America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY JUNE 21-28, 2010 $3.50

The Greening of Detroit

DAVID ALIRE GARCIA

Douglas W. Kmiec remembers his father

OF MANY THINGS

A basic requirement for any endeavor to be counted as a profession is a set of ethical standards. They guarantee the integrity of practice, bind the members of the profession to one another and build trust on the part of the public in the services rendered by the profession.

Medicine is one of the oldest professions in the West; its ethical standards reach back to the Greek physician Hippocrates (fifth century B.C.). Medical students who still swear the Hippocratic Oath pledge that "in every house where I come I will enter only for the good of my patients, keeping myself from all intentional ill-doing." Medical professionalism rises and falls on that double commitment: the good of the patient and the avoidance of harm.

For that reason, a new report from Physicians for Human Rights, which provides evidence of the participation of medical professionals (physicians, psychiatrists and others) in the torture of "high-value" detainees held by the Central Intelligence Agency after September 2001, is distressing. There is no smoking gun in the report, only careful re-examination of the declassified public record. There is sufficient data, however, to suggest high-level inquiries are in order, as the physicians' group and the National Religious Campaign Against Torture have urged.

Among the practices in which doctors and others are said to have engaged are these: determining how far harsh interrogation could go before suspects would suffer irreparable harm, providing a defense against potential prosecution and designing procedures for future interrogations.

According to the report, one technical adjustment introduced by medical personnel was the use of saline solution instead of plain water during waterboarding to prevent pneumonia and a drop in blood pressure. A finding that multiple techniques used in combination produced no more pain than when they were applied singly provided justification for combined use of torture methods—e.g., waterboarding a suspect in a protracted kneeling position.

The C.I.A. has denied that the health personnel in its employ were engaged in unlawful "human experimentation" and asserts their activities were under government supervision, including that of the Justice Department. The problem is, however, that this is the same Justice Department that under George W. Bush rewrote the rules on torture. Unfortunately, the Obama administration has backed off from prosecuting Bush-era employees and is ambiguous about its own detainee policies.

While the P.H.R. report is not conclusive, it has assembled enough information to merit further investigation. Though the administration may not pursue this question, Congress and associations of health professionals should do so. Congress possesses the subpoena power to bring to light the data still held from public view, and professional associations have the responsibility to investigate violations of professional integrity.

In recent decades, professional associations have too often deteriorated into little more than trade groups and have been reluctant to police their members. I hope Physicians for Human Rights will succeed in persuading the American Medical Association and other organizations of health professionals to investigate the suspicions of participation by some of their colleagues in torture. The trust of the public that physicians and other health care providers will work only in their patients' interest and never intentionally consent to harm them is essential to their social contract as well as to their professional integrity. It is also necessary to resist the erosion of ethical standards by the national security state.

DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J.

America

PUBLISHED BY JESUITS OF THE UNITED STATES

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Cover: Composite images. Shutterstock/America.

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www.americamagazine.org VOL. 202 NO. 20, WHOLE NO. 4898 JUNE 21–28, 2010

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Defining Aggression

Following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the numerous wars among the onetime member states of the former Yugoslavia, the 1999 Treaty of Rome established the International Criminal Court to end impunity for crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. While the court's mandate also included the crime of aggression, a review meeting the last two weeks in Kampala, Uganda, wrestled with defining that crime and establishing related rules for the court's jurisdiction. A major issue is whether the court should leave the identification of the crime of aggression to the United Nations Security Council on the grounds that naming aggression involves political judgment. Smaller nations, not wanting to leave the decision to the Big Five on the Security Council (Russia, China, the United Kingdom, France and the United States) propose instead moving it to the General Assembly—whose actions are even more political.

In its short history, the court has made serious advances in extending the rule of law to states, establishing warrants for Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir for genocide in Darfur and Joseph Kony, the notorious leader of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, for crimes against humanity. While some African leaders are among the court's foremost critics, others argue that it has already made a substantial contribution to establishing the rule of law across that continent. Its record suggests that in the future it may even be able to address the question of aggression where major powers are involved. It is unreasonable to think that international law should be applied only to lesser powers and emerging states and not to major powers. A possible compromise lies in allowing the Security Council to retain jurisdiction for a stated period of time, with jurisdiction reverting to the court once that time has elapsed.

National Day of Prayer

Is a national day of prayer unconstitutional? Yes, ruled a federal judge in Wisconsin, Barbara Crabb, in mid-April, because such a statute points to "an inherently religious exercise that serves no secular function." Her ruling stemmed from a lawsuit brought by the Madison-based Freedom From Religion Foundation, which claimed that a national day of prayer violated the separation of church and state. Last year, the Obama administration asked Judge Crabb to dismiss the organization's case, and she has stayed her ruling pending the completion of appeals.

The issue of a national day of prayer arose as far back as 1775, when the Continental Congress called for one in the course of forming a new nation. Two decades later President John Adams set May 9 as a day not only of prayer but also of fasting at a time when the United States was at odds with France. In his proclamation in 1863, Abraham Lincoln also called for a national day of prayer and fasting as the Civil War ground on, in the hope that "genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon" for "our presumptuous sins."

Congress finally established a national day of prayer in 1952, and in 1988 it set the first Thursday in May as the day for presidents to issue a proclamation asking Americans to pray. With wars raging in the Middle East and Central Asia—whatever the outcome of Judge Crabb's ruling—the proclamation may seem to many not unreasonable, especially when we too might accuse ourselves, in Lincoln's words, of "presumptuous sins."

A Win-Win Situation

On a playing field in Indianapolis a few weeks ago, Vince Lombardi's slogan, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing," would have been clearly out of place. The junior varsity girls softball team from Roncalli Catholic High was set to play Marshall Community, an inner-city middle school playing its first softball game ever.

After nine Roncalli girls were walked by the Marshall pitcher, the girls realized there is more to sports than crushing the opponent. They probably could have won 100 to 0. Roncalli had not lost a game in over two years but decided to offer to forfeit the game rather than humiliate the Marshall girls.

What happened next? The Roncalli team spent the next two hours teaching the Marshall girls how to get better instead of beaten. Together they practiced batting and fielding, running bases and how to use the equipment the Roncalli girls shared with them. Marshall had come with only two bats, no helmets, no cleats and five balls.

Even after the game, this spirit continued. Roncalli's J.V. coach, Jeff Taylor, appealed to the parents of his girls for equipment for Marshall—used bats, gloves, helmets and team shirts. Reebok and the Cincinnati Reds also contributed to assist the Marshall girls. Instead of an embarrassing blowout victory for Roncalli, the loss became a win for everyone.

Blessed Pope John XXIII, after whom Roncalli Catholic is named, once remarked that he especially enjoyed being with children because they did not take him to be a pope with fancy robes, but simply an old man. We are sure he looked down with smiles upon the childlike spirit and friendliness of the two softball teams that day.

Adrift in the Gulf

Ian Guidry stopped shoveling the brown ooze off the beach at Grande Terre island on the Louisiana coast long enough to survey the dark line of oil marking high tide. He was happy to have this job, since the blowout of the Deepwater Horizon oil drilling rig had shut down the local economy; but he was eager to do this work for more than just the money. "I want my children to be able to experience what I experienced," he told **America**. He grew up near Grand Isle, a popular summer surf and sport-fishing resort. No sooner had Mr. Guidry shoveled some oil off the beach than the surf rolled in with more. Does he think this apparently futile effort will achieve his goal? Mr. Guidry turned away a second to regard the beach. "I don't think it will ever be the same again," he said.

Dead pelicans and porpoises have already washed ashore not far from the site of Mr. Guidry's labors; oil-covered survivors were being rushed to treatment. The oil's rainbow sheen covers the Gulf waters, and for those who watch the brown blotches of oil rolling and turning in the current like drifting autumn leaves, it is hard not to pause a moment to grieve for the crime being commited against God's creation. "What have we done," a reporter at the site wondered aloud in a half-joking, half broken-hearted apology to circling pelicans.

British Petroleum will bear the heaviest responsibility for the unnatural disaster unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico. During the last three years, BP has committed 829 of the 851 willful health and safety violations among all the refiners cited by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. After a series of deadly incidents and smaller ecological accidents, BP's record of irresponsibility makes the case that Deepwater Horizon was simply an accident waiting to happen. The company placed profit over safety and in its arrogance chased oil into the depths without a clear, practiced and reliable recovery plan in the event of disaster. We are all living with the predictable outcome of its monumental carelessness. It would be a disservice, however, to the survivors of the 11 men who lost their lives on April 20 and to the suffering of the people, wildlife and ecology of the Gulf states if the shame and the culpability ended with BP.

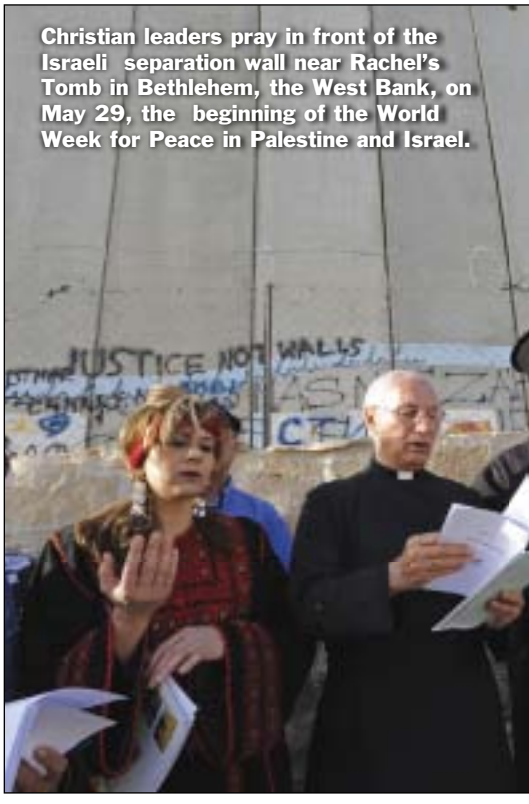
Our government performed badly long before the blowout and sinking of the Deepwater Horizon when it abdicated its appropriate oversight role. Staff members of the Minerals Management Service were caught accepting gifts from oil industry executives, snorting cocaine and bed-hopping with industry employees. And government reliance on BP for expertise, which the company lacked, and rapid response, which it failed to achieve, indicates that the United States, in its eagerness to promote a dependable energy supply, has for decades ceded too much authority to powerful multinational corporations. The scale of this disaster might have been hard to predict, but the possibility of it certainly was not. Where were the back-ups to the back-up plan? Why, after years of deepwater oil exploration, should this one event prove so confounding? More to the point, if the scale of the Deepwater Horizon disaster truly exceeds the capacity of all industry and federal agencies to respond, then why is this method of resource extraction allowed in the first place?

The American public also bears responsibility as a consumer society living beyond its means. We have been in denial about our appetites, unwilling to make the sacrifices required by a real world of diminishing fossil fuel reserves and content to divert risk elsewhere. Americans say they want small government and limited regulatory intervention; then they express surprise when government cannot respond to big crises or has not done a better job preventing them. We disparage civil service employees and skimp on their salaries, then complain about Washington's "revolving door" when regulators retire to become lobbyists or industry experts. And while many Americans support alternative energy, most resist an extra tax at the pump that could propel its development. We cannot have it both ways.

We could start to change our ways by redoubling conservation efforts. We could turn our backs on "cap and trade" for the boondoggle it is and embrace the more effective carbon tax instead. It would not require much to put off dangerous proposals for Arctic exploration indefinitely. The deep ocean is not merely a difficult site from which to extract resources; it is part of a beautiful, breathtaking gift for all generations to share, preserve and pass on. We have failed in our responsibility as its stewards. An accounting wizard may someday tally up the cost of this oil spill and the cleanup to taxpayers, the fishing and tourist industries and the unfortunate residents of the Gulf states and deliver a comprehensive bill to BP executives. But no human can calculate the cost of the disaster to the marshes and the ocean and the wildlife, to God's good creation. God may forgive us; our grandchildren may not be so merciful.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Christians Have Special Role As Regional Peacemakers



Christian leaders pray in front of the Israeli separation wall near Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, the West Bank, on May 29, the beginning of the World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel.

Presenting the working document for the Special Synod of Bishops on the Middle East, Pope Benedict XVI prayed for "just and lasting solutions" to the region's conflicts, which cause so much hardship. "I reiterate my personal appeal for an urgent and concerted international effort to resolve the ongoing tensions in the Middle East, especially in the Holy Land, before such conflicts lead to greater bloodshed," the pope said June 6 at the end of a Mass in a sports arena in Nicosia, Cyprus.

The pope gave the document to representatives from the Latin-rite, Maronite, Melkite, Armenian, Coptic, Chaldean and Assyrian Catholic churches living in countries from Egypt to Iran. The synod will be held at the Vatican from Oct. 10 to Oct. 24 and will focus on "communion and witness" in the region where Christianity was born but where Christians are now a minority. Pope Benedict said that the synod would be an occasion "to highlight the important value of the Christian presence and witness in the biblical lands." Recognized for their work in education, health care and other charitable activities, Catholics still face discrimination and limits on their rights, particularly their right to religious freedom, he said.

The synod's working document was prepared by a committee of patriarchs and bishops from the Middle East and representatives of Vatican offices. Surrounded by war and sometimes treated like outsiders, Christians in the Middle East need faith and outside support so that they can stay in the region and contribute to peacemaking, the document said. "History has made us a little flock. However, through what we do, we can still become a presence which has great value." According to the document, the region's Christians are in a unique position to serve as peacemakers. "Although efforts on behalf of peace can be rebuffed, they also have the possibility of being accepted, considering that the path to violence, taken by both the strong and the weak, has led in the Middle East to nothing but failure and a general stalemate."

Life often can be difficult for Christians in the Middle East, especially because of "the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the resulting instability throughout the region," said the document, which was prepared on the basis of responses to a questionnaire sent to church leaders in the region. "The menacing social situation in Iraq and the political instability of Lebanon further intensify the phenomenon," it said.

"The Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories is creating difficulties in everyday life, inhibiting freedom of movement, the economy and religious life—access to the holy places is dependent on military permission, which is granted to some and denied to others on security grounds," the document reported.

Despite the tensions emerging in the region because of the continuing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, the document said its survey respondents clearly rejected anti-Semitism, while "the actual animosity between Arabs and Jews seems to be political in character due to the situation of conflict and the resulting political hostility."

Relations between Christians and Muslims are difficult in the region, since Muslim states often relegate Christians to "the precarious position of being considered non-citizens," the document said. "The key to harmonious living between Christians and Muslims is to recognize religious freedom and human rights," it said.

IMMIGRATION

Borderline Thinking

As reports of increasing violence at the U.S.-Mexico border fill newspaper headlines, bishops of the United States, Canada, Central America and the Caribbean have called on their governments to

address the economic root causes of hemispheric migration and urged policies that would create jobs for people in their homelands. During a regional consultation on migration held at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' headquarters in Washington, D.C., on June 2-4, Bishop John C. Wester of Salt Lake City and bishops from Canada, Haiti and Latin America spoke about some of the primary issues related to immigration.

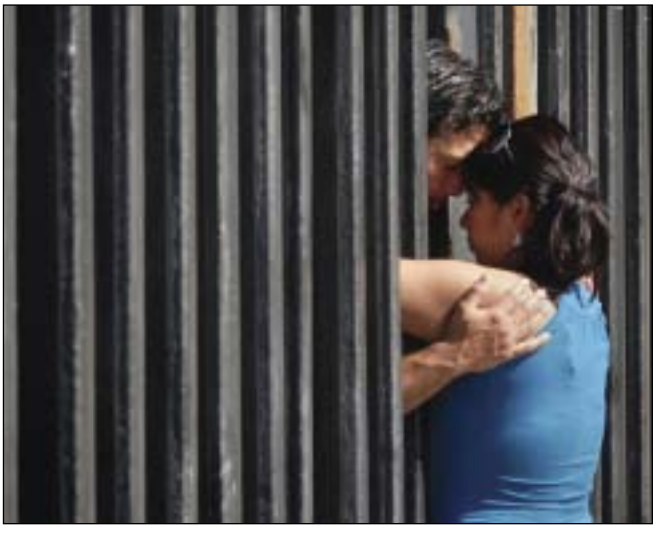
Addressing economic root causes of migration "in our mind, is the lasting and humane solution to the challenge of illegal immigration," said Bishop Wester, chairman of the U.S.C.C.B. Committee on Migration, in a statement he read at a news conference on June 3. "Second, we believe that all governments, not only the United States, should look at their immigration laws and reform them in a manner which respects basic human rights." The nations of the hemisphere also must "redouble their efforts against the scourge of human trafficking," he said.

He noted that in a globalized world, where capital, communications and goods are readily exchanged, the movement of labor has not been regularized, and the impact of globalization on human beings has not been acknowledged or addressed. "As the most powerful country in our hemisphere and a destination for migrants, the United States should lead the way in this effort by reforming immigration laws as soon as possible," said Bishop Wester.

Bishop Álvaro Ramazzini Imeri of Guatemala said that the poor of his country have not benefited from the Central American Free Trade Agreement, known as Cafta, which Guatemala ratified three years ago. "The level of poverty in Guatemala is increasing," he said. Bishop Ramazzini said his country is reeling from the twin effects of a volcanic eruption near the capital, Guatemala City, and the inundation of much of the country with up to three feet of rain by the tropical storm Agatha. The two disasters have destroyed many farmers' entire production for the season, he said. That jeopardizes their income as well as the source of affordable food for Guatemalans, he said.

Bishop Francois Lapierre of Saint-Hyacinthe in Quebec, Canada, said, "We are living an incredible contradiction. We want to live in a global economy, but every day we make it more difficult to go across the border." In Europe people cross borders more easily all the time, he said, but passports are now required for Canadians and U.S. citizens to visit each other's countries. Mexicans now need visas to visit Canada. Meanwhile, the church continues to address migration-related issues from a Gospel perspective, Bishop Lapierre said, "because somebody years ago said, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.'"

Bishop Rafael Romo Múñoz of Tijuana, Mexico, chairman of the Mexican bishops' migration commission, said his country is becoming a collection of semi-abandoned small towns as working-age teens and men go to the United States to provide for women, children and elderly people left behind. During the meeting, participants heard from directors of programs for Hispanic ministry, church public policy and social services to migrants. A panel of U.S. federal officials, including representatives of the White House and the Border Patrol, also met with the group.



A husband and wife embrace through the border fence near Tijuana, Mexico.

'Jewish Boat' Preps Gaza Blockade Run

In May, several ships intent on breaking the Israeli blockade of Gaza departed from Cyprus and Turkey; the Rachel Corrie, named for an American killed by an Israeli bulldozer in 2003, departed from Ireland. Now another vessel, carrying Jewish human rights activists, will keep the pressure on Israeli authorities to end or further mitigate restrictions on the movement of food, medical supplies and building materials into Gaza. It will set sail sometime in July from an undisclosed Mediterranean harbor. "Our purpose is to call an end to the siege of Gaza, to this illegal collective punishment of the whole civilian population," said the expedition's organizer, Kate Leiterer. "Our boat is small," she said, "so our donations can only be symbolic": schoolbags, musical instruments, art materials and medical supplies.

C.H.A. Committee Meets With Vatican

The executive committee of the Catholic Health Association met with officials of several top Vatican agencies for talks that focused in part on the association's support for health reform legislation that the U.S. bishops opposed. Carol Keehan, a member of the Daughters of Charity who is president and chief executive of the C.H.A., said that the meetings at the Vatican were "useful and positive," but she would not comment on particular issues raised in the talks. "We were very cordially received and had a wonderful exchange of ideas," she said. This spring, Sister Carol and the C.H.A. expressed public support for the final version of U.S. health care reform legislation passed by Congress in March, convinced it would not fund abortions. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops opposed the measure, saying its provisions on funding for abortions and conscience protections were morally unacceptable. Vatican officials were known to have been perplexed at the C.H.A.'s unwillingness to follow the bishops' position on the issue.

Treatment of Irish Children Challenged

A year after the publication of the Irish government's Ryan Report, which exposed decades of child abuse and neglect in church-run residential institutions, Amnesty International has strongly criticized the government for failing to protect children. Amnesty's annual report on the state of human rights worldwide lists 61 countries for torture and 48 for imprisoning people for political or religious beliefs, but in Ireland's case the organization focused chiefly on breaches of the rights of children. The Irish practice of placing mentally disturbed children in adult institutions is "inexcusable," said Amnesty, which also noted that between late 2002 and June 2009, more than 400 children have disappeared while in the care of the Irish Health Service Executive. The children were illegal aliens who were unaccompanied by an adult when detained by immigration services. It is feared that some have been taken by human traffickers and forced into the sex industry.

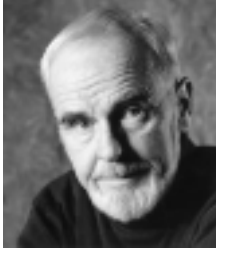
From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Father Brian Kolodiejchuk

JustFaith Ministries has entered into partnerships with Pax Christi USA and Bread for the World, focusing on "promoting and practicing the social mission of the church among Catholics throughout the United States." ✦ An official at the **Filipino Catholic Bishops' Conference** has advised Filipino homosexuals to avoid work in Saudi Arabia in light of new restrictions on homosexuals there. ✦ The Rev. Brian Kolodiejchuk, postulator for the sainthood of **Blessed Teresa of Calcutta**, told a gathering at the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven June 1 that her cause is "still waiting for one more miracle." ✦ A German prosecutor is investigating the head of the German bishops' conference, Archbishop **Robert Zöllitsch** of Freiburg, after a man charged that he was an accessory to the sexual abuse of children. ✦ In a letter to Congress, U.S. bishops detailed their opposition to the **Employment Non-Discrimination Act** because of its potential to "jeopardize our religious freedom." ✦ In a statement on June 1 Archbishop **Timothy P. Broglio** of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services urged Congress not to repeal the "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays in the military.

JOHN F. KAVANAUGH



Uninformed Conscience

Thirteen years ago, when I started writing this column for **America**, two of my early offerings dealt with the strategic function of conscience in our ethical lives. As the years have gone by, and especially during the past year with its increased polarization of moral positions in church and society, I am more convinced than ever that we need a clear understanding of just what conscience is and how it functions.

Although there is a range of opinions concerning what conscience is—from an inner voice, a feeling or a sense of shame to the internalized values of parents or culture—I propose that the most effective account is the one offered by St. Thomas Aquinas: Conscience is a particular kind of judgment, a moral judgment, by which we apply our knowledge of good and evil to practical action.

As a practical moral judgment, conscience takes the form: "I ought to do X." Aquinas points out that when I make such a judgment, I should follow it. But acting on my conscience is not enough. Like any other kind of judgment—business, artistic, scientific or athletic—we base our moral judgments not only on principles but on evidence, data and information. A judgment made without data, evidence or information is a foolish one indeed. Thus, Aquinas thought it is as important to inform one's conscience properly as it is to follow it. If I refuse to look at evidence or information in forming my moral judgment, I am actually refusing to act morally.

JOHN F. KAVANAUGH, S.J., *is a professor of philosophy at St. Louis University in St. Louis, Mo.*

It is this second point that seems most neglected in ethical discourse today. There is little doubt that various religions, nation states and philosophies hold different ethical principles. But whether one's principles are based on duty, the will of God, submission to Allah, happiness, liberty or the common good, such principles are empty if they are not applied to the specifics of evidence, information and data.

Unfortunately, it is the resistance to evidence and information that marks so much of our present moral discourse. That is why the "marketplace" of ideas, or the "public square" has become so segmented and rigid.

In the world of politics and media, we find an increasing segmentation not only of markets but of convictions as well. Information is edited and selected to conform to the conviction of the viewer or the voter. Thus, information no longer informs or challenges one's moral judgement; it only confirms opinion, whether that opinion is warranted or not. Spend one evening comparing the programs offered by MSNBC and Fox News. Compare Chris Matthews and Ed Schultz with Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity. Whom do they ridicule? What is their presumed moral universe? What information do they never consider? If we listen to only one side of these polarities, we are not forming our judgment, we are propagandizing it.

No matter what the issue, competing ideologies offer plenty of moral judgments; but there is little willingness to address data or information offered by the opposition. Undocumented immigration, tax reform, the Free Gaza movement, the Gulf Coast oil disaster, the financial crisis, all generate fierce opinion. But it is almost impossible to find any polarized antagonist willing to examine carefully data or arguments that challenge ideology.

> A conscience may be certain, but that does not mean it is correct.

In the church, things are just as segmented. I regularly receive messages by e-mail from the right and left. Both sides seem totally certain, but they are also totally ignorant of the arguments and evidence on the other side. As Aquinas would say, a conscience may be certain; but that does not mean it is correct. So think of the issues: abortion, global warming, President Obama, the health care bill, immigration reform, the wars in the Persian Gulf. Do you find any true engagement of the issues? Or do you find only assertions?

As for those who aspire to form the consciences of Catholic believers, they too must do more than make pronouncements. They must engage the evidence and data offered by those who dissent from their opinion.

To refuse to inspect hostile data or listen to challenging information is to reveal a conscience that has capitulated to ideology.

If a nation or church forms its people to accept assertions blindly, without supporting evidence, it will form a community not of moral agents but of menaces. They may be sincere, but they will be sincerely dangerous.

PHOTOS BY DAVID ALIRE GARCIA

URBAN FARMERS REIMAGINE A CITY'S LANDSCAPE.

The Greening of Detroit

BY DAVID ALIRE GARCIA

People in Detroit, America's idled Motor City, stumble upon the Earthworks Urban Farm from a variety of places. "I came in through the soup kitchen line," recalled Willie Spivey on a weekday morning working in the Earthworks greenhouse, nodding toward the Capuchin soup kitchen just across the parking lot. He was carefully tapping out speckled Amish lettuce seeds into a planter box. "I was reaping the benefits of their labor," he added with a chuckle, pointing to the smiling volunteers beside him.

Mr. Spivey, who grew up nearby on the city's east side, is now a regular volunteer at Earthworks's sprawling farming operation located within an all-too-familiar Detroit landscape: perfectly lovely two-story brick homes bustling with life next to vacant houses with busted-out windows. "I used to like to drink and smoke cigarettes and do anything else I wanted to do," Spivey continued, "but now I'm seeking a healthier fix." Besides that, he explained, taking part in this city's trailblazing urban agriculture movement offers more rewards. "You watch the local news every day, you watch what's going on in the world, and there's ruin and despair. But you come here and it's all about success and peace and God's gifts."

While it may be too early to pronounce Detroit's urban farming movement a success, positive signs are easy to spot. Both small and large for-profit and not-for-profit enterprises are emerging, among them a business founded by a civic-minded local entrepreneur who touts plans for "the world's largest urban farm." Hundreds of smaller gardens already dot Detroit, a city founded by French farmers three centuries ago, and city leaders are in the early stages of rewriting local ordinances to facilitate a more modern strain of urban agriculture. It's a green movement marching forward during an otherwise dim period in the city's storied history.

The Long Decline

Once the country's fourth largest city with nearly two million inhabitants, Detroit counts about 900,000 residents today. But even that figure is sliding, driven down in large part by a historic hit to the region's manufacturing sector, especially the near collapse of the city's namesake auto industry. This story began

DAVID ALIRE GARCIA *is a Detroit-based freelance writer.*

a century ago when Henry Ford inaugurated a new industrial age with the assembly line and the Model T—producing something novel called a middle class—and Detroit prospered. In the 1940s, the city became the "arsenal of democracy" as auto plants, drafted into war service, churned out a wide range of military vehicles and weapons.

The nation's heavy investment in interstate highways in the 1950s provided another big boost. But in the decades that followed, Detroit's long-simmering racial divisions and inequalities erupted in riots, and a massive white flight to the suburbs followed. Meanwhile, Detroit politicians and union leaders had nurtured an over-reliance on the one industry they all figured would never run out of gas. But it did. Last year's bankruptcy of General Motors and Chrysler was only the most spectacular marker along Detroit's long, painful road of industrial decline. At 139 square miles, Detroit today remains one of the largest cities in the country, yet a combined 40 square miles of it sit vacant—literally fallow. The official unemployment rate within the city limits hovers around 30 percent, the highest of any big U.S. city. Unofficial estimates put the joblessness figure closer to half the working-age population.

Earthworks volunteers (from right): Willie Spivey, Audrey Chase and Gene Yuells.

But those steep challenges have far from extinguished optimism for a better, greener city. On April 4, The Detroit Free Press ran a rare front-page editorial looking at the city a decade from now. It eloquently summarized current revitalization proposals, picturing a dramatically altered future urban landscape: "You see thousands of kids attending schools that work for them. You see people using light rail and boarding buses in a transit system that serves them…and people tending little farms that nourish their neighborhoods in more ways than one."

It is the promise of a reimagined Detroit, where newly employed workers tend rows of wholesome produce on formerly trash-strewn lots, that helps inspire the people at Earthworks, a ministry of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen. The soup kitchen—two of them actually—form the faith-in-action arm of the Capuchin Franciscan Province of St. Joseph in Detroit. Asked if more urban farms like Earthworks offer a solution to Detroit's massive problems, Brother Jerry Smith, O.F.M.Cap., the nonprofit's executive director, demurs. "I think it can be a tiny solution," he said. "I think the problems of this city are so overwhelming that we have to start with little chunks, and if this model can bite off a little chunk of it, it's better than where we were before."

Brother Smith cited a passage from Ezekiel (36:33-34) that underscores a piece of his own biblical motivation: "I will repeople the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt; the desolate land shall be tilled." Wearing his brown Franciscan habit, chin resting comfortably in his hand, Brother Smith added, "And this is really like a ruined city in many ways. But there's fire in the ashes."

Comparative Advantages

Many city leaders echo Brother Smith's small-scale optimism. "The reality is [that] Detroit is not like Boston or San Francisco or New York, where land is at a premium," City Councilor Kenneth Cockrel Jr. said. "Land is in abundance in this city." That's the city's comparative advantage, he argues. "To me, the right urban agriculture plan can actually complement a plan for creative downsizing of the city because it gives you something to do with a lot of these parcels of vacant land," Cockrel said. "The other thing is, then the land is back into productive use. It's generating property tax revenue, which helps the city's budget."

"I think [urban farming] has great potential," said Malik Yakini, chairman of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. He points to the clear public-health fallout that follows a lack of fresh local produce in this mostly African-American city. Remarkably, Detroit does not have a single national grocery chain operating within the city limits. That lack of food access has serious health implications. "There are all kinds of health conditions, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, both childhood and adult obesity, that are controllable by diet," Yakini said.

In March city planners forwarded a draft report to the city council proposing a new legal framework for the future of farming in Detroit. Among its provisions is the establishment of soil-testing standards as well as easier access to idle city land at reduced rates for small operators. Under the draft, the keeping of bees, rabbits, chickens and other farm animals would be legally permitted for the first time. Larger farming operations would also be permitted to purchase tax-reverted land at a reduced rate and qualify for a lower property tax rate provided they "commit to tangible and measurable benefits to the community." Yakini would like to see other initiatives from the city, including more city-led purchasing from local growers and the wider availability of city-owned equipment, like tractors for city farmers.

Mike Score, the president of three-year-old Hantz Farms, is also paying close attention to city planners' nascent proposals. Hantz Farms is the brainchild of the financial services executive John Hantz, a former stockbroker for

American Express who has since pledged $30 million of his own money over 10 years for his ambitious for-profit enterprise. "We have a dream of becoming a global center for urban agriculture, where people fly in from around the world to see what's possible," Score explained. "Like at the Detroit auto show, people come to see the concept cars. We want to be that for urban agriculture."

He hopes to see vegetables growing in abandoned factories and offers this twist on the traditional fruit orchard: "Imagine an orchard where a parking lot used to be and instead of ripping out all the pavement, we rip out five-foot-wide channels…where we plant the trees and we leave the space between the rows paved so that urban consumers can come to a you-pick operation and not get their feet dirty."

For Profit, for Detroit

The Hantz model further envisions "pods" of varying amounts of land scattered across the city, from the tiniest parcel to tracks of more than 1,000 acres, featuring the latest in vertical growing systems and solar and wind energy. The operation would include both organic and conventional nonorganic methods. It also seeks to create incentives for spinoff economic development on the edges of the pods. According to Score, Hantz Farms will pay full-time employees a "prevailing wage" with benefits. He says he expects the business to begin with at least 40 acres, generating some produce later this year.

Hantz Farms has already generated mixed reviews even before the first seeds have sprouted. In a city starkly segregated by race, Yakini faults the business's lack of racial diversity. "From what I have seen thus far, the key players in the Hantz project seem to be all white men. I have a concern about that," he said. For his part, Score says he is committed to "a diverse workforce" but that the for-profit operation will not "come up with some type of formula that is politically satisfying."

Yakini adds another major criticism: "Detroit's grass roots urban agriculture movement over the years has had as one of its objectives the empowerment of people within the community, and I have not seen any provisions for really empowering people from Hantz other than offering people jobs," he said.

"I've heard that criticism from Malik. But we can't adopt an approach that says, 'Here come the suits, here come the bad guys,'" Cockrel countered. "We've got to recognize that the revitalization of this city is going take players at a variety of levels. At the end of the day, if Hantz generates revenue for the city of Detroit and if it creates jobs, we ought to be embracing that." And if Hantz Farms turns a profit? "There ain't nothing wrong with that!" Cockrel said emphatically. "That's frankly what America is all about."

Totally Organic

As the debate over a new legal framework for urban farm-

ing—and over some of the players themselves—continues, Earthworks is reveling in its organic certification, a green badge of honor achieved last year. "We're the first certified organic farm in the city of Detroit," Gwen Meyer, a full-time Cap Corps volunteer, crowed while prepping soil boxes in the greenhouse. "We want to be a resource for the community, so if other members of the community want to do it and don't know how to, we've done it; we've jumped through the hoops. We can now share the knowledge."

Patrick Crouch is Earthworks's program director. A fan of French intensive farms in the late 19th century, Crouch was quick to detail their relevant benefits in an impromptu interview conducted while he helped clear asparagus beds adjacent to the greenhouse. "Their transportation system created a renewable resource called manure. Unlike our cars, you can't really grow plants off of the smog," he said, rake in hand. Like others, Crouch believes urban farming in Detroit can help redefine the modern urban landscape. "When we think about cities, there's this assumption that there's no place for nature in the city. I don't know why that is." Transplanting nature to the city, he said, is not very profitable, "but it's deeply spiritual."

But that doesn't mean that Crouch embraces Earthworks as a traditional ministry. In fact, he says he is not Christian. "But the Capuchin values that are at the root of the work we do, I hold those values extremely deeply. They're universal values." While he thinks "there's more justice involved" in smaller-scale operations, he does not have a problem with Hantz Farms' for-profit aspirations. "I'm not against folks making money. It's a tool we've all agreed upon. I mean, it's easier than transporting cows," he deadpanned to the laughter of volunteers nearby.

ON THE WEB
A slideshow of Detroit's urban farms.
americamagazine.org/slideshow

One of them, Rosemary Spatafore, later offered up the source of her own duel motivation to participate: "I started coming down just because I love to garden," she said, "but I also like the social justice part of it, bringing fresh vegetables to people who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity to have them."

Yakini points to a transformational power buried in the gardening that is going on here and across Detroit that residents are right to tap. "Gardening has this side effect of helping shape our own reality, that if we work together we can begin to meet our own needs," he said. "I think that is probably the most important part of this urban agriculture movement, because one of the side effects of oppression is that people develop a sense of despair and powerlessness. The urban agriculture movement allows people to take back the power." A

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My Father's Dreams

BY DOUGLAS W. KMIEC

My father dreamed—even when he was not asleep. Scarcely a world problem went unresolved in my father's dreams, and there was scarcely a powerful political figure or captain of industry whom my father did not readily let in on his dreams through ample, handwritten messages.

These dreams, as my father dreamed them, created jobs, reduced global warming, delivered health care to the poor and the elderly and made substantial headway on a cure for cancer—all before lunch. Sadly, it turns out the cancer cure still needs work. But until that illness ravaged his physical strength, my father communicated his dreams freely, expecting neither credit nor recognition. In fact, few of his dreams were even acknowledged.

Neither Bill Clinton nor the Bushes nor George Steinbrenner ever referred to my father's counsel. My father greatly admired the philanthropic and disaster relief work of Bill Clinton as an ex-president. But married to Mom for 60 years, he was troubled and saddened by President Clinton's "fooling around," as Dad put it. Nevertheless, as far as the world knew, President Clinton decided to give greater honor to his marital vows all on his own, even without Dad's note to him urging fidelity and circumspection. Was it Walter Mitty braggadocio for Dad to take personal satisfaction in watching the president "straighten out his act"? Maybe to some, but Dad's advice was seldom just a repetition of the prevailing headline. From the beginning, Dad thought the president deserved a private conversation with his pastor, not public impeachment. Dad reached this conclusion long before much of the nation—and later the special prosecutor himself—had second thoughts about what many now see as a mistaken use of prosecutorial authority.

Dad wrote the Bushes a lot. Because ambassadors must avoid commenting in a personal essay about continuing military commitments, I will let you draw your own inferences about what Dad had to say. These were one-way conversations.

Putting to one side whether Dad should get footnote credit for much of recent world history, I found his life to be an invaluable lesson in political participation. Especially salutary was his firm belief that in our democracy it is up to the regular guy—not just David Brooks or Mark Shields or even Glenn Beck or Bill O'Reilly—to demonstrate

ART: STEFANIE AUGUSTINE

ON THE WEB
Douglas W. Kmiec on the pope's trip to Malta.
americamagazine.org/podcast

DOUGLAS W. KMIEC *is the U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Malta. The views expressed here are personal and not necessarily those of the president or the secretary of state.*

an appreciation for freedom of speech.

Dad did not dream only politically, either. With the skin-flinty corporate owners of the Cubs keeping Chicago out of World Series since well before his birth, my father seldom hesitated to let George Steinbrenner know how his checkbook was "ruining the *game*" of baseball. Steinbrenner didn't take the hint—if one can call a letter in all caps, pressed hard on school notebook paper a hint.

Most famous personages would ignore my father's dreams. Sometimes the lack of response would perturb him. After Mom passed away five years ago, Dad felt even more intensely the loneliness and separation shared by millions of the elderly who had followed the sun, far from their children and grandchildren, in Buffalo, Philly, Detroit, St. Louis and other rustbelt cities. Life for young families today is two-income busy, and any time left to share dreams with seniors is but a truncated add-on to Disneyworld or Busch Gardens or Christmas visits sandwiched into the lines of holiday travel.

Dad did discover, however, a way to open the minds of others to his dreams. By sending $5 or $10 to a growing list of charities, he shared widely not only his dreams, but his poetry, songs and inspirational prayers. In return, gratitude, for the money at least, would flow in abundance to his numbered mailbox at the trailer park where he lived. Bulk mail would overtax the "mail lady," for whom my father made dutiful expressions of empathy. Mother Nature appeared to follow Dad's lead, matching his philanthropy for disaster victims with an increased frequency of earthquakes, tsunamis and airport-closing volcanoes.

Often my father cleaned out his closets—removing baseball caps, shirts and years of accumulated Father's Day stuff he was too nice to say didn't fit. Driving into his neighborhood, one would encounter many poor children

and their parents wearing his Ralph Lauren shirts with their tattered jeans, not to mention a disproportionate number of Notre Dame and Cubs' fans, to judge by the caps.

My father was a lifelong Democrat, the workingman's party, and he thought highly of President Obama's experience as a community organizer. "Tell the president," Dad would insist (as if Barack and I ate breakfast together every morning), "that he needs to direct every dime he can to jobs."

My father understood intimately the dignity of work and the indignity of foreclosure. Vivid in his memory was the sight of his own mother pleading with the sheriff, during a notorious Chicago thunderstorm, not to toss the family's furniture and the six Kmiec children into the street. That was after the crash of 1929. In a brief autobiography inspired by Tom Brokaw's book, *The Greatest Generation*, my father described how his "mother was crying so hard," he couldn't "differentiate her tears from the driving rain and her sobs from the relentless thunder."

Until the financial collapse of September 2008, many smugly assumed that nothing like the Great Depression could happen again. We know better now, though the present economic pain has been more unevenly felt than it was in the 1930s, when 10 million were put out of work.

In a similar way, this generation's experience with military matters is more ambivalent in light of the attacks on Sept. 11 and the tragically executed Iraq war. An all-volunteer force immunizes many from the costs of war, and that may plague us with an insufficient strategic assessment. By contrast, my father's generation faced military service as an "enlist or be drafted" proposition. After he enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Forces, the B-17 Flying Fortress bomber made real Dad's heroic dreams as he played his part in the unambiguous good of stopping the Holocaust. The military also gave him three squares at a time when he was just plain hungry.

It is less clear that fighting the shadowy, highly mobile, not easily understood Al Qaeda conveys a comparably noble feeling. It should, so long as it shares with my father's military service the need for vigilance against the common enemies of all good dreams—ethnic or racial hatred, poverty and the pernicious misuse of religion to slaughter the innocent in the name of God.

The name Kmiec is of Polish origin, and the small farming village from which my father's father emigrated is not far from Oswiecim (Auschwitz). My father knew what a genuine war crime looked like, whether perpetrated near his ancestral home or in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania by 19 men in possession of commandeered jets and lacking respect for the sanctity of human life.

My father died a few weeks ago in home hospice care in Florida. To both his sons at his side the Father's Day lesson is inescapable: As we check our voice mails, BlackBerries and inboxes, let us not be too busy to notice all those who, like my father, freely give of their dreams. By the Cross and Resurrection, Christ offers us a vision of unconditional love. The dreams of men are frequently their Christ-like offers of love. We can't lose in taking them up. Why? Listen to my father's voice, now fallen silent but forever clearly heard by the family and friends who took the time to share his dreams: "because we have faith, courage and enthusiasm."

With those qualities, Dad, we are confident your dreams of eternity are being fulfilled. A

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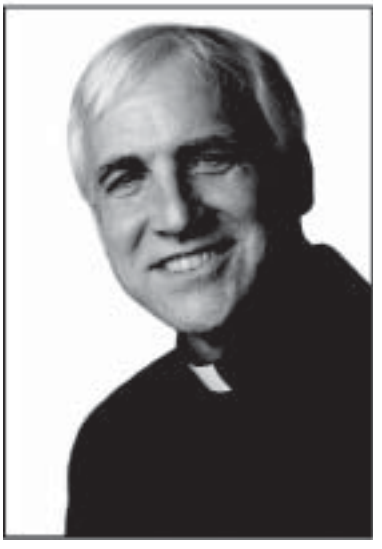

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About your Professor

William Harmless, S.J., is Professor of Theology at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. He has been a member of the Society of Jesus since 1978 and specializes in the history and theology of early Christianity. He is the author of *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Liturgical Press, 1995), *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford University Press, 2004), *Mystics* (Oxford University Press, 2008), and *Augustine In His Own Words* (Catholic University of America Press, 2010).

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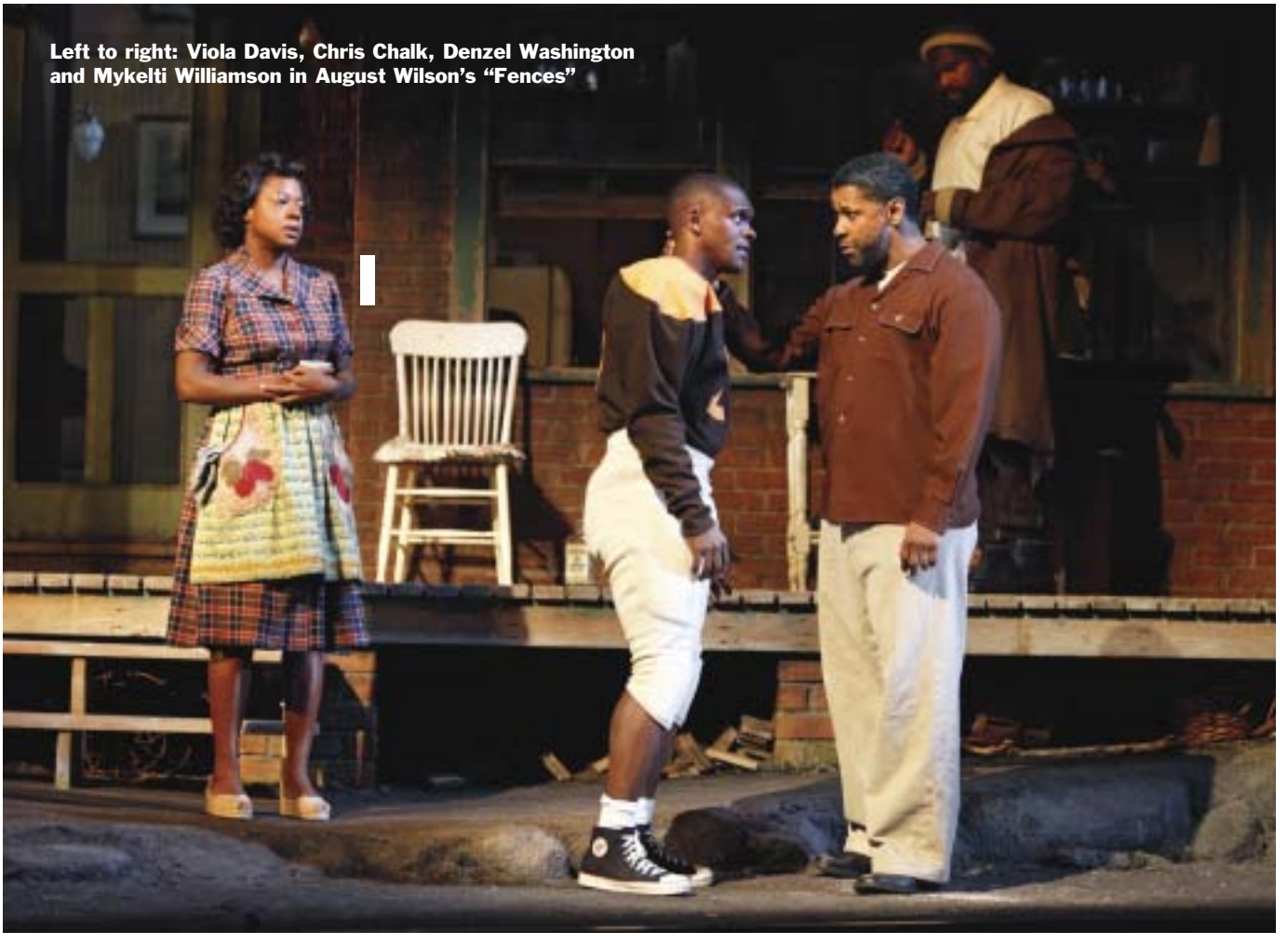
THEATER | ROB WEINERT-KENDT

AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY

August Wilson's 'Fences' and race on Broadway

This was a season of race on Broadway, specifically of "Race"—David Mamet's tendentious legal drama starring James Spader and David Alan Grier. The play opened in December and five months later broke even, not a small achievement for a new play in the shark tank of the commercial theater. But Mamet was not alone in tackling America's still-thorny black/white divide on the Great White Way. There was a revival of the sweeping musical "Ragtime," about a black musician standing athwart Gilded Age privilege; "Memphis," about the miscegenetic origins of rock and roll, which has become an unlikely minor hit (expect to see it on tour immediately); Tracy Letts's miniaturist drama about urban Chicago, "Superior Donuts," praised in this space last year; and even the charmingly oddball revival of Yip Harburg's 1947 satire "Finian's Rainbow," in which Irish pluck and class warfare trumped racism in the Jim Crow South.

While the lasting merit, not to mention entertainment value, of these race-themed shows has varied widely, all have struck chords with audiences eager to see the subject dramatized or at least broached. Despite its clunky, ham-handed dramaturgy and its contrarian, apparently right-leaning perspective, Mamet's "Race," for instance, has been attracting multiracial crowds who seem to respond viscerally to its impolitic provocations. If most of the other aforementioned shows could be



Left to right: Viola Davis, Chris Chalk, Denzel Washington and Mykelti Williamson in August Wilson's "Fences"

PHOTO: © 2010 JOAN MARCUS

said to flatter, or do precious little to ruffle, liberal sensibilities, they are notable for another reason: Along with Mamet's play, they are all by exclusively white writers.

It seems only fitting, then, that this string of shows is capped by a rip-roaring revival of August Wilson's 1987 Pulitzer-winner, **"Fences,"** starring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis as Troy and Rose Maxson, a couple facing challenges from without and within Pittsburgh's Hill District in the late 1950s. Given that Troy is a retired baseball star from the long-defunct Negro Leagues, the sports metaphor is irresistible: With bases loaded and a couple of outs (the early closing of "Ragtime" and "Finian's Rainbow"), Wilson's family drama constitutes a gratifying grand slam.

We should not let the whooping cheers that greet not only the headlining stars but the entire "Fences" team distract us from the play's tragic weight or from its dire but not entirely despairing diagnosis of the nation's social ills in microcosm. Like most of the 10 plays Wilson wrote in his cruelly brief life (one play set in each decade of the 20th century), "Fences" portrays a people in transition, pinned between American history and the American promise. Typically, their urgent struggle to claim both their patch of earth and their human dignity only half succeeds. Wilson's characters do usually manage to locate some sense of their authentic self or "their song," as the conjurer Bynum memorably put it in Wilson's masterpiece "Joe Turner's Come and Gone" (seen on Broadway last season). In the process they often pay with their lives, their peace of mind or, most commonly and wrenchingly, with severe collateral damage to their families and children.

ON THE WEB
Jim McDermott, S.J., on summer film sequels.
americamagazine.org/culture

"Fences" could be a case study out of *The Moynihan Report*, Senator Patrick Moynihan's analysis of the status of the underclass in this country in the 1960s, specifically African-Americans. By play's end, Troy can count one child each by three different women. All his progeny are hovering in the sympathetic but sturdy orbit of the only woman he married, long-suffering Rose, herself the child of what might charitably be called an "extended" family. It's not a new point, but Wilson makes it with force over and over, and nowhere more forcefully than in "Fences": The women keep the home fires burning while the men are off finding themselves, often in contention with each other. That is a worthy quest, no doubt, but all too often it includes a component of sexual conquest alongside other emblems of validation. Wilson created many exemplars of both the rover and the homebody in his plays, but no couple so iconic as Troy and Rose. None of his loyal

women is more tested than Rose, and none of his questing men crash down to earth with a greater thud than Troy.

For while some of Wilson's heroes are lone wolves or gadabouts whose ties to home or hearth are gossamer-thin, Troy is an innately social creature, as entangled in the relationships that sustain him as he is restless for the next new thing. A garbage collector who works the back end of the truck with his buddy Bono (Stephen Mckinley Henderson, a Wilson expert who makes the role look easy), Troy is pushing management to let him move to the front of the truck, as it were, and become the city's first black driver. He also has a wandering eye, despite his still-simmering marriage to Rose. And his brusque, even brutal treatment of his cowed teenage son, Cory (Chris Chalk), suggests that Troy stubbornly views family obligations as just that, no more and no less.

With his smiling good looks and hard-to-hide charm, Denzel Washington easily embodies Troy's feisty good humor, his ribaldry, his comfort at the center of attention, so much that Wilson's play almost settles into the rhythms of a good-natured sitcom. Washington seems typecast in these moments: He is a star playing a star, albeit a fading one. But it is in the "fading" part that Washington's performance is ultimately revelatory. There is the searing monologue about a scrap with his own unloved, unlovable father; there are tall tales about wrestling with Death and the Devil, which grow less and less outlandish as the play rolls on.

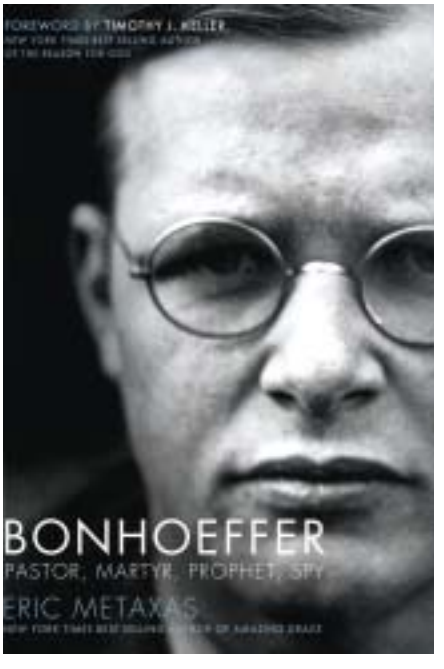
Above all, there is the second-act tête-à-tête in which Troy quietly delivers to Rose a bombshell that will destroy their marriage and finally seal his isolation. It is a tough, gasp-worthy moment, in which an unsolicited confession from Troy unleashes a furious response from Rose, which Viola Davis turns into a bitterly effective aria. What's easy to miss about this scene, with its heavy shudder of melodrama, is that Troy's hand has not been forced; he has no reason to bring such bad news to his wife apart from his own confused sense of integrity. In its own awful way, it is an act of courage—one that, as it happens, utterly ignores his wife's feelings, as she does not hesitate to point out, but an act of rare fortitude nonetheless.

This is Troy's tragedy, and August Wilson's unflinching point: A 53-year-old man might indeed still grapple for a sense of who he is and what he should be, even at the expense of those he loves. This is not only because he is a flawed male of the species, but because he still lives in a nation that does not recognize or validate his larger-than-life manhood. In part, you could say it is a matter of bad timing; Troy, after all, lives on the cusp of America's huge civil rights breakthroughs. But even those triumphs have been interlaced with tragedy. When in 1968 Memphis garbage workers went on strike under the defiant slogan, "I Am a Man," the nation's greatest civil rights leader rushed to march with them. And we all know how Martin Luther King Jr.'s trip to Memphis ended.

ROB WEINERT-KENDT *is an arts journalist who has written for The New York Times and TimeOut New York. He writes a blog called "The Wicked Stage."*

BOOKS | PETER HEINEGG

TRUTH-TELLER



BONHOEFFER
Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy
By Eric Metaxas
Thomas Nelson. 592p $29.99

Who doesn't know about Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45)? The story of his arrest and execution by the Nazis (days before the war's end) and his posthumous career as perhaps the most credible and exciting Christian theologian of the 20th century (seen especially in *The Cost of Discipleship*, *Letters and Papers From Prison* and the unfinished *Ethics*) has been told and retold. The definitive biography is still that by Bonhoeffer's close friend Eberhard Bethge (1,084 pages in the 2000 paperback edition); but shorter, readable tours of the man and his work are still welcome, and Eric Metaxas certainly makes an engaging guide.

Best known for *Amazing Grace* (2007), his fine life of William Wilberforce, Metaxas is that rare creature, a sophisticated "inspirational" journalist; and newcomers to Bonhoeffer will find much to like here. Above all, there are the many generous quotations from the diaries, correspondence and sermons of a man who was at once a class-conscious Prussian aristocrat, a fierce egalitarian, a boyish charmer, a highly gifted musician, a tender lover (of the young Maria von

Wedemyer, whom he never got to marry), a thinker both innovative and conservative and a fearless teller of the truth. Bonhoeffer had a way of saying things that immediately cleared the air. When someone suggested that he join the Nazi-run "German Christians" church to fight against the regime from within, Bonhoeffer replied: "If you board the wrong train, it's no use running down the corridor in the opposite direction." And he advised his compatriots who wanted to carry on religious business-as-usual amid the Final Solution: "Only the person who cries out for the Jews may sing Gregorian chants."

So far, so good. Unfortunately, Metaxas is not content with putting his star on center stage and letting him do his thing. Like Glenn Gould, with his habit of humming along to Bach keyboard pieces, Metaxas feels impelled to keep adding enthusiastic paraphrases to Bonhoeffer's already eloquent words. Thus, after he cites a passage from a letter to Maria von Wedemeyer justifying their "desire for earthly bliss," he amplifies as follows:

> Bonhoeffer was trying to reclaim everything for God.... He was saying that it's not just some "religious" part of this marriage that is important, but the whole thing. The freedom to choose a mate is a gift from God, who created us in his image. And the "desire for earthly bliss" is not something we steal from behind God's back, but is something he has desired that we should desire. We mustn't separate that part of life and marriage from God, either by trying to hide it from him as belonging to us alone or by trying to destroy it altogether through a false piety that denies its existence.

Well sure, but the careful reader will hardly need that scholion to get Bonhoeffer's message.

A second quirk of Metaxas, though sometimes an amusing one, is his effort to jazz up his account of the Third Reich with snappy, even startling, expressions. He describes SS-Obegruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich as an "albino stoat" and a "piscine ghoul." He attacks the "fumfering inaction of the German army officer corps": "In time the bloodthirsty devils with whom they were

playing pattycake would strangle them with the guts of their quaint scruples." On the other hand, if the generals' anti-Hitler putsch succeeded, "the former Viennese vagrant might be given the bum's rush at any moment." Metaxas also makes some sloppy mistakes with foreign terms (e.g., repeatedly citing "Gleischaltung" for *Gleichschaltung*, the crucial Nazi codeword for "standardization," or totalitarian takeover of society). But he's not writing academic history, so it's no big deal.

Finally, we have the knotty—and probably unanswerable—question of where Bonhoeffer was headed with his controversial "religionless Christianity." He argued:

> The God who is with us is the God who forsakes us (Mk 15:34). The God who lets us live in the world without the working hypothesis of God is the God before whom we stand continually. Before God and with God we live without God. God lets himself be pushed out of the world on to the cross. He is weak and powerless in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us. Mt 8:17 makes it quite clear that Christ helps us, not by virtue of his omnipotence, but by virtue of his weakness and suffering.

Is this just streamlined Protestantism, faith stripped of all-too-human institutional crutches and dodges, a vision born from Bonhoeffer's experience of the ways German Christendom compromised with, and surrendered to, Hitler? Or does it look toward a more radical direction, if not to the weird acrobatics of the death-of-God theologians, at least to some kind of post-Christian landscape? Metaxas firmly rejects the latter option; but even if he is right, the dispute shows how Bonhoeffer's work still carries weight across a broad spectrum of belief and doubt.

And undergirding it all is the unforgettable tale of Bonhoeffer's return to Nazi Germany when he could have saved his skin by staying on in either America or Britain, of his serving in the Abwehr (military intelligence) while plotting the overthrow of Hitler, of his imprisonment and hanging. One cannot help wondering whether the war might not have come to a quicker end if Bonhoeffer's co-conspirators—many of them Prussian bluebloods like himself—had been as far-sighted as he was in spotting the intrinsic evil of Nazism and as determined to risk everything to attack it. But of course they were not, and they paid the penalty for their fastidious delays and ineptitude.

Tragic might-have-beens aside, Bonhoeffer's achievement burns as brightly as ever and should get a still wider audience, thanks to Metaxas's warm-hearted, lively chronicle.

PETER HEINEGG *is a professor of English at Union College, Schenectady, N.Y.*

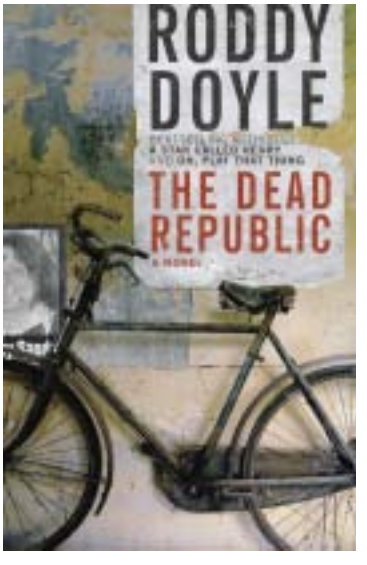
TOM DEIGNAN

HENRY'S FINAL ACT

THE DEAD REPUBLIC
A Novel

By Roddy Doyle
Viking. 336p $26.95

The population of Ireland currently hovers around that of Norway, Croatia, Costa Rica and Moldova. But given the number of books that explore Ireland's turbulent history, you would think this island of saints and scholars was roughly the size of two Chinas and an India. Then again, if you count the diaspora, that seems to be the size of the global Irish nation.



Back in 1999, on the cusp of the 21st century, the best-selling author Roddy Doyle embarked on an ambitious attempt to present an alternative view of Ireland's bloody 20th century. Doyle—best known for such raucous working-class novels as *The Commitments* and *The Snapper*, as well as the Booker Prize-winning *Paddy Clarke, Ha Ha Ha*—created the character Henry Smart. First introduced in the novel *A Star Called Henry*, Smart is a kind of Irish Forrest Gump, with a penchant for showing up at key moments in his nation's history. So Henry—a child of the worst Dublin slums—is in the General Post Office during the Easter Rising of 1916, fighting the British alongside Pearse, Connolly, Collins and other Irish martyrs familiar to anyone who has ever heard a rebel ballad.

In fact, you might say that's the problem Doyle was looking to solve, or at least play with. In *A Star Called Henry*, the Irish rebels are not exactly the poetic dreamers and warriors of myth. They are flesh and blood men (and women), which means they can be petty and vindictive rather than heroic. Doyle also confronted conflicts within the rebel movement, leaving Henry, by

the end of the book, to wonder why any poor kid would fight alongside some of these middle-class stiffs. *A Star Called Henry* wasn't exactly revolutionary, but it was a bold reappraisal of a cherished version of Irish history.

Henry Smart appeared next in the equally bold though not quite as well executed *Oh, Play That Thing*, in which Henry (having fallen out of favor with the I.R.A.) heads to America. Unlike other Irish immigrants, Henry is not interested in becoming a cop or fireman. Instead, he dives into Prohibition-era Manhattan night life before shuffling off to Chicago, where he becomes manager for an up-and-coming musician named Louis Armstrong.

Now we have the final installment in Doyle's Henry Smart trilogy. *The Dead Republic* begins with a look at another famous American popular artist: the film director John Ford. The year is 1951. Henry, we learn, is going to have his life story—of poverty, sex and violence—told on the big screen by the famous Irish-American director. The name of the film is going to be "The Quiet Man." It is one thing to tarnish the memories of beloved Irish rebels. But "The Quiet Man"? Doyle risks finding himself on the wrong of end of a Hibernian fatwa.

Indeed, Doyle could have given in to the temptation to mock "The Quiet Man," its legions of fans and its cozy view of Irish life. What we get, however, is a battle of wills between Henry and Ford (who actually did employ an "I.R.A. advisor" on the set of "The Quiet Man"). The ex-rebel wants his life story (as well as history) told unflinchingly. But Ford, the entertainer as historian, believes romance, jump cuts and bright colors will also be required.

"What was in the script now wasn't what we'd written," Henry laments. "The race across the country to save the rebel's life had become a race on a beach for a woman's bonnet."

"The Quiet Man" section of *The Dead Republic* is entertaining, if a bit long. The novel, from there, sags a little. Henry plays vigilante, threatening abusive school teachers and unwittingly catching up with women from his past. Doyle's prose is generally curt and muscular, though occasionally it seems simply terse. There are, though, occasional moments of hilarity, with keen insights into the human soul, particularly the Irish variety.

ON THE WEB
Read about this month's Catholic Book Club selection.
americamagazine.org/cbc

The Dead Republic picks up steam nicely by the time the hunger strikes of the 1980s roll around. Bobby Sands becomes an international icon, and Margaret Thatcher plays her role as villain more sharply than even John Ford could have imagined. As the I.R.A. wages war, Sinn Fein and others were, if you will, waging peace behind the scenes.

"Good suits had to be bought, bad hands had to be shaken," Doyle writes. In the end, Doyle depicts Henry Smart—and presumably those who share his hopes, if not quite his colorful experiences—as a pawn (albeit an important one) in a game of history, during which even the slightest bit of power can corrupt. But Doyle's hidden history of the Irish 20th century is not merely cynical. History is diplomacy and politics, sure. But it is also music and movies, and often the result of contradictory forces and unintended consequences.

The Dead Republic is far from a perfect book. Overall, however, Doyle's trilogy is provocative, impressive and an important part of an ongoing conversation about the Irish past and the nature of history. It really would have been interesting to have Henry Smart survey the Ireland of the 1990s and 2000s, the Celtic Tiger years. Then again, Doyle may be scribbling away at such a tome as we speak.

TOM DEIGNAN, *author of* Coming to America: Irish Americans, *is a columnist at The Irish Voice newspaper and Irish America magazine. He is working on a novel about a New York City high school.*

WITHOUT GUILE

"I know the view isn't that great, but it's near a good school."

CARTOON BY VINCENT VOK

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Send letter and résumé by June 15 to: Director of Human-Spiritual Formation, Sacred Heart School of Theology, P.O. Box 429, Hales Corners, WI 53130-0429, or to pschuessler@shst.edu.

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LETTERS

Unfortunate Misunderstanding

Please allow me to respond to two letters that appeared in your May 31 issue concerning the liturgical use of the cappa magna at the solemn pontifical Mass celebrated by Bishop Slattery in Washington, D.C.

Bishop Slattery has received close to 2,000 letters and e-mail messages from 13 countries around the world commenting on the prayerfulness of that Mass and the depth of comfort the faithful found in his homily.

The cappa magna does indeed represent the finery of the world, its power and prestige. That is why after his entrance wearing it, the prelate is publicly stripped of this finery and humbled before the congregation. Then, vestment by vestment, the bishop is clothed in the new man of which St. Paul speaks, including the baptismal alb, the dalmatic of charity, the stole of pardon and the chasuble of mercy. When finally clothed in Christ, the prelate makes a second entrance into the church to begin the eucharistic celebration *in persona Christi*, the visible head of the body, the church.

It was a clear statement that the power and prestige of the world have no place at the altar, but it is expressed in a liturgical ritual or symbol, which, unfortunately, are often lacking in the contemporary rites and thus hard to grasp.

(MSGR.) PATRICK BRANKIN
Director of Communications
Diocese of Tulsa, Okla.

Forty Years in the Desert

Thank you for "What Good Soldiers Bear," by Nancy Sherman (5/31). The differences between those who came back from Iraq and Afghanistan and Vietnam veterans is the former's willingness to talk about their experiences in war. That is because the country welcomed them back.

Not so Vietnam veterans, who had to keep it all inside because the country condemned both the war and those who fought in it. I know. It took me 40 years after nightmares, weeping, loneliness and inability to speak to anyone about my experiences. And only then because a local policeman found me walking in my sleep and brought me to a veterans' group of former Vietnam soldiers, who spoke about their experiences.

Would that I had met Nancy Sherman 40 years ago!

PETER J. RIGA
Houston, Tex.

Wounded Warriors

Thanks for this thoughtful and thought-provoking review ("To Hell and Back," 6/7). Knowing several vets and their families, I find the reviewer's observations right on the mark. Pastoral outreach to military personnel and their loved ones ought to be high on the church's agenda. We can be for peace (popes and the U.S. bishops have opposed the war in Iraq) and also for those who are sent, often by misguided leaders, into harm's way. Many carry the lasting scars, often invisible, of conflict and combat. The work of those involved in the Wounded Warriors campaign (www.woundedwarriorproject.org) and the Wounded Warriors Academy, founded by Rick Curry, S.J., deserve our support and prayers. So too the efforts of those like John Dear, S.J., who has dedicated his life and work (now some 20 books and thousands of talks across the globe) to fostering peace and ending war. Someday we'll realize "where all the flowers have gone" and heed the words of Pope Paul VI: "War no more. War never again."

RICK MALLOY, S.J.
Yellowstone National Park, Wyo.

Welcoming the New

I hope that Catholics will welcome this new development in the field of bioscience ("Vatican Greets First

Synthetic Cell With Caution," Signs of the Times, 6/7). Though obviously only a first stumbling endeavor in this direction, most likely it will be followed by more and better results. Let us rejoice in this new human enterprise. Should we fear it because it can be used for wrong purposes? No! Every human enterprise, alas, can and most likely will be used for evil purposes. Still, God saw all he had made and indeed it was very good.

THEO VERBEEK
Wagga Wagga, N.S.W., Australia

Outdated Maps

Regarding "True North," by Thomas A. Shannon (5/31): He gives references to Bernard Häring, C.Ss.R., and Joseph Fuchs, S.J., but does not even mention Pope John Paul II's encyclical "Veritatis Splendor." That is like using a modern G.P.S. system that has outdated maps for the crucial intersections one has to navigate.

(REV.) MARCEL L. TAILLON
Narragansett, R.I.

Open With Caution

Opening a new issue of **America** can by scary. Just about every article is a challenge, an attempt to get us out of our comfortable niche or our comfortable pew in the church. We live in a country where we can do much, far beyond just giving money to the needy. We can agitate, form groups, write letters, support those who are already doing much. But it is easy to get discouraged.

Thank you, **America**, for not permitting us to acquiesce and go away quietly.

LUCY FUCHS
Brandon, Fla.

America (ISSN 0002-7049) is published weekly (except for 13 combined issues: Jan. 4-11, 18-25, Feb. 1-8, April 12-19, June 7-14, 21-28, July 5-12, 19-26, Aug. 2-9, 16-23, Aug. 30-Sept. 6, Sept. 13-20, Dec. 20-27) by America Press, Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019. Periodicals postage is paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. Business Manager: Lisa Pope; Circulation: Judith Palmer, (212) 581-4640. Subscriptions: United States, $56 per year; add U.S. $30 postage and GST (#131870719) for Canada; or add U.S. $54 per year for international priority airmail. Postmaster: Send address changes to: America, 106 West 56th St. New York, NY 10019. Printed in the U.S.A.

The Path to Life

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), JUNE 27, 2010

Readings: 1 Kgs 19:16-21; Ps 16:1-11; Gal 5:1, 13-18; Lk 9:51-62

"I will follow you wherever you go" (Lk 9:57)

The threats from the loggers and ranchers and their hired gunmen were coming more frequently. Some urged her to leave or to desist her relentless outcry against the devastation of the Brazilian rainforest. But Dorothy Stang, S.N.D., would not leave the poor farmers whose homes and livelihood were in peril. She forged on through almost impassable muddy roads to reach them, to read the Scriptures and pray together, to bolster their courage to stand up against injustice and to urge them to live in harmony with the rainforest, with God and with one another. Her resolute journey ended when she was gunned down on February 12, 2005.

In today's Gospel we see the same resolute determination on the part of Jesus not to deviate from the path on which he has set out, to advocate for life for the most vulnerable. The opposition against him is mounting, and he knows it. He chooses not to turn back. There were still many ancient hatreds that needed healing, one of which was the enmity between his people and Samaritans. He tries to meet them in their own territory, but they will not receive him. The infuriated disciples want to do as Elijah did (2 Kgs 1:10) and call down on them fire from heaven. Jesus instead urges them to peaceably journey on to another village with him.

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.*

En route Jesus encounters three potential followers. Many commentators understand these as people who are initially enthusiastic but are not able to embrace the serious demands of discipleship once Jesus articulates these. But each encounter is left open-ended, and we are not told whether or not the person does ultimately follow Jesus. They all pose questions to us about our own commitment to follow Jesus all the way to Jerusalem.

The first person approaches Jesus, expressing a desire to follow him. With words akin to Ruth's profession of loyalty to Naomi (Ru 1:16), the first says, "I will follow you wherever you go." This potential disciple rightly voices that following Jesus requires whole-hearted dedication to him. In reply Jesus warns that his is an itinerant mission that demands mobility to go where the needs are and a letting go of any possessiveness, even of a bed of one's own.

In the second encounter, Jesus initiates the call to follow. This person wants to take care first of filial obligations to his parents. Jesus invites him to embrace a larger family obligation: to extend his concern for life to all God's family as his kin and to proclaim well-being for all in God's realm.

The third person, like the first, initiates the encounter and expresses a desire to follow Jesus, asking to bid farewell first to his family, as did Elisha when called by Elijah. Jesus warns that any who come with him will not be able to return to what was before. They are forever changed and must proclaim the reign of God. Just as Dorothy Stang could not leave the people she had come to love in her 40 years of ministry in the Amazon rainforest, so disciples must follow the path of Jesus until their own moment of being "taken up" in death and resurrection.

We do not know whether the three would-be disciples accepted these sobering challenges and continued on the way with Jesus. If the conditions Jesus sets forth seem daunting, Paul reminds us that this is not a yoke of slavery we take up, but a freeing power to live by the Spirit. Just as Elijah clothed Elisha with the mantle of his prophetic power, so Jesus' disciples are wrapped in the protective cloak of his loving spirit.

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How have you experienced the freedom of life in the Spirit?
- In what ways have you not been able to "go back home" once you chose to follow Jesus?
- How do you resist "calling down fire from heaven" on those who oppose God's reign?

ART: TAD DUNNE

Laborers for the Harvest

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), JULY 4, 2010

Readings: Is 66:10-14; Ps 66:1-20; Gal 6:14-18; Lk 10:1, 17-20

"The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few" (Lk 10:2)

A recent radio interview featured a journalist who decided to spend a year doing jobs that most Americans will not do. One of these jobs was to harvest lettuce. For two months he was the only white person toiling among Mexican migrant workers. He described the back-breaking labor vividly and how he had to become numb to the pains in his back and hands and arms to make it through each day. He had to ignore his fierce thirst from the relentless heat and sun, for to take a break to get water would put him hopelessly behind.

What was most impressive in his story was the way people helped one another in the fields. When one person was sick and could not keep up the pace, all the others automatically took on a bit more of a load to help her get through the day. This work is so physically strenuous and the pay so meager that few if any would ever aspire to it; migrants desperate for any income take it gladly.

In today's Gospel Jesus invites his disciples to take up the very strenuous work of evangelization. As in the lettuce fields, the harvest is abundant, but those who are willing to take on this demanding work are few. Those who do take it up are "like lambs among wolves," gentle and loving, while facing fierce opposition that could even devour them. Like migrant workers in the United States, whose presence is unwanted yet whose work is indispensable, laborers in God's vineyard also face frequent rejection.

Furthermore, they bring with them no provisions and no defenses. For their food they are dependent on what is offered them. They deserve payment, but there is no guarantee they will receive it. Like migrants who cannot raise their voice in protest against injustices toward them for fear of deportation, missionaries may need to move to another town, another field, another kind of crop if there is no welcome for them in the first place they preach. Their vulnerability proclaims an alternative kind of power to that of the reigning systems: God's saving power of love in the crucified Christ. Throughout, they are to be bearers of peace proclaiming God's reign. What would entice anyone to take up such work?

The last part of the Gospel points to the rewarding aspects of this difficult work. When proclaimers of the Gospel can see that the power they use for good is able to transform evil situations, the ensuing joy is indescribable. It is essential for them, however, not to focus on the visible results of their handiwork and not to take false pride in what they may think has been accomplished by their own efforts. Their true joy comes from acknowledging the divine source of the power they are able to wield, as they entrust themselves fully to the One who has called them to mission.

Like the returning exiles addressed in the first reading, who are filled with rejoicing over the rebuilding of Jerusalem, they know that they rest under God's protective mantle, where they may "suck fully of the milk of her comfort" and "nurse with delight at her abundant breasts." It is the Holy One who will "spread prosperity over Jerusalem like a river," carrying its inhabitants in her arms, fondling them in her lap, "as a mother comforts a child."

Those who respond to Jesus' invitation to go out into the fields never go alone. Like the workers cutting lettuce, they have partners who rally in support of anyone who is flagging, ensuring that none is left behind and that all together share in the joy of a successful harvest.

BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- What rigors do you face in sharing the Gospel with others?
- How have you experienced joy from being a transformative power for good?
- Let God's motherly care enfold you as you allow yourself to be formed for mission.

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