied to by political and military leaders as happened, for example, in Vietnam with the incident at the Gulf of Tonkin and in Iraq

with weapons of mass destruction. Being entrapped in a lie and then being identified as a personification of that lie often drives warriors to stony silence that eats away at them. Vietnam veterans who are moving from the homelessness of the streets to veterans hospitals raise many cautionary flags about the young men and women returning from war today with unresolved issues. What will become of today's veterans, who after repeated deployments come home to a world so different, in which it is difficult to make sense of what they have seen and done?

A soldier's reluctance to share the memory of difficult experience is rooted in part in the false notion that any display of mental anguish is inappropriate military demeanor. In a chapter titled "Loosening the Stoic Armor" Sherman claims, "I have argued that Stoic and Stoic-inspired models of perfection by the military can also reinforce the stigmatization of mental illness." Only recently has the military begun to encourage soldiers to come forward and seek help for the scars of war.

There are additional questions I wish the author had addressed. Where and when does a soldier learn how to re-enter civil society after training and battlefield encounters? How does one shed a lethal persona? What is society's obligation to these men and women who have carried professed American interests in bloody conflict?

It took me a long time to read this book. I often stopped to ponder unresolved issues in my life that are rooted in war and betrayal by government and superiors. Only veterans are plagued by knowing they have been part of something that doesn't make sense and is not part of ordinary life. *The Untold War* will have a lasting effect on readers and should serve as a resource for those responsible for sending others to war. It is a powerful and moving reminder of war's long-term consequences and the cost to soldiers and society.

JAMES R. CONROY, S.J., *a Vietnam veteran and co-founder of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps, is currently executive director of the Jesuit Collaborative.*

JONATHAN WRIGHT

THE MESSIAH IN BRIEF

JESUS
A Biography From a Believer

By Paul Johnson
Viking. 256p $24.95

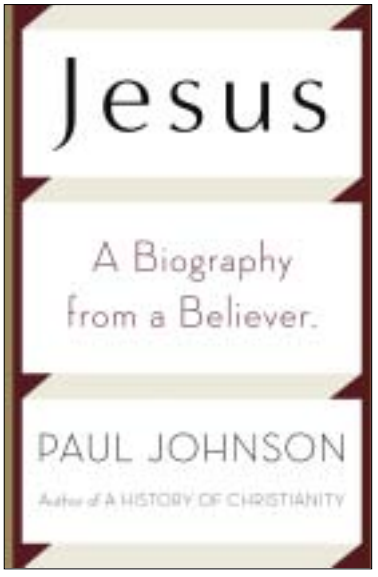
For obvious reasons, Christians have been arguing about the identity of Jesus Christ for a very long time. Christological battles have raged, the Trinity has been analyzed by theologians both great and small, and the relationship between Christ's humanity and divinity has fuelled squabbles in fourth-century Alexandria, 19th-century Boston and many times and places in between. Deciding what, who and why Christ was represents the most urgent task Christians can set for themselves. It is an obligation, frankly. It is therefore rather curious to find a book about Christ declaring that it is "futile for us to inquire into the nature of Jesus and God." Yes, the Christians always have to admit that our feeble intellects can grasp such issues only in imperfect ways (through human concepts and human language), but calling the enterprise futile seems rather pessimistic. Still, this is what the British historian Paul Johnson does in his latest book.

He does find time to declare his own belief in Christianity, he quickly asserts that Christ was both God and man and, so far as one can tell, his positions on issues such as the Trinity, the authenticity of Christ's miracles and the Resurrection are politely orthodox. By and large, however, *Jesus: A Biography From a Believer* is not very interested in theology. Johnson's sole objective is to "write about Jesus the man" and to provide a potted history of his deeds and ideas.

As the author concedes, pocket guides to Christ's life and times are ten-a-penny. Johnson claims that "there are over one hundred thousand printed biographies of Jesus in English alone," so we are bound to ask whether we require another. If Johnson had conjured up some new insight, or if he had sought to engage with all the fruitful scholarly research that has interrogated the creation and reliability of the Gospel texts, then his book might have represented a substantial contribution. Regrettably, he does neither. All we are offered is a cozy, straightforward synopsis: essentially, the canonical Gospel stories rehashed. Johnson's book is well written and heartfelt, but if you have taken the trouble to read the New Testament you will not learn anything new here.

There is room for puzzlement. Johnson's earlier studies of Christian history have not been to everyone's taste and they have only rarely moved serious scholarly debates forward, but a book like his *A History of Christianity* at least possessed a certain chutzpah. This book, by contrast, is strangely anodyne. It also misses some obvious tricks. Even if you are dedicated to avoiding engagement with Christological debates, you are surely obliged to take a critical approach to the texts you are using. There are obvious questions, the kinds that oblige us to see Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as something more complicated and

sophisticated than "essentially the memoirs of eyewitnesses." How accurately do the Gospels report Christ's utterances? How and when was oral tradition transmuted into written words? What were the strategic decisions that determined the content of the canonical Gospels? How should we approach the alternative versions of Christ's message and ministry encapsulated in Gnostic texts? Asking such questions does not make one a disloyal Christian. If anything, it will make for a better one. That Johnson has largely ignored these pulse-beats of current early Christian scholarship is baffling.



Johnson ends by summing up Christ's message in 10 new commandments. At last, the reader will hope, something daring and more substantial has arrived on the horizon. Sad to say, the list is very predictable: We are all equal in God's eyes; power should be exercised with restraint; love should be the cornerstone of human relationships; we should all have open minds and believe in universality; and so forth. There is absolutely nothing wrong with lionizing such ideas. Vague as they are, they would probably lead to a cuddlier word, but two points have to be made. First, providing such a digest of Christ's ideas is the least novel undertaking imaginable. Second, there is a huge risk of recruiting Christ as the harbinger of modern philosophical nostrums and forgetting that he was a denizen of the first century C.E.

Johnson wants to tell us about Christ the man. If you hope to do that well or originally, an aversion to reductionism, a sense of the mutability of the Gospel message during the church's early centuries and a dislike of ahistorical platitudes are useful weapons to have in your interpretative arsenal. The author seems to have left them at home this time around.

As an expression of personal gratitude to Christ for influencing a Christian life, this book possesses great charm. It bears the hallmarks of authenticity. As a meaningful contribution to our table talk about Christ, or as a serious book about a serious subject, it is disappointing.

JONATHAN WRIGHT, *who writes extensively on early modern religious history, is the author of* God's Soldiers: A History of the Jesuits *(Doubleday, 2004).*

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LETTERS

Please Package and Post

Please package the two editorials ("Pilgrim People, Part I" and "Pilgrim People, Part II," 5/10 and 5/17) and circulate them everywhere. We who work for reform in the church have been working for these structural changes for almost 30 years. I am so pleased that **America** is speaking out. The sexual abuse crisis is the unfortunate wake-up call that can bring about the much needed reform of the Curia you detailed. Just when I begin to think it is all hopeless, I am presented with the excellent writings of these last two issues. Perhaps Part I should be tacked up on the doors of every Catholic parish in the world!

MARY LOUISE HARTMAN
Princeton, N.J.

A Lost Opportunity

Re "Main Street Still Waits for the Recovery" (Signs of the Times, 5/31): Despite the obvious myriad of victims of the meltdown of the financial system, our U.S. bishops' conference remains apparently unengaged and silent on the sidelines. Where is the call to responsible legislation and regulation of a totally heinous approach to our economy by special interests? In California, our state budget proposes cutting services even further to the most vulnerable in our midst. In other states, notably Arizona, xenophobia seems to be the order of the day. An opportunity to lead as Jesus would lead is being lost.

(DEACON) MIKE EVANS
Anderson, Calif.

A Beloved Community

Thank you, Sister Barbara Reid ("Breath of God," The Word, 5/17) for the lovely reminder and word of encouragement with our recent Pentecostal celebration. The Hawaiians talk about "being in the presence of the breath of life," and for me this means God, of course. The reading for May 24 from Mark 10 tells us to not be sad, to give away our wealth and join Jesus. I am ever grateful for the example of my grandmother, Dorothy Day, who managed to do this, thus creating a beloved community in the Catholic Worker. We need one another and our mother church. We need to remind ourselves and one another that this is so.

MARTHA HENNESSY
Perkinsville, Vt.

Mistaken Identity

I loved the article about Norman Rockwell ("The Storyteller's Art," by Terrance W. Klein, 5/24). Am I the only one who thinks that the movie star in the magazine on the little girl's lap is not Rita Hayworth, but Jane Russell?

ANDREA ROWSON
San Diego, Calif.

Air Freshener

If the Catholic hierarchy would read the wonderful article "True North," by Thomas A. Shannon (5/31), and take to heart the wisdom contained in it, the air might begin to sweeten and the light begin to shine.

ROSS LONERGAN
Vancouver, B.C.

The Maternal Face of God

One thing that must die ("The Spirit's Gifts," Editorial, 5/31) is the patriarchal structure of the church. The reformation of the rigid hierarchy we now have must include the ordination of married women to the diaconate, and the ordination of celibate women to the priesthood and the episcopate. Otherwise, the body of Christ will continue to suffer the nefarious effects of making the maternal face of God invisible.

LUIS GUTIERREZ
Montgomery Village, Md.

Christianity in China

Many thanks to Jeremy Clarke, S.J., for his article on Matteo Ricci, S.J., and his breakthrough missionary activities in China in the 16th and 17th centuries ("When West Meets East," 5/10). It is important to note, however, that he and his companions were not the first to bring Christianity to China. Christianity first came to China overland along the Silk Road, beginning in the fourth and fifth centuries, carried by Christian missionaries from Mesopotamia.

Western China had a flourishing Christian culture with many churches and monasteries, some of which still stand. It has been estimated that at one time there were as many as 30 eparchies (dioceses) in Western China. In addition, the Jesuits in the 17th century discovered a stone stele dated from 781 C.E. celebrating the first 150 years of Christianity in China. The writing on the stele is in Chinese characters and in Syriac (Aramaic). Christianity in China was eventually overtaken by Islam in the 10th and 11th centuries.

RONALD J. JEBAILY
Florence, S.C.

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Great Forgiveness, Great Love

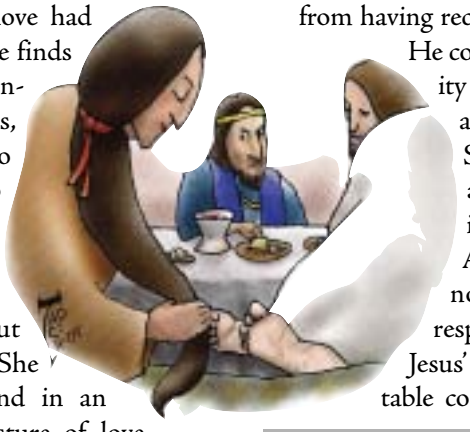
ELEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), JUNE 13, 2010

Readings: 2 Sm 12:7-13; Ps 32:1-11; Gal 2:16-21; Lk 7:36–8:3

"Her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; therefore she has shown great love" (Lk 7:47)

How do you make amends when you know you have hurt someone deeply or when you become aware that your patterns of life choices cause great harm to others? Sometimes you can kiss and make up with the hurt person. But at other times it is not possible to repair the damage to the ones directly affected. Even as remorse and relief flood over you when you become the recipient of forgiveness, you search for how to express the love and joy that come from being freed from guilt. Today's Gospel captures a scene in which a woman who was known as sinner, and who had experienced forgiveness, pours out her joy and gratitude toward Jesus in lavish demonstrations of love.

The rest of the woman's story is lost to us. We do not know her name or where she came from or any other details of her life. We do not know what kinds of sins she had committed, nor how she met Jesus. We do not know when or where it was that he had absolved her from her sins (the tense of the verb *apheontai*, "have been forgiven," in verse 47 indicates an action that happened in the past whose effect endures into the present). We have only one small slice of her life, a moment in which she takes advantage of the open door for poor people to partake of the scraps of a banquet, and she enters the home of Simon to seek out the one whose kindness and love had set her free. She finds the guests reclining on cushions, reaching into the center to partake of the food, with their feet extending out into the room. She spots Jesus, and in an extravagant gesture of love, she mingles her tears of joy with precious perfume and anoints his feet.



This act is open to misinterpretation. Simon, the host, immediately harbors judgmental thoughts. He is certain in his knowledge that the woman is a sinner, and he is unaware of the forgiveness she has experienced. He is just as certain in his judgment of Jesus: he cannot be a prophet. Much as the prophet Nathan used a parable to bring King David to repent of his murder of Uriah (see the verses immediately preceding today's first reading), Jesus tells Simon a parable aimed at getting him to repent of his false judgment and to open himself to the forgiveness Jesus offers.

The point of the parable is easy to grasp: great love flows from having been forgiven much. While Simon easily grasps this in story form, we are left to wonder if he got the point when Jesus brings his attention back to real life and asks him to look again at the woman. Jesus retells what he saw: great gestures of love outpoured that sprang from having received great forgiveness. He contrasts her great capacity to receive forgiveness and give love with Simon's puny capacity and invites the Pharisee into this expansive love. As the story ends we do not know how Simon responded. Did he accept Jesus' offer, or did he join his table companions in murmuring critically about Jesus' ability to forgive? The story turns the question toward us as well: How do we perceive forgiven sinners? How do we ourselves respond to Jesus' offer of forgiveness and love?

The scene that follows provides an exemplary response. Having been healed of severe illness, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and other Galilean women expend all their monetary resources (this is the connotation of the Greek word *hyparchonton*) for Jesus and his mission.

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Ask Jesus to expand your capacity to receive forgiveness.
- How have you been freed so as to extend lavish love to others?
- Ask for the grace to suspend judgment and to perceive grace at work in others.

ART: TAD DUNNE

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 is vice president and academic dean.*

Clothed in Christ

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), JUNE 20, 2010

Readings: Zec 12:10-13:1; Ps 63:2-9; Gal 3:26-29; Lk 9:18-24

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ" (Gal 3:27)

Arriving at church a few Sundays ago was a family all bedecked in their very finest, carrying a tiny infant, engulfed in a long, white gown, a miniature version of the white robe given to newly baptized adults at the Easter vigil. The symbolism of the gown was perfect: The child who was "putting on Christ" was completely covered with the flowing fabric. It was even impossible to distinguish whether the child was a boy or a girl.

The famous verses from Paul's letter to the Galatians in today's second reading were likely words taken from an early Christian baptismal formula. They make the extraordinary assertion that when we are clothed with Christ in baptism, the status markers that determine our place in society exist no longer. Within a religious movement that was born amid the Jewish people and that was attracting an increasing number of Gentiles, Paul asserts that baptism in Christ gives all equal status in the family of God—all are descendants of Abraham and Sarah, all are children of God and all are equal heirs. There is no privilege accorded to those who were the firstborn. Nor are there different levels of inheritance; all are one and equal in Christ.

A second determination of status is also eclipsed: the demarcations between free-born, freed and slave are dissolved in the waters of baptism. Finally, in a world in which males held all the power to make decisions and in which women were to be subordinate to men, baptism erased distinction in status based on gender. This is an extraordinary assertion of egalitarianism.

It is most likely, however, that Paul is referring to the equality of all Christians in terms of their salvation, not necessarily as something to be enacted in the social structures of his day. In others of his letters, he advises believers not to change status. He instructs the Corinthians, for example, that those who were uncircumcised should remain so and that slaves should stay slaves (1 Cor 7:17-24). One of the reasons for this advice was that Paul believed the *parousia*, the Second Coming, was imminent.

Two millennia later, with a heightened sense of global human rights and a vast tradition of social justice in the church, the question of incorporating this baptismal vision of equal status in social and ecclesial structures takes on a different urgency. Baptism does not wash away the differences, but it makes them irrelevant. All who are clothed with Christ belong equally and have equal status. Just as the white gown masked the tiny babe's gender, so does baptism cover over any status markers in communities of equal disciples.

The ending of today's Gospel moves in a similar direction, as Jesus asks his followers to deny themselves and take up their cross daily. In one sense, baptism is the first step in a lifelong effort to let go any desire for privilege based on status. This "denial of self" is a daily search for the common good and requires relinquishment of self-aggrandizement on the part of those who have power, privilege or status. For those whose circumstances of birth or misfortune place them at the underside of society, the movement is one of empowerment instead of relinquishment, as with the anointed one, who saves life by losing his own.

No structures that thrive on inequality are brought down easily. Jesus knew this and tried to prepare his disciples for the conflagration that would cost him his life. The question still confronts us: Are we also willing to take up this same struggle each day, clothed in the power of the One who has gone before us through death to new life?

BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Pray with the image of yourself as "clothed in Christ."
- Pray to see all others as also "clothed in Christ."
- Ask the Spirit to strengthen you in your struggle for the baptismal equality Paul envisions.

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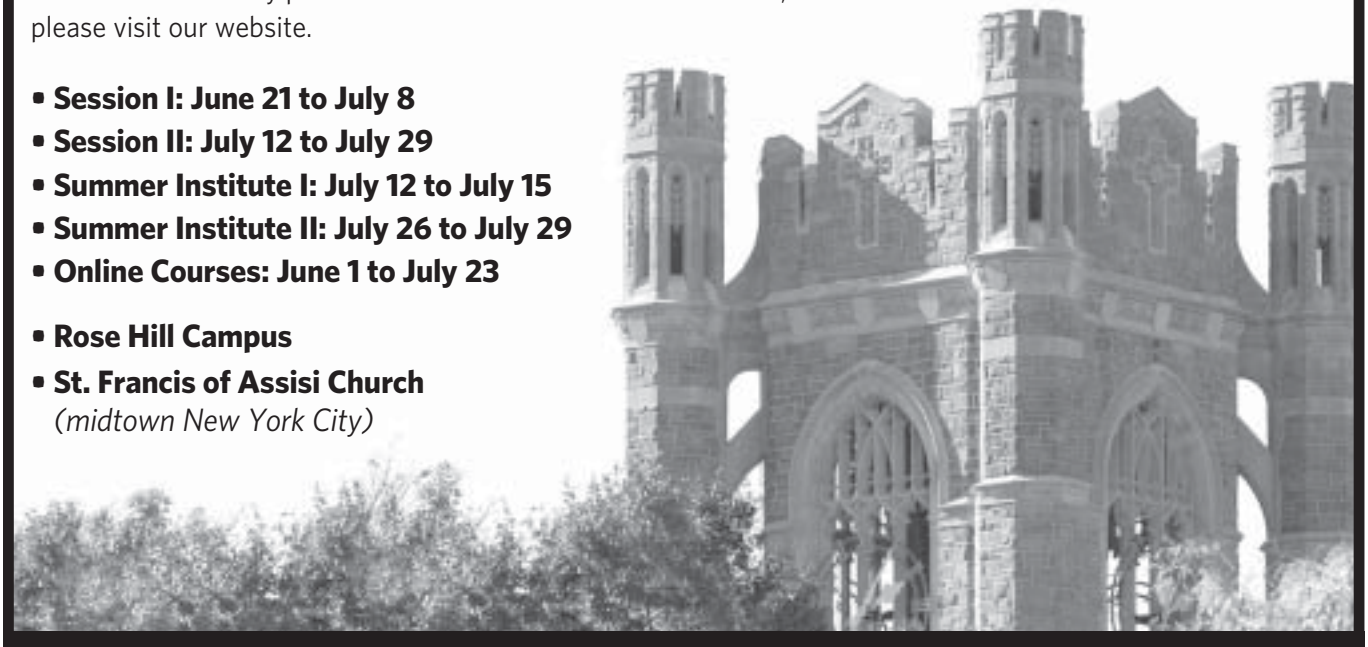

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