America

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Eboo Patel on Countering Religious Prejudice

KERRY WEBER

A Catholic Lobbyist

DAVID GOLEMBOSKI

OF MANY THINGS

For years I carried a tennis racket on vacations and played in some beautiful, memorable places—high on a mountainside in Bellagio, Italy, for instance, above the fork in Lake Como. These days, however, having taken up painting (or, more accurately, having been seized by painting), I pack paper, a pencil, an eraser and a travel set of watercolors (so small it fits into my hand) and spend hours in plein-air pursuits. Watercolors have accompanied me to Canada, Spain, Poland, Norway, Portugal and France. Yet the quality of the art I make might cause a fair-minded viewer to wonder why I bother. I'm no John Singer Sargent, no J. M. W. Turner, and no amount of practice will ever change that.

A rank amateur, I have found that studying portraiture and the human figure has not prepared me to paint cityscapes, seascapes or landscapes, though I thought it would and think it ought to, if only I were doing it correctly. When painting trees, skies, water and architecture, I'm tempted to dial 911 for emergency assistance.

Painting outside in public also has its challenges. In art class, no one ever walks between artist and subject, but outdoors people routinely linger in the narrow space between the artist and the statue or flowers or boat she has chosen to immortalize. In class, no one gawks from behind or comments on the work in progress. No dripping leaf, bird or sudden cloudburst mars the image one has spent hours making; no gale rips the sheet from one's tablet. In class, other students sympathize with common errors—like the troubling blooms that form from an excess of water. Outdoors, though, these blooms call out to passersby: "Come here and look at this mistake!" As anyone who has ever painted in the medium knows, watercolors do not tolerate mistakes. Outdoors, the paintings seem to take them personally.

The plein-air painter must be prepared for sweat, sunburn, insects, wind and accidents involving permanent color. I have learned (almost) not to care what onlookers say and readily oblige anyone who asks to take my photo. And I love the children who, fascinated by the colors and the act of painting, stand reverently beside me until some adult calls them, still rapt, away. Mark-making binds people, even if they can't say 10 words to each other in a common language.

Imagine me folded onto a six-inch curb in Krakow, painting a streetcar passing through a crowded intersection. Imagine me, fingers half-frozen, painting solo on a bench overtaken instantly by Japanese tourists, the day's last busload, as night falls over a totem at a Canadian national monument. See me in Vancouver, straddling a felled tree on the beach trying to catch on a 10-inch by 14-inch page the spectacle of the setting sun. Imagine me painting vignettes of children as they swim and jump into Lake Annecy in the French Alps.

Why try if the paintings are not the reward? After all, one can effortlessly make a picture-perfect video or photo. My answer: Because effort is the thing; the joy is in the doing. It is fun to imagine oneself painting a lovely frameable keepsake, but the joy comes in the application of the paint. Also, I remember each subject, sitting before it, relating to it, giving it my best. While I am often proud of my paintings—enough to display them at home and at the office—it is the experience of painting that satisfies. I choose a subject, sketch it, experiment with colors and stroke with the brush. I love the grand absorption, oblivion for hours. Often I take too long. The light changes so much that my finished image shows the passage of time by its incongruous shadows. Yet looking intensely at a subject, examining how it is constructed, what lies in front of it, behind it, next to it, watching it change with the light—is a huge reward.

KAREN SUE SMITH

America

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Cover: Eboo Patel speaks at an interfaith conference in Oct. 2009. Photo: Deanna Mandarino

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Melanie Thernstrom, right, answers questions on her new book, *The Pain Chronicles*, and Luke Hansen, S.J., discusses his recent visit with former **Guantánamo Bay** detainees on our podcast. Plus, Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., reviews **"Waiting for Superman."** All at americamagazine.org

It's Nonsense to Compromise

How can any self-described "deficit hawk" argue for an extension of President Bush's tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans? It defies reason and the economic evidence. Extending the tax cut for America's highest earners, the top 2 percent, would withhold $700 billion from the federal government over 10 years. Tax revenue, of course, enables the government to pay down the deficit and to refrain from further borrowing. Yet for the last two years, the recession has caused federal tax revenues to drop even as demand for services like extended unemployment benefits, health care for children, increases in food stamps and aid to the states, for example, have increased. Who needs the money more—the nation's wealthiest (who for eight years under President Bush received the largest cuts among taxpayers) or those who require government assistance? Already, the nation's top 1 percent of taxpayers earn nearly a quarter (23.5 percent) of the nation's total income. And within that, a tenth of one percent (0.1) earn 6 percent of the total.

That's not all. Data from both the Reagan and Bush tax cuts for the wealthy show that top earners tend to save their excess, which does little to stimulate the economy. The other 98 percent of the population, by contrast, tend to spend their "extra" income because they can actually use the money. Such spending, spread across the country, would boost both the economy and citizens' morale. If President Obama's current plan proceeds without compromise, all but the top earners receive a tax cut, and earners from the top tier will be able to take a bow for helping reduce the deficit.

Corporate Muscle

The political reach of the conservative Koch brothers is now well documented, thanks to Jane Mayer's must-read exposé in The New Yorker. David and Charles Koch, the principal owners of Koch Industries Inc., a private energy company, have bankrolled numerous think tanks and political action groups, including Americans for Prosperity and Citizens for a Sound Economy, to advance their libertarian, free-market philosophy. The most troubling aspect of the Kochs' activism, however, is their lobbying on environmental causes. Greenpeace alleges that Koch Industries is the "kingpin of climate change denial," having funded several organizations working against energy legislation. In California Koch-funded entities are among those leading the fight for Proposition 23, a referendum that would suspend implementation of the state's landmark climate-change bill of 2006. In response Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has rebuked Koch Industries and two Texas oil companies for meddling in local politics.

Prior to the publication of Ms. Mayer's article, the Koch brothers may not have been called out by name; but her investigation has focused much-needed attention on how much influence one company can exercise in American politics. Unfortunately, in the wake of Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission the political power of corporations will only grow. The clout of corporations will harmfully affect many areas of public life, but perhaps none more than the environment, where America's immense energy companies will fight fiercely to protect their profit margins. There is little chance that Congress will step in to check their power before the mid-term elections; but perhaps, come November, the growing political muscle of corporations will focus legislators' minds on the urgency of electoral finance reform.

Horse Sense on Immigration

Meg Whitman, a candidate for governor of California and a frequent critic of employers who hire paper-challenged workers, found herself in a paper jam of her own this month. It was revealed that Ms. Whitman fired her long-time housekeeper in June 2009 after a belated discovery that she had been dusting chez Whitman for years without legal residency. The champion anti-immigration bloviator Lou Dobbs had similar paperwork problems at his 300-acre New Jersey estate and horse farm. An investigation by The Nation magazine turned up undocumented workers tending its grounds and horseflesh and no doubt ducking every time the self-appointed border watchman made his rounds. It is always great fun to catch public figures in glass estates, but the apparent hypocrisy about immigration is a less striking aspect of these gotcha news stories than what they reveal about our national bipolar disorder on illegal immigration.

The truth is that for decades the United States has tacitly accepted, even encouraged, the expansion of a vast undocumented labor force that now has a significant presence in virtually every U.S. industry and community—even in the homes and horse stalls of some of its fiercest antagonists. These workers cannot be "outsourced" back to their native countries without mass disruption to U.S. civic life and, of course, great suffering and more dislocation in their own lives. Despite overstuffed Dobbsian rhetoric, a more compassionate and rational approach—opening doors to legal immigration and legalizing workers in place—is the only practical way forward.

Voting Block

The end is near. Candidates are hoarse and woozy; the public recoils in exhaustion from a final assault of candidate mailers and attack ads; the cable punditry contemplate mid-November Caribbean getaways. A good number of pollsters and commentators have already predicted the outcome of these 2010 Congressional elections, but the vote itself, the only poll that matters, still remains to be actually taken by actual people: Tuesday, Nov. 2. Will you be joining your fellow citizens in the voting booth?

Past performance suggests probably not. Mid-term races are notoriously poor draws—historically less than 40 percent of registered voters bother to mark a midterm ballot—and if members of the chattering class can be believed this year, many Americans are so turned off by the state of our electoral process that they will surely sit this one out. Young people, African-Americans and Latinos who enthusiastically ushered the Obamas into their historic White House residency in 2008 are showing significantly less interest in this race. Will America's crucial independent voters head to the polls, or are they too falling into the "enthusiasm gap" that is swallowing so many? The only apparently dependable voting bloc this year may be the members of the emerging demographic of the disgruntled—especially the hyper-motivated, if anarchic and unpredictable, members of the Tea Party movement. These are the folks hurrying to get government off our backs by propelling their candidates into it. Partisans on the left appear equally eager for the first Tuesday of November.

If the nation's political extremes swarm voting booths while the befuddled, exasperated moderate middle elects to stay home and watch television reruns, we will once again achieve the government we deserve. A motivated minority will set national policy for the rest of us who were too uninspired, too tired, too turned off and tuned out to vote. That is, in the best of times, merely an unworthy outcome for a mature democracy. In this accidentally crucial election, it proposes to become a tragedy.

The Tea Party has driven out Republican moderates—a problem for the G.O.P. no doubt, but also a disservice to the nation. If the moderate center cannot hold, things fall apart in America. Little legislative progress will be achieved during this time of profound national uncertainty and civic crisis if a hyperpolarized Congress becomes a bar-room shouting match instead of a legislative forum that remains somewhat familiar with the concept of compromise.

But despite the relentless anger depicted on cable news, this year's vote may not prove as extreme as many predict. A Newsweek poll reports that "angry" voters are no more likely to vote than more even-tempered folk. Hot-button social issues that turned heads in previous elections or the Islamophobic distractions churned up earlier this year turn out to be of little interest to 2010 voters. According to a New York Times/CBS News poll, voters are focused on two issues: an economy on life support and an unemployment rate that has turned obstinate. That is not surprising after an unprecedented 17 months of stagnant employment figures that threaten a generation of workers and their children.

Catholic voters need to be mindful that the economy is not the only issue that should direct their decisions in the voting booth. Our comprehensively pro-life camp needs to make decisions that are based not only on what is best for the economy but also on what will do the most to protect the most vulnerable among us during this especially dangerous time, to safeguard what is left of our social safety net during a period of accelerating poverty, to bring an end to overseas conflicts that squander human lives and increasingly scarce national resources, and to interrupt the collusion between corporate interests and government agencies that threatens our democracy and our environment.

Owing to the many geopolitical and economic hazards of our times, this is no throwaway election. It will determine the fate of a nation at war and struggling with a fragile economic recovery that could at any time relapse into something far worse. It is a nation finally facing up to the ethical necessity of a health care system that protects instead of bankrupts its citizens. There is cause, through the murk of the season's ceaseless prognostification, to make out some signs of hope. According to a recent Pew poll, 70 percent of all likely voters say they plan to take part in our democracy on Nov. 2. If it is true, as Woody Allen once said, that 80 percent of success is just showing up, that figure suggests we may have a decent chance this year of voting in not just the government we deserve, but the one we need.

SUDAN

Independence Vote Could Reignite Civil War

The planned referendum on independence for Southern Sudan scheduled for Jan. 9 is simply a "formality," and efforts must be undertaken to ensure that the fragile peace that exists in Sudan continues after the vote, said members of a Sudanese delegation to the United States. "The people of the South are beating day and night the drum of secession, independence," said Bishop Paride Taban, retired bishop of Torit.

Bishop Taban, joined by Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Adwok Kur of Khartoum and John Ashworth, acting director of the Denis Hurley Peace Institute in South Africa and an adviser to Catholic Relief Services in Sudan, spoke at the Universtity of Notre Dame on Oct. 5 at a conference sponsored by C.R.S., the U.S. bishops and the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, among others. The group said that the need to preserve peace after the referendum is vital to the region's future.

"Southerners are going to vote overwhelmingly for separation," Ashworth said. "But the government in Khartoum doesn't want separation to happen." The trio warned that a return to civil war would only preserve the power of the Islamic government and allow for the continued oppression of Sudan's ethnic and religious minorities.

Ashworth said that even if the vote is overwhelmingly in favor of independence, the outcome could be nullified. He explained that a provision under the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended decades of civil war requires that at least 60 percent of registered voters turn out in order for the referendum to be official. "Given the difficulties of a country like Sudan, without

MIDDLE EAST

Eastern Church Leaders Seek More Autonomy

Eastern bishops at the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East, assembled at the Vatican from Oct. 10 to Oct. 24, began their extraordinary meeting with expressions of concern for the future viability of the Christian presence in the region and a call for religious freedom in the Middle East. "We must emerge from a logic in defense of the rights of Christians only and engage in the defense of the rights of all," said the introduction to the synod prepared and read by the Coptic patriarch Antonios Naguib of Alexandria, Egypt, the synod's recording secretary.

But freedom to practice their faith within different Middle Eastern societies was not the only church freedom the bishops sought. Within the Catholic Church itself, the Eastern bishops demanded greater respect for Eastern authority and tradition. Many bishops protested the lack of autonomy their churches experience and suggested that structural reforms would be required to preserve the identity, authority and heritage of the 22 Eastern churches.

Six different churches from the Middle East were represented in the synod: Armenian, Chaldean, Coptic, Maronite, Melkite and Syrian. As the synod opened, various prelates from those churches proposed that patriarchs and other heads of Eastern churches should have authority over their communities all around the world, not just in regions of origin. The bishops also argued that Eastern churches in Europe, North America and elsewhere should be allowed to have married priests, according to their tradition, anywhere it takes root and not just within their historical Middle Eastern boundaries.

The Eastern Catholic churches have their own canon law and disciplines, their own liturgies, spiritualities, histories and heritage. While they

A voter casts her ballot in Malakal, Sudan, in April, during the country's first multiparty election in 25 years.

communication, without roads, it's going to be very difficult to get people to vote," Ashworth said. "There is fear among people that ghost voters will be registered and then not vote."

The role of the church will be vital to maintaining peace, both bishops said. Bishop Adwok, who chairs the Justice and Peace Commission of the Sudanese bishops' conference, said the Catholic Church has gained the respect of people of all faiths because of its efforts to provide shelter, food and other basic necessities to war victims. "The church plays a major role, and it plays it in the eyes of the people," he said. "They look at the church as another government, an alternative government."

The situation in southern Sudan is complicated by the presence of oil reserves, the lack of specific boundaries marking the south from the north and questions about displaced people from the south who remain in northern territories, the panelists said. Specifically, about 85 percent of Sudan's oil reserves are located in the south. Revenue-sharing has so far not been discussed. The absence of an agreement would feed the possible renewal of hostilities, Ashworth said. Whether such complex issues can be resolved by Jan. 9 remains questionable, he said.

"What is clear is that southern people want to secede and there's a real possibility they will declare independence unilaterally," Ashworth said. "What we're hearing is if they declare independence as a last resort and follow all legal means, then it will be relatively easy for the international community to recognize that independence. If they don't exhaust all legal means, it will be more difficult to recognize independence."

Ashworth urged the United Nations to send in large numbers of election monitors as soon as possible in an effort to promote a free and fair referendum. He also called for the world body to "provide protection for the people" so they do not fear casting their ballots under the shadow of war.

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tend to be identified with one country or geographical region, many of them now find that the majority of their faithful live abroad. Bishop Vartan Waldir Boghossian, the Argentina-based bishop for Armenian Catholics in Latin America, used paticularly strong language regarding limits placed on Catholic patriarchs. He said, "Of the 23 churches in their own right that make up the Catholic Church, only one—the Latin church—is not subject to this limitation" of its authority within the bounds of its ancient geographical borders. For example, while the bishops of the Armenian Catholic Church elect bishops for dioceses in Armenia, it is the pope who selects Armenian bishops for dioceses in the United States or Australia.

Antonios Aziz Mina, the Coptic bishop of Guizeh, Egypt, said that especially when there are more faithful of an Eastern church living outside than inside the church's territory, "it is not entirely logical that some faithful who belong to a *sui iuris* church have no relationship with the church they belong to, other than liturgically.

"My request is that the patriarch be granted personal jurisdiction over the faithful of his church wherever they might be," he said. The Coptic bishop also asked Pope Benedict XVI to revoke a decision made in the 1930s that Eastern churches can ordain married men only in their homelands.

The Eastern bishops said that Eastern patriarchs should automatically have the right to cast votes in papal elections and should even take precedence over cardinals. They requested that the process of papal approval of the election of bishops by the synods of Eastern churches should be simplified and accelerated.

Prelates leave the opening Mass of the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican on Oct. 10.

New Agency at Vatican For New Evangelization

Pope Benedict XVI unveiled a new Vatican agency to promote "new evangelization" and assigned it the task of combating the "de-Christianization" of countries that were first evangelized centuries ago. The new council, named the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, will encourage a clearer understanding of the faith and help "remake the Christian fabric of human society." In an apostolic letter dated Oct. 12, the pope identified a variety of factors in the weakening of religious faith in the West: advances in science and technology; the widening of individual freedom and lifestyle choices; profound economic changes; the mixing of cultures and ethnic groups brought about by migration; and the growing interdependence among peoples. Such changes have brought many benefits but often are accompanied by "a worrisome loss of the sense of the sacred," he said.

Poverty Grows In U.S. Suburbs

Poverty has grown in America's suburbs, but suburban poor are finding it hard to get help, according to *Suburbs in Need*, a study released on Oct. 7 by the Brookings Institution. One of its co-authors, Scott Allard, an associate professor in the School of Social Service Administration of the University of Chicago, said, "Few of the suburban communities have a social services infrastructure in place to address the challenges this increased poverty poses." Existing suburban social service entities are experiencing reduced funding because of state budget shortfalls. The report found that by 2008 the rising number of suburban poor exceeded the number of city poor in the largest U.S. metro areas by 1.5 million. Although the collapse of the housing market and high unemployment are driving suburban distress, "Forty-five percent of providers report substantial increases in the number of clients coming from households where one or both adults are working but cannot earn enough to make ends meet," Allard said.

A Vision of Unity

Developed by the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation during a three-day meeting at Georgetown University in Washington, two "unprecedented" statements released on Oct. 7 offer a vision of what the unity of the two churches might look like. *Steps Toward a Reunited Church* offers a vision of the possible shape of a reunited church resulting from the reestablishment of full communion. The second statement, *Celebrating Easter/Pascha Together*, focuses on the importance of a unified celebration of Christ's resurrection. The statements identify areas where the churches diverge in leadership and other practices, such as the role of the pope, that must be reconciled before the nearly 1,000-year separation between the churches can end. Ronald Roberson, a Paulist priest who is the associate director of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said the divided churches now "dimly perceive" what a united church would look like. "Obviously for that to happen," he said, "Catholics would have to adjust and Orthodox would have to adjust."

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Protest in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Catholic Justice and Peace Commission joined human rights groups campaigning for the release of the Chinese dissident **Liu Xiaobo**, winner of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize. ✦ U.S. doctors announced on Oct. 11 that they have begun the first publicly known use of **human embryonic stem cells**, treating a patient at an Atlanta facility for victims of severe spinal cord injuries. ✦ The Archdiocese of Los Angeles launched a **creation sustainability ministry** on Oct. 4 to inspire Catholics "to act out of reverence and respect for God's creation." ✦ Khartoum police arrested a man subdued after rushing toward the altar with a dagger during a Mass celebrated by Khartoum's Cardinal **Gabriel Zubeir Wako** on Oct. 11. ✦ As scientists gathered in Detroit for the **World Stem Cell Summit** on Oct. 3, Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit said research that destroys human embryos "deserves our scrutiny and scorn." ✦ The president of Australia's **United Retail Federation** has urged Pope Benedict to intercede against the Australian government's decision to curtail the merchandising use of the name of the newly canonized Mother Mary MacKillop.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE

Left Out

Merlie "Milet" Mendoza knelt and prayed. A peace builder in Mindanao, the southern islands of the Philippines plagued by longstanding conflicts among Catholics, Muslims and indigenous people, Milet prayed the rosary daily. This time she felt the presence of Mary by her side and, on her other side, her friend and colleague, Rey Roda, a priest of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Father Rey had been murdered 18 months earlier while conducting peace-building work. Milet felt Mary and Father Rey holding her hands. She also felt the butt of a gun forcing her head forward, toward the machete poised to behead her.

Kidnapped by the Abu Sayeff terrorist group, Milet was imprisoned for 61 days in a 4-foot by 4-foot cell, isolated from her co-worker, who had also been captured, deprived of the basics of life, beaten and taken on forced marches through the forest. One of her 18-year-old captors warned her: "You may see us as young but we are used to beheading Christians. Sympathy and compassion are the first virtues we rid ourselves of."

Instead of a desire for vengeance or violence, Milet felt empathy. "What monster have we made of this young man?" she wondered. Throughout her captivity, prayer sustained her, and remembrances of every good deed done for her throughout her life. Milet vowed never to lose respect for the many Muslims who treated her like family. "Because of them I am a better Christian," she said. In Milet's dreams, Father Rey and Mary visited her, reassured her and led her to Mass, where she joined hands with her friends from the Oblates and her peace-building colleagues.

In the seconds before what she thought would be her execution, a movie played in Milet's mind. It was not her life flashing before her eyes, but the centuries of violence and injustice done by the invading Catholics to the Moro and indigenous people who had lived in the Philippines for centuries before colonial conquest. Her mouth was bound by masking tape to stifle her screams. But she was moved to try to speak a few words: "On behalf of the sins of all the Christians, I ask for forgiveness for the harms done to the people of Mindanao." She survived the ordeal and was released.

> Peace cannot be built while excluding a majority of the population.

Mendoza, who was later honored as a Kroc Institute of Peace 2010 Women PeaceMaker, by the University of San Diego, is one of many women on the front lines of building peace. Vaiba Flomo mobilized women to bring peace to war-torn Liberia, as portrayed in the documentary "Pray the Devil Back to Hell." Sarah Lochodo, an African chief from Kenya, works to reconcile warring pastoralists and farmers. These women put their lives on the line to work for peace. Yet too often women are excluded from official peace processes and from international and institutional support.

A U.N. report, to be delivered to the secretary general this month and highlighted at the University of San Diego's conference "Precarious Progress," notes that since 1992 only 2.5 percent of the peace signatories who were involved in the 24 U.N.-sponsored peace processes were women.

Exclusion of women from the peace table has consequences. Though rape is used systematically as a tool of war, only 18 of 300 peace accords since 1989 mentioned sexual-based violence in the conflicts. Of the international monies budgeted for post-conflict reconstruction, less than 2.9 percent are directed toward women's needs. Less than 29 cents out of every $10 budgeted for post-conflict reconstruction goes to women.

This sets up a perverse incentive system. Male combatants who commit human-rights abuses are given a seat at the peace table and are offered financial incentives to demobilize and disarm and are given jobs to reintegrate them into society. Their female victims are offered nothing.

This culture of impunity invites more violence against women and girls. Several U.N. Security Council resolutions were supposed to change this, but too little implementation has been done.

This month, on the 10-year anniversary of Resolution 1325, nongovernmental organizations are pressuring the United Nations and member states to include women in peace and security processes. Sustainable peace cannot be built while excluding a majority of the population. It is time women had seats at the peace table.

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

Eboo Patel with Interfaith Youth Core leaders in Chicago in June 2010.

PHOTO: IFYC/MAURYA ORR

Eboo Patel promotes interfaith dialogue as a defense against anti-Islamic prejudice.

The Talking Cure

BY KERRY WEBER

The subject line of the e-mail message read: "Why Muslims can't be good Americans." Audrey Allas, 22, had received the chain message from a member of the church in which she grew up but no longer attended. She knew the content of the message was full of lies, yet she chose to respond—kindly, respectfully—with the truth. As Allas typed her reply, she drew on her experience working at the Interfaith Youth Core. As an intern with the organization, she collaborated with Muslims daily, befriended Muslims and participated in dialogue and service projects with them. She clicked "Send" and hoped for the best.

The response that came from the church's members was not as kind, however. Many were angered by what Allas had written and told her so, even going so far as to accuse her of being a "secret Muslim." Her parents, who had responded as well, also received angry, accusatory e-mail messages. They are now searching for a new church.

"Interfaith Youth Core gave me that motivation to stand up," Allas told **America**. "If I hadn't been involved in the movement, I might have been silent in that issue. I've met Muslim people, and I care about them."

The courage and commitment to truth displayed by this young woman is the kind Eboo Patel hoped to foster when in 1998, at the age of 22, he co-founded the Interfaith Youth Core. The Core—spelled this way to represent its place at the center of a larger movement—works to provide the tools and support college students need

KERRY WEBER *is an associate editor of* ***America.***

to become leaders in interreligious dialogue. These leaders, Patel says, are young men and women "who have the framework, the knowledge base and the skill set to bring people from different religions together to build understanding and cooperation." In light of the ongoing and much-publicized controversy surrounding Park51, the proposed Islamic center a few blocks from ground zero in New York City, as well as the anti-Islam protests popping up in cities across the country, these skills are especially needed today.

"The Park51 controversy, in a way, exposed the levels of anti-Islam sentiment and Islamophobia in America," said Patel. "The part of it that I find so disturbing is that it's what I call an educated bigotry, which means that people have sought information that confirms their worst fears about Muslims and Islam."

Patel says that while being interviewed on National Public Radio he has heard from callers who use words like *Shariah*, *dawa* and *taqiyya*, but few of the callers truly understand the meaning or implication of these terms. Patel credits the "industry of Islamophobia" for this, which he describes as those "peddling a distorted image of Islam and Muslims and advancing the line that all Muslims want to dominate." These individuals have books, Web sites and speaking tours and use the terms as "a kind of anti-Islam propaganda," he said.

Distinguishing Islam From Terrorism

This propaganda feeds into the worst fears of many Americans. "People see acts of violence committed in the name of Islam, and then they hear somebody say, 'This is what Muslims are called to do,'" said Patel. "What these anti-Muslim bigots do is effectively confirm that narrative and say, 'Yes, the narrative of Osama bin Laden is the true Islam.'"

Such misinformation is not coming only from the fringes. Patel says the mainstream media sometimes play a part—albeit a less deliberate one—as well. Osama bin Laden videotapes beheadings because he knows that the American media will show the footage, said Patel. "For Bin Laden the videotape is even more important than the beheading because the videotape poisons the image of Islam in the world," he said. "It creates an us-versus-them scenario: that Muslims are opposed to the world. If all you know about Islam is that videotape, that's your image of Muslims."

But the distinction between Islam and terrorist organizations is key to understanding the situation at Park51 and to rebutting claims that establishing the center shows insensitivity toward the families of those who died on Sept. 11, 2001. Patel says when the difference is made clear, so is the fact that the center poses no threat to America or to the memory of those who died at ground zero. "How is it insensitive for a group of Americans in a mixed neighborhood—one that includes strip clubs, off-track betting parlors and restaurants—to start an interfaith center in the neighborhood that they have been present in for two decades?" Patel asked.

A look at the history of American Catholics, and the prejudice they have faced, can offer some perspective, Patel says. "One hundred years ago, the line against Catholics was that Catholics were the 'alien Roman,' that they were papists, that their fidelity to the Vatican meant that they could never be loyal Americans. You literally hear the exact same charges leveled against Muslims: Their fidelity to the Quran means they can never be loyal Americans. Muslims are Islamists. It's the alien Muslim."

John T. McGreevy and Scott Appleby, both of the University of Notre Dame, drew similar parallels in a recent article in The New York Review of Books titled "Catholics, Muslims, and the Mosque Controversy." It took Catholics more than a century to gain acceptance, but eventually, McGreevy and Appleby write, American Catholics earned that acceptance both by transforming their own church and "by serving (and dying for) their country, and building their own churches, schools and health care systems alongside public counterparts, which they also frequented and supported with their taxes." An overwhelming majority of American Muslims, the authors argue, are now trying to do

the same. According to the authors, Park51 is just one more sign of the desire among American Muslims for full participation in American society, and the builders must not be denied that right: "If the Catholic experience in the United States holds any lesson," they write, "it is that becoming American also means asserting one's constitutional rights, fully and forcefully, even if that assertion is occasionally taken to be insulting."

Collaborative Action

Patel hopes that the Interfaith Youth Core will help young adults gain confidence in their ability to express their faith to others, so that common misconceptions of American Muslims and of people of all faiths can be broken down and those working toward inclusion might be able to offer an organized and respectful response to all prejudice.

"A good bit of this anti-Muslim hatred is being sacralized," said Patel. "It's being articulated in theological terms. The guy leading the Quran burning in Florida says, 'This is what Jesus would do.' The people who are in favor of burning the Quran in the name of Jesus preach from the pulpit about that message every Sunday.... Those of us who believe in embracing our neighbors of different backgrounds [have to ask ourselves]: Are we as loud? Are we as forthright? Are we as compelling? Are we as cogent?"

What those seeking inclusion need now, Patel says, is a renewed sense of urgency and a renewed commitment to dialogue and deliberate collaborative action. "It's not about saying all religions are the same; it's not even about saying all religions are equal," he said. "It's about saying that people from different faith backgrounds ought to come together in ways that build understanding and cooperation. We consider intolerance and bigotry a severe threat to pluralism." Patel envisions congregational partnerships between churches and mosques, which might include religious leaders giving speeches at the other's house of worship and religious groups working together on interfaith service projects.

The idea of service is key to a successful dialogue and is particularly effective in a college campus setting, since college students often have the resources, infrastructure and enthusiasm to organize effective and far-reaching projects, Patel said. Interreligious service projects allow students to relate not only to peers of other faiths, but can easily include students who do not subscribe to a particular faith or who may have given up on the idea of God altogether. Individuals of all backgrounds are able to draw upon common values or influences. "What we really put at the center of the table is the shared values of service, mercy and compassion," said Patel. "And then we invite people to speak to how their tradition inspires them to apply that shared value."

Patel's own religious experience has been influenced by

a diverse group of spiritual men and women, all of whom have helped him to strengthen his own Muslim faith. His interest in the life of Dorothy Day, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, led him to embark on a tour of Catholic Worker houses along the East Coast during college.

Campus Volunteers

College is a formative time for many young adults, and Patel believes that Catholic colleges and universities have a special ability—responsibility even—to foster interfaith dialogue on campus. "I really think that the Catholic universities have a leg up on many other universities, because they have taken volunteerism seriously for many, many years," Patel said. "They naturally connect faith to volunteering. So many Catholic universities have diverse student populations or exist in areas in which diversity is around them. Catholic universities, because they take their own faith seriously, have appreciative understanding of other people's faiths…. I think every college campus ought to consider itself a model of interfaith cooperation." Colleges can effectively live that model by offering courses, lectures, training and service projects with an eye to religious diversity and dialogue, he said.

The Core has worked on more than 150 campuses across the nation, including more than 30 Catholic universities, like Chicago's DePaul University, Loyola University of Chicago, Dominican University in River Forest, Ill., Loyola University of Maryland, Saint Mary's College near San Francisco and Xavier University in Cincinnati. As the organization grows, Patel hopes the dialogue will grow with it.

ON THE WEB

A conversation with Eboo Patel.
americamagazine.org/podcast

Years ago, as a 22-year-old interested in his faith—and the faith of others—Patel noticed that most of the individuals interested in interreligious dialogue were not his contemporaries. Many who were actively participating in dialogue were decades older, while many young adults closer to his age seemed to spend time with others like themselves or even to favor more fundamentalist views. The Core came out of Patel's desire to challenge his peers to enter into conversation with one another. In the 21st century, most people view religion in one of four ways, said Patel: "It can be a bubble of isolation, a barrier of division, a bomb of destruction or a bridge of cooperation. And what those four things have in common is this: They are answers to the question, How do I respond to diversity?"

While negative influences encourage some to respond with barriers or bombs, the major faith traditions do not urge such action. "There are resources within our faith communities and a call from the divine to build a bridge to diversity—a bridge of cooperation using the raw materials of the theology of your faith—and to walk across that bridge to serve others," he said. "There are really fruitful dialogues to have on shared values—mercy, service, compassion."

Patel said that the way these values manifest themselves, however, can differ. "Just because Muslims believe in mercy and Catholics believe in mercy doesn't mean we believe we walk the same path toward mercy," he said. "So the interesting dimension of that dialogue is: What is it in your tradition of Catholicism that inspires you to act in mercy? You get these very rich stories from Catholics about the works of Jesus, about a Scripture from the Bible, and you get these rich stories from Muslims about Muslim prayers about mercy and about stories relating to Muhammad."

In sharing these stories, individuals of faith must recall, retell and reflect on them once again, which often gives participants new perspective on their own faith. "The way we frame our question—How does your tradition inspire you to serve others?—is constantly referring young people back to a tradition," Patel said. "Our process helps reconnect young people with traditions that they might have felt, for whatever reason, estranged from or they have gone astray from. I hear with some frequency young people saying the process of interfaith service compelled me to go back to church because I saw, in explaining it, how my religion inspired me to serve others." A

Truth and Power

How I put my faith to work in Washington

BY DAVID GOLEMBOSKI

In a religiously diverse society like that of the United States, all citizens must be given an equal chance to participate in government of, by and for the people. By law the government cannot exclude citizens on the basis of religion or require them to adopt any particular religious beliefs or practices. Nor can any citizen force another to live by the standards of any particular faith tradition—all of which brings me to a conflict I encounter every day.

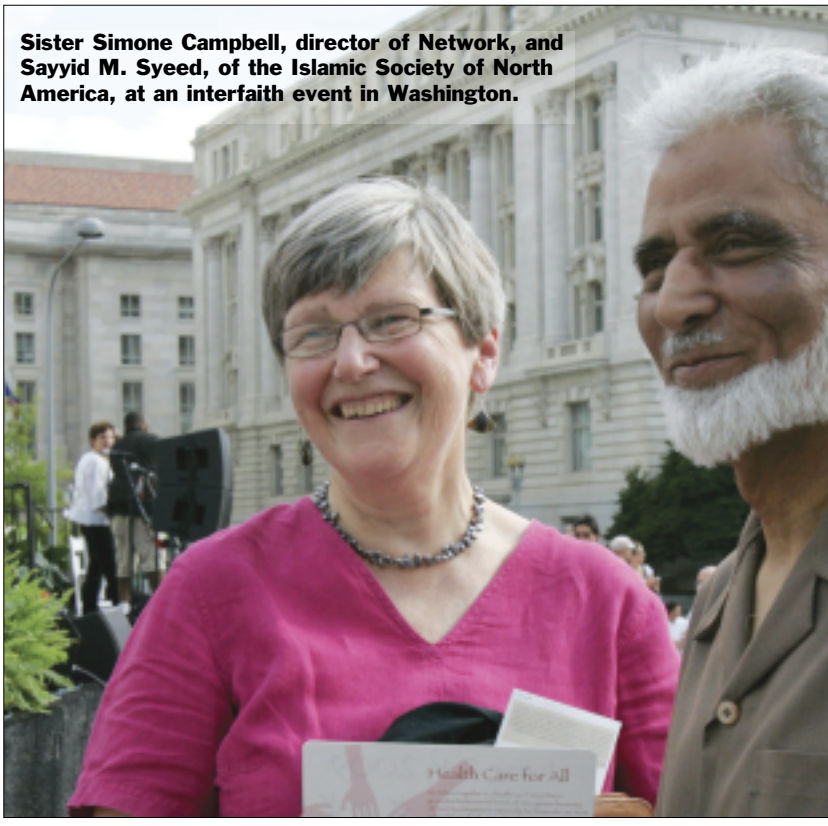
I work for Network, a faith-based lobby in Washington, D.C., that engages in advocacy to influence national legislation. The organization's mandate is to raise the voice of Catholic social teaching to the leaders who shape the country's laws and direction. As Catholics, we on the staff believe in the social message of our faith—that living the Gospel is not a private matter and that institutions, systems and structures should reflect solidarity with the poor, concern for the vulnerable and the overwhelming mercy of God.

My colleagues and I spend our days telling members of Congress that their decisions, which affect the whole country, should be made based on the values of our particular faith tradition.

See the problem? If not, don't worry; few people do.

As a Catholic organization, Network fits within the mainstream of the American religious landscape, so it does not raise many eyebrows on Capitol Hill. But imagine if, instead, it lobbied for legislation that was, say, more faithful to Islamic law. The resulting uproar would be forceful and immediate. We advocates would be blasted for trying to legislate morality and impose our values on the rest of society. Legislators would not give us the time of day, news media would treat us as a scandal, and we would have to struggle just to keep our doors open.

Network does not generally face this kind of opposition, because Catholicism is familiar and acceptable to most Americans. But the question remains: On what grounds do I get to tell lawmakers that they should organize society around my church's teaching? Is that not legislating morality? Am I not trying to impose my values on the rest of the country? Should non-Catholics (and anyone who does not want the United States to become a theocracy) sound an alarm to warn that Network (or any other Catholic lobby) is breaching the wall of separation between church and state?



Sister Simone Campbell, director of Network, and Sayyid M. Syeed, of the Islamic Society of North America, at an interfaith event in Washington.

These questions are not merely hypothetical. During the health care reform process, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops played a highly visible and controversial role. Their advocates pushed for the inclusion of specific provisions regarding abortion funding and achieved success early on. When a reform package including the bishops' preferred language passed the House of Representatives in early November, there was much talk of the influence that the U.S.C.C.B. was enjoying in Congress. Some questioned whether the conference had played too large a role. An article in Ms. magazine titled "Bishops, Keep Your Hands Off Healthcare!" exhorted the bishops to "keep the separation of church and state clear." Representative Lynn Woolsey (Democrat of California) even suggested that the Internal Revenue Service reconsider the U.S.C.C.B.'s tax-exempt status.

Not only do others have questions about religion in the public sphere; I myself wonder whether I am justified in my

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daily work. I respect and revere our secular democracy. I think it is the best way to protect against religious discrimination and ensure religious liberty. I do not support prayer in public schools; I do not think America is properly called a Christian nation; I do not think that manger scenes belong on the lawns of city halls. So how can I, in good conscience, work for a Catholic lobby?

I do not think America is properly called a Christian nation. So how can I, in good conscience, work for a Catholic lobby?

If there is a simple answer to my conflict, I have yet to find it. There is no shortage of legal, philosophical and theological scholarship surrounding religion in the public sphere. A host of thinkers far more brilliant than I, including generations of Supreme Court justices, have failed to settle the matter.

Yet a few insights from my work may help point toward an understanding of how people of faith can act on their convictions in the secular realm without undermining the Constitution.

No Such 'Separation'

Like most other stock political phrases, the words "separation of church and state" are uttered far more often than they are understood. What *separation* is supposed to mean is far from obvious.

Separation surely does not mean simply physical separation, though at times this is its sense. Religious displays, for example, are not permitted on public land. Separation does not imply temporal separation, since we enjoy federal holidays on many days of religious significance. Practically, it often refers to financial separation, although some faith-based entities do receive public funding to carry out charitable functions. Nor can it mean personal separation, since countless people of faith serve in official public capacities. Elected officials are often quite open about their religious beliefs, and nobody suggests this violates the Constitution. (Concerns only arise in the case of minority religions: the worries about Mitt Romney's Mormon faith, or the rumors that President Obama is a "secret Muslim.") Individual voters, who exercise a critical public function, represent all sorts of religious commitments. Indeed, every citizen is also a spiritual being, and there is no way to "separate" these parts of a self.

The "separation" phrase is not found in the U.S. Constitution; the wording comes from a later document penned by Thomas Jefferson. What is found in the Constitution is the First Amendment's protection of "free exercise" of religion and its prohibition of state preference for one religion over another. These principles are specific. Wrestling with the actual constitutional language will bear more fruit than relying on the politically charged and highly unclear rhetoric of "separation."

Most major American Christian denominations have offices in Washington, as do numerous other faith-based advocacy organizations. Every office has a particular focus. And while there is outright disagreement over some issues (abortion rights and the Israel-Palestine conflict are two prime examples), there is a wide area where values and policy priorities overlap. On many issues Christians and non-Christians work in coalitions on behalf of values shared by millions of people of faith across the country and throughout the world.

Advocates from non-Catholic traditions have often said to me that they envy the Catholic Church for its richly developed and clearly articulated social principles. Catholic teaching resonates outside Catholicism. And the language of Catholic social teaching (human dignity, civic participation, preferential option for the poor) is used widely by faith-based coalitions to express shared priorities.

Catholic faith values are often entirely comprehensible in secular terms as well and are shared by many who seek the common good. The public sphere can be a fertile ground on which to nurture and strengthen shared values. By working together for justice, we Catholics can grow closer to our religious and nonreligious partners and with them build a better world.

Raising the Moral Voice

I am often struck by the limited domain in which moral language is employed publicly. In contemporary political discourse, moral principles tend to be used to stake out positions on sexuality and sexual relations. Around these one

PHOTO: CNS/JESSIE ABRAMS

finds no shortage of voices claiming moral authority.

In the rest of the policy arena, by contrast, the rhetoric is dominated by prudential, rather than moral, reasoning. Decisions about war, economics, education, health care and global trade, for example, are usually argued and explained on the basis of cost, economic or strategic advantage and the "national interest." One unique contribution of people of faith has been a willingness to bring moral considerations to public discussions.

Take, for example, the topic of global economic justice. Whereas American politicians will often fight poverty in the United States as a service to those who elected them, they feel less accountable to impoverished people abroad. People of faith, however, see themselves as accountable not only to their constituents, shareholders or immediate neighbors. Christians are accountable to a God who knows no national boundaries and who is not swayed by "national interests."

In its injection of moral reasoning into public policy debate, faith-based advocacy enhances public discourse. This holds true whether any particular set of moral reasons wins out or not. It is an achievement merely to have shifted public discussion from self-interested politics to concern for others in need.

Religion is not limited to words, of course, in its contribution to the public sphere. It is not limited to articulating values and persuading lawmakers. Rather, the church can influence society whenever its adherents live in accord with Christian teaching. As the theologian Stanley Hauerwas has said, "The first social ethical task of the church is to be the church."

The invitation to discipleship has never been a matter of persuasion or of a detailed comprehensive philosophy. Christ did not convince people to follow him. Rather, the Jesus we find in the Gospels offered a fresh vision of how to live, in defiance of reigning social norms, proclaiming that a new kind of world is at hand. To some onlookers this vision appeared repugnant, even dangerous, but to others it was compelling. Indeed, it was compelling enough to motivate centuries of prophets who have faced rejection and persecution for their refusal to abandon that vision. Christ merely extended an invitation.

The church in the world today should not assume that its job is to convert officials, institutions or systems. It can work at these things, of course. But the church's greatest hope should rest on the capacity of the reign of God to draw others in on its own. If the church can commit itself to radical compassion, radical nonviolence and radical forgiveness, it will inevitably draw attention. To some, it will appear repugnant and even dangerous. But to others, it will be compelling.

When hearts and minds are changed, legislation and policy will follow. If Christians can truly live as the church in the world—the pilgrim people of God, witnessing to the transforming love of Christ—all we will need to do is extend the invitation. A

Guantánamo Pilgrimage

BY LUKE HANSEN

ART: SEAN QUIRK

Since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, a particular narrative has dominated the American consciousness. It goes like this: Terrorists are unconditionally committed to a religious ideology that requires them to kill "infidels" without any regard for their own lives or any effort toward reconciliation; therefore, there is but one realistic option for the United States as it relates to such persons: permanent incapacitation through killing or detention. This narrative seeks to rationalize a perpetual war against terrorism and keeps places like Guantánamo and the detention facility at Bagram Air Base open. I reject it, however, and its conclusion that the United States must continue its war and detention policies.

Rejecting the legitimacy of such an outlook, I pray for the grace to live the Christian alternative faithfully: love of one's enemies. Jesus commanded his followers to "do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (Lk 6:43-44). He did not instruct them to kill their enemies or detain them indefinitely. Since each enemy is a human being, there is always hope for relationship and dialogue, redemption and transformation.

Since 2002 the United States has detained about 800 men at Guantánamo and about 3,000 men and women at the Bagram base. The U.S. government has reported to the United Nations that about 100 of these detainees have been juveniles as young as 13 years of age.

Concerning these detentions, the Bush and Obama administrations have made substantially the same claim: Since the nation is fighting a war, the law allows the executive to indefinitely detain those declared to be "an unlawful enemy combatant" without ever charging them with a crime or giving them due process in a court of law. As long as military authorities determine that a person either constitutes a threat to national security or possesses valuable intelligence about terrorist activities, detention may continue indefinitely.

In large part, U.S. courts have accepted the argument that in wartime it is legal for the executive to use indefinite detention. Guantánamo and Bagram remain open for business. While the number of people held has been reduced in the last year-and-a-half, currently almost 1,000 men are detained in these two facilities.

The Bush and Obama administrations have also claimed that there should be no independent judicial oversight of these detentions, that in wartime military authorities, not the courts, determine whether a person has been accurately classified as an enemy combatant. But at least in regard to those detained in Guantánamo, the U.S. Supreme Court has rejected that claim.

In a historic case, Boumediene v. Bush (2008), the court ruled that Guantánamo detainees possess a constitutional right to have their detentions reviewed in U.S. federal courts.

The Obama administration has opposed extending habeas corpus to Bagram detainees, however, even when detainees were initially captured outside Afghanistan and later transferred to an "active theater of war." In April 2009 a U.S. district judge rejected the administration's argument, but in May 2010 a federal appeals court overturned the district court ruling. Now it is up to the U.S. Supreme Court to decide whether to hear the case.

The Guantánamo Detainees

According to the prevailing U.S. view of who the enemy is, permanent inca-

LUKE HANSEN, *a Jesuit scholastic of the Wisconsin Province of the Society of Jesus, is currently coordinating the Red Cloud volunteer program on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.*

pacitation through killing or detention appears a plausible or even necessary response. If the enemy is irredeemably evil, he or she cannot and will not change. If the United States sets them free, they will inevitably "return to the battlefield" to kill more Americans.

Civilian leaders have continually reinforced this narrative. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and Vice President Dick Cheney repeatedly characterized the detainees as the "worst of the worst" terrorists in the world, captured on the battlefield fighting U.S. soldiers. The available evidence does not support these accusations.

Since 2008, when federal courts finally began to review detentions at Guantánamo, judges have concluded that in 36 of 50 cases the executive branch failed to provide sufficient evidence to support its claim that the detainee in question is an "enemy combatant" who can be lawfully detained for an indefinite amount of time. In nearly 75 percent of cases, the courts ruled the detention unlawful and ordered the detainee released.

In May, President Obama's Guantánamo Review Task Force finally released its review of detainee cases and recommendations for disposition. The report admits that only 10 percent of the 240 detainees (when Obama came into office) had a "direct role in plotting, executing, or facilitating" terrorist acts. A majority of the detainees, the task force reports, were "low-level foreign fighters" who "lacked a significant leadership or other specialized role" in a terrorist organization. (Note: these classifications reflect the task force's own investigation, not the assessment of an independent court that has objectively scrutinized the available evidence in each case.)

Not only have the Guantánamo detainees been wrongly characterized as the "worst of the worst" terrorists in the world, but they have been consistently dehumanized by Rush Limbaugh and others who have called them "human debris" and "bottom-of-the-barrel dregs." Whatever the accusations against the Guantánamo detainees, however, they retain their inherent dignity and basic rights as human beings. These men are fathers, sons, uncles and brothers.

Living the Gospel

As I learn more about the Guantánamo detainees, I have experienced a deep desire to enter into relationship with them. These days I am less interested in collecting information from legal briefs and newspaper articles. Instead, I want to meet these men, shake their hands, engage in dialogue and imagine a new way forward. I want to be a brother to them. I want to be a faithful companion of Jesus, who invited his followers to love their enemies. I want to sit down with Guantánamo detainees and learn their stories, to ask: Where did you grow up? What did you do as a child? What did you dream of? What formed you and shaped you as an adolescent? What is important to you now? What are your values?

If the person is one of the few Guantánamo detainees who is a committed member of Al Qaeda, I want to hear his reasons for joining the terrorist organization. I want to ask: "What motivates you? What are your grievances against us?" I want to learn what has compelled him to resort to violence.

He might ask similar questions of me: "Why does the United States wage war against Muslims? Why invest $800 billion in soldiers and weapons each year? Why resort to violence in an attempt to solve the world's problems?"

Such a relationship might seem farfetched were it not for the prophetic witness of communities and individuals who have creatively incarnated Jesus' love for enemies. Here are three:

- The Witness Against Torture community, founded by Catholic Workers and friends, made a pilgrimage to Guantánamo in 2005 to perform a corporal work of mercy: visiting the imprisoned (Mt 25:36). Even though the pilgrims were stopped at a military checkpoint outside the U.S. Naval Base and prohibited from going any farther, they were able to hold a 24-hour fast and vigil near the barbed-wire fence as an act of solidarity with the prisoners, who were informed that the vigil was taking place.

- Marc Falkoff, a professor of law at Northern Illinois University and an attorney for 17 Guantánamo prisoners, edited *Poems From Guantánamo: the Detainees Speak* (Univ. Iowa Press, 2007). The collection presents the voices of detainees, who share their experiences of darkness and light, despair and hope.

- Brandon Neely, a former guard at Guantánamo, traveled to London in December 2009 to meet with two former Guantánamo detainees. During the meeting, he expressed regret and sorrow for his complicity in their suffering.

Prophetic acts entail risk. Will it be possible to build trust between so-called enemies? Will Americans who seek reconciliation be labeled "terrorist sympathizers"?

I think Jesus would understand such a loss of good repute. For touching lepers and talking with Samaritans, Jesus was declared unclean. For dining with sinners, Jesus was called a glutton and a drunkard. Jesus took this risk and entered into these relationships because he believed that redemption is possible for all people. In doing so, Jesus provides a counter-narrative to the dominant belief that perpetual war and indefinite detention are the regrettable, yet inevitable responses to alleged terrorism. He showed us another way, the way of love. A

TELEVISION | JAKE MARTIN

COMIC TIMING

Can five new comedies survive the fall rush?

In autumn hope springs eternal, and usually lasts about a week. Then the Nielsen ratings come in. In network television that is when executives can garner a sense of whether the new shows they have spent the previous six months primping and priming will see the light of the May sweeps. Industry types spend July and August buzzing over which shows will hit and which will miss, as pilots are bandied about and advertising executives decide where to put their money.

Any show with "CSI" as its prefix is a safe bet to see springtime; others, particularly comedies, are not nearly as easy to track. The following overview of five of the most buzzed-about new comedies considers whether they are worth the hype.

The most highly anticipated comedy of the fall, Fox's **Running Wilde** is engaging, light-hearted television. At this point, it is also the funniest new show on the docket. The show follows the adventures of the vacuous playboy Steven Wilde (Will Arnett) as he reconnects with childhood sweetheart Emmy (Keri Russell), now grown up. She is an environmental advocate and a single mom to daughter Puddle (yes, Puddle), residing in the Peruvian rainforest with her eco-terrorist fiancé.

The downside for "Wilde" has nothing to do with the show itself. Rather, because "Wilde" was created by the team behind the critical darling "Arrested Development," it suffers by comparison. To put it in sitcom terms: if "Arrested Development" is Marcia Brady, then "Wilde" is Jan. Perhaps it

The cast of "Raising Hope"

PHOTO: RAY MICKSHAW/FOX

is unfair that "Wilde" is held to such a high standard, since it is a good show in its own right, but "Wilde" winds up looking pedestrian next to its innovative predecessor.

Arnett's Steven Wilde is the show's high-status buffoon, a character both utterly ridiculous and lovably human. He is a fundamentally good man in need of a moral compass, which is where Emmy enters. Russell has the thankless role of playing "straight woman" to Arnett's comedic brilliance, but her gentle underplaying and likability complement her co-star's histrionics. Though "Wilde" is not one for the ages, it is solid, and the skill and likability of its two leads should make for a steady run.

The self-explanatory idea for CBS's **S#*! My Dad Says** came from a Twitter feed with a similar but more explicit name. While the concept of the show (and its title, to which reviewers are referring as "Bleep My Dad Says") has all the makings of a dissertation on what's wrong with contemporary television, "Bleep" is not as bad as it could be or should be. While the writing of "Bleep" will not change the face of comedy, it manages to be clever and sharp, particularly the one-liners delivered by the eponymous father, portrayed by the television legend William Shatner.

The show should be commended for attempting to move beyond the one-liners of its gimmicky premise and to explore the complicated, often messy relationship between Shatner and his younger son Henry (Jonathan Sadowski). But the father/son "moments of truth" feel contrived, and Sadowski's Henry comes across as petulant and whiny. Nicole Sullivan, the lone female voice, portrays the wife of Shatner's dim-witted elder son, Vince (Will Sasso). She not only holds her own with the boys but usually outshines them.

The fundamental problem with "Bleep" is the premise: the show has nowhere to go after the one-liners have run their course. That puts in question the show's staying power.

Staying power seems not to be a problem for NBC's **Outsourced,** which has the comedy legs to last. NBC has put so much faith in this show that it appears in the venerated Thursday night lineup alongside such heavyweights as "The Office" and "30 Rock." The network's faith is not unfounded. The show, based on the independent film of the same name, is a fish-out-of-water tale about Todd Dempsy (Ben Rappaport), an American 20-something thrust into the heart of India as the manager of a call center for a novelty catalogue that sells such items as whoopi cushions, fake blood and bacon wallets. His staff is made up of a group of misfits, called "the B team," who have little understanding of the kitschy Americana they are hawking over the phone.

The writing never plays to the lowest common denominator in terms of cultural stereotypes. And while cultural disparity is the foundation of the show, the laughs come from a sense of discovery rather than disdain. Rappaport, highly likeable in the lead role, steers the ship with ease; that's no small feat, since the temptation for smugness is ripe with this kind of character. He is amply supported by a cast of unknowns, who showcase their quirkiness with a clear sense of ensemble that hearkens back to the early seasons of "The Office." Most great shows do not hit their stride until their second or third season. "Outsourced" could be such a show. One can only hope that NBC maintains its faith in it long enough for that to happen.

CBS's **Mike & Molly** has a one-

ON THE WEB

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., reviews the documentary "Waiting for Superman." americamagazine.org/culture

joke premise, and that one joke is a fat joke: both the titular leads (portrayed by Billy Gardell and Melissa McCarthy) are obese. The show looks at the blooming romance between the two, a police officer and an elementary school teacher, respectively, who meet at an Overeater's Anonymous meeting. Hijinks and fat jokes ensue.

The show works. Yet having seen only the pilot episode, I find it hard to predict how long it may run, given that the well of obesity humor is relatively shallow. From Ralph Kramden onward, television has presented its fair share of iconic overweight characters. While size always played a role in their humorous appeal, however, weight was never the whole joke. The writers of "Mike & Molly" have yet to find the layers beneath the fat.

Although the supporting cast is appealing (Katy Mixon as Molly's morally bankrupt sister is especially funny), the show relies entirely on the skill of its two leads. Both Gardell and McCarthy bring a depth and sincerity to their performances rarely seen on television, let alone in the cartoonish world of sitcoms. They are more than ready to take the show to another level.

If you can wait out the first dark and uncomfortable 10 minutes of the pilot of Fox's **Raising Hope,** you will be more than rewarded. It could become a fine show. Jimmy Chance (Lucas Neff), a bumbling slacker in the midst of an existential crisis, finds himself the sole caregiver to his newborn daughter after unfortunate events leave the infant motherless. (This unseemly plot contrivance may or may not involve an electric chair.) Jimmy recognizes fatherhood as an opportunity to give direction and meaning to his aimless life. In its ability to tease out the extraordinary from the mundane, "Raising Hope" leaps beyond the standard television fare.

The talented cast includes Martha Plimpton as Jimmy's no-nonsense mom, Virginia, who somehow manages the difficult task of fusing bitterness with tender affection. Cigarette dangling from her sour-milk lips as sardonic platitudes fly, Plimpton never lets the audience doubt for a second that she is one protective mama bear. With his wide-open gaze and blank-slate delivery, Neff is wonderfully clueless as Jimmy, yet he manages to convey a powerful sense of hope and spiritual depth, which drive Jimmy and help him to identify the importance of the journey he is about to begin.

Almost all contemporary American film and television, mirroring the culture at large, prioritize the value of career and sex, not necessarily in that order. The beauty of "Hope" is its emphasis on the significance of vocation outside the realms of occupation and romantic attachment. Jimmy finds relevance through the fundamentally self-sacrificial nature of parenthood, in spite of the less-than-ideal circumstances in which he finds himself: single, unemployed and living with his parents. In many ways Jimmy is a classic American protagonist, restless and yearning for self-discovery. Yet rather than going west or moving inward in the hope of finding himself, Jimmy moves outward and discovers himself in the face of a child. As Jimmy says: "I just want the chance to do something good. This is [my] chance to do something good." And something good aptly describes much of what's happening with this show.

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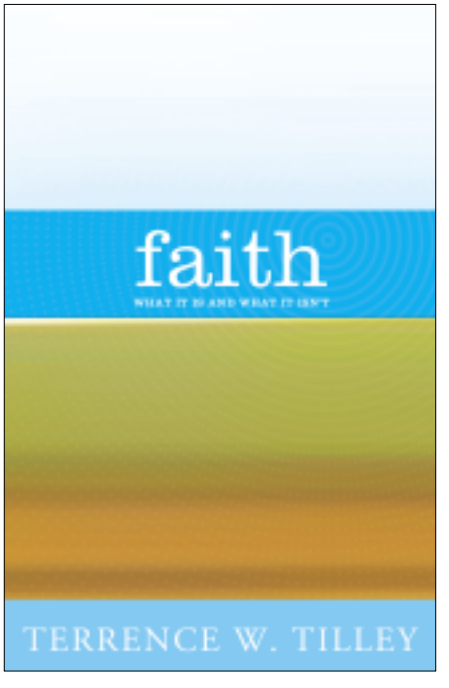
BOOKS | NANCY HAWKINS

LIVING IT

FAITH
What It Is and What It Isn't

By Terrence W. Tilley
Orbis Books. 152p $22



It is not easy to explain faith, nor is it easy to write about it. But Terrence Tilley has done so in a fine manner in this small book, which unpacks various aspects and nuances of faith. It is always wonderful to come across an accessible book that can be used with those beginning to explore their life of faith, and also with those starting their study of theology. Tilley's work will also be useful for those of us who are not new at pondering what it means to be a person of faith.

Tilley, a professor of Catholic theology and department chair at Fordham University, is correct when he states that faith is a powerful human reality that is often ignored and misunderstood in our public discourse. It is easy to state that one has faith, but that is usually where the conversation ends. This book explores misunderstandings about faith, various ways to define

faith, what it means to express one's faith in public, how one lives faith and finally how it is possible to justify the faith one professes.

I found the first chapter, on misunderstanding faith, to be quite relevant, especially since so many people today are taking it upon themselves to judge (and often condemn) the faith of others in their midst. The reader needs to be reminded that "faith always involves risk. Blind faith is irrational risk." Tilley clearly explains that faith is not the same as morality, nor is it the same as hope. Neither is all faith connected to religious beliefs or expressions, for as Tilley states, "people without religious faith also do have faith." Those with "religious faith" will greatly benefit from Tilley's explanation of scientific materialism, Freud's critique of religion as illusion, humanism and universalism—if for no other reason than to be able to respond to such critiques.

When discussing the various expressions of faith, Tilley offers the reader a valuable explanation of creeds and how they present the tenets of a faith. At Sunday liturgy I am often aware of how the assembly "rattles" off the Creed, and I wonder if we ever ponder the significance of the words we say. This chapter on expressing faith, though, lacks the focus of the other chapters. Tilley dips in to humanism, St. Augustine's theology, moralistic therapeutic deism and Buddhism all in fewer than 10 pages. It is a bit much to cover in such a short space, even for a book of this kind. I wish the author had expanded the section on moralistic therapeutic deism, because it seems to be the "faith expression" of so many young people today. It is a fascinating topic that deserves to be looked at in depth.

ON THE WEB

Melanie Thernstrom discusses her new book, *The Pain Chronicles.*
americamagazine.org/culture

It is one thing to have faith and it is another thing to live one's faith. Tilley explains well the importance of narrative when one is embracing and living a faith life. Human beings have responded to the power of the story since ancient times, and while creeds are important for stating the tenets of faith, stories are what draw us in. Tilley lays out the types or genres of stories of faith and is careful to explain that he is not engaging in literary criticism. He is looking at how stories shape our faith. I greatly enjoyed this section of the book and, like many people, am fascinated with the narrative expressions of story. Our various religious communities rely on the power of faith, especially when we celebrate our significant feasts.

The chapter on living faith needs to be read slowly and carefully in order to appreciate Tilley's explanation of myths, sagas, action stories (biographical stories set within a particular world) and parables. Each narrative form is unique and functions in a specific manner to inform one's faith. Tilley is correct in stating that "stories flesh out the answer to crucial questions of faith." One automatically thinks of the significance of the infancy and resurrection narratives to Christianity and the power of the Exodus story at Passover. I wish Tilley had mentioned the postmodern conviction that there are no longer any metanarratives. What impact has this made upon the faith of contemporary individuals?

Tilley is to be commended for reminding readers of the necessity of examining and assessing our faith. This is especially true in our diverse and multi-faith society. The final chapter in the book offers specific criteria by which to do this assessment. They are: consistency, the accuracy of

reference with regard to the faith claim, the plausibility of the faith claim over time and, finally, whether or not our faith promotes authentic human development. Of all the criteria (each is highly significant) I most appreciate the final one. If faith helps us to become more liberated, real and authentically human, then it has done its job. The promotion of my human good also serves to promote the good of the community in which I dwell.

NANCY HAWKINS, I.H.M., *is associate professor of systematic theology at St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry in Rochester, N.Y.*

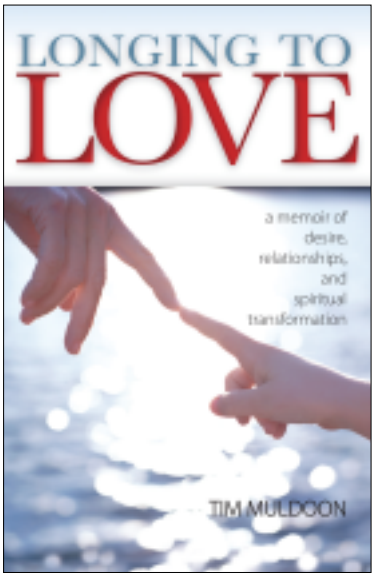
MARK MOSSA

MARRIAGE COUNSEL

LONGING TO LOVE
A Memoir of Desire, Relationships, and Spiritual Transformation

By Tim Muldoon
Loyola Press. 144p $13.95 (paperback)

In a time when spiritual memoirs are long on dysfunction, anger and tragedy, Tim Muldoon's *Longing to Love* offers a refreshing contrast. Though not a story absent a tragedy of its own, it is primarily a memoir of falling in love and staying in love. It is a compelling portrait of what many college-aged young men experience but rarely write about: negotiating the demands of romance and practicality while falling headlong into love. While Muldoon recalls his earliest forays into dating and relationships, the main object of his narrative is Sue, the woman who would become his wife. Muldoon, a Catholic theologian and spiritual director at Boston College, recounts the joys and travails of their budding romance (including a long-distance separation), his growing certainty about their future together and the difficulties of their young marriage.



One is drawn by Muldoon's passion and self-effacing honesty. Describing the first days of his marriage, he affirms: "My heart was full. Never before had I known such a pervasive sense of rightness, of being at home in this world. Never before had I felt so right in my own skin, this flesh made word to her...." Yet the author's passion is tempered by his accompanying awareness of a lack of sensitivity to the affective needs of the woman to whom he has committed his passion and his life. He humbly shares his repeated failures to appropriately attend to her concerns. But from the first to the last we see his increasing awareness of this shortcoming, and are pleased by his growing ability to both recognize the error and set about correcting his course.

Tragedy enters in when the two realize that their dream of having children together may not be possible. Muldoon admits his stubbornness in accepting what Sue seemed to know even before all their options had been investigated and exhausted. He also shares his reluctance to embrace the possibility of adoption, even as his wife eagerly does so.

> A part of me has wanted to keep the subject at bay but since last autumn I'm committing myself to praying about it. I suppose I could have taken a hard line, strong-armed our conversations: "We're not about to raise someone else's child!" But I cannot utter that sentiment, no matter how often it lingers in the back of my mind. It wouldn't be the best me talking, the me that she deserves.

It takes time for him to come around, but his love again urges him on: "I cannot imagine her—God's beloved, and mine—living without being a mother to a child. I'm beginning to believe now that our challenge is first to learn where that child lives."

Answering that question eventually took the Muldoons to China. It is there that we, having shared in the young couple's struggles, see Muldoon's passion enflamed anew:

> I am falling in love. Even in spite of the many ways I have prepared for this experience, I am surprised and amazed at how it is happening. But the simple truth is that this child has captured my heart; I am smitten and out-of-control in love with her. The only comparison I can draw is falling in love with Sue eleven years ago.

He falls in love once more, after returning to China to adopt a second daughter. Settled now with his surprising family, he concludes, "I have learned to attend to the whisperings of desire to find the places where God might be inviting me to grow, to change, and to stretch toward the free-

dom of the real me, the person who can share joy with the women he loves most."

The book, appropriately, includes "discussion points" for young couples. This is a fine addition, except that the marginal notes on some pages are distracting and interrupt the flow of Muldoon's emotionally absorbing narrative. The book's brevity is no doubt deliberate. But as a reader I wanted to hear more about the author's experience of his daughters beyond the early days after adoption. (Perhaps that is a future book.)

Besides simply appreciating its introspective honesty, its practical attractions for me—a single person—were twofold: It heightened my sensitivity toward the challenges of married life; and, as a priest called upon to prepare young couples for marriage, I also knew early on in my reading that I would encourage them to read this book. Every young couple could benefit from the glimpse into the passions, the practicality and the piety required of marriage and family life that Muldoon offers. His account, while inspiring and beautiful, also can serve as a "reality check" for couples contemplating marriage.

The Muldoons' is a story of how longing and learning to love—and more than a little faith—can sustain two people devoted to each other, especially when, as often happens, things do not turn out quite as planned or imagined. Indeed, *Longing to Love* serves as a poignant reminder to the young and old, single, married or otherwise committed, of the importance of love in everyone's life.

MARK MOSSA, S.J., *studies and teaches at Fordham University. He is the author of* Already There: Letting God Find You *(St. Anthony Messenger Press).*

JAMES T. KEANE

HOLY WRIT

BETWEEN HUMAN & DIVINE

The Catholic Vision in Contemporary Literature

Edited by Mary Reichardt
Catholic University of America Press.
304p $69.95

Half a century has passed since the end of the literary era generally recognized by scholars and readers alike as the golden age of Catholic authors in the English-speaking world. The decades leading up to the Second Vatican Council produced so many prodigious talents recognized as "Catholic authors" that it is not uncommon to wax nostalgic for the writers of that time; their names and works are often what come to mind when one thinks of the roughly-defined genre of Catholic literature. In the United States alone, the two-year period preceding Vatican II saw J. F. Powers win the 1962 National Book Award for *Morte D'Urban*, Edwin O'Connor the 1962 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for *The Edge of Sadness*, and Walker Percy the 1963 National Book Award for *The Moviegoer*. The decades since have seen their share of talented Catholic writers, to be sure, but where are the Graham Greenes, the Muriel Sparks, the Evelyn Waughs and Flannery O'Connors of today?

They're out there; it's just that no one knows where to find them. Such is the contention of Mary R. Reichardt, a professor of Catholic studies and literature at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., and the editor of *Between Human and Divine: The Catholic Vision in Contemporary Literature*. Reichardt notes in her introduction to this interesting and informative volume of essays that while she finds no shortage of authors exploring the Catholic vision in the contemporary literary world (and in fact considers the genre to be thriving), rare is the reader in or outside the Catholic tradition who can identify them.

These 15 essays by scholars from throughout the English-speaking world and Japan introduce and explore Catholic works in the fields of fiction, poetry and memoir, though the very term "Catholic author" takes on a variety of meanings for different scholars. Hard enough to define in a pre-conciliar church often presented as somewhat monolithic, the label is not always a useful one in a more fragmented contemporary religious and literary era. Must an author be a baptized Catholic? Must his or her work include the trappings of Catholicism? Must they be somehow sacramental or redemptive in their themes? Reichardt wisely writes instead of a "Catholic vision" that incorporates many of the conventional notions of what Catholic literature is about but requires no litmus test for inclusion—after all, one finds no birettas or incense in the work of Flannery O'Connor—and the authors treated here are diverse enough to include non-Catholics as well as a few lifelong Catholics who spent years rejecting the label.

These brief studies vary in their use of academic jargon, so some are more accessible to the general reader than others (may I plead here for the retirement of "othering" as a term in literary analysis?). Some of the fiction authors treated are well-known literary figures who need no real introduction, like Jon Hassler, Shūsaku Endō and Alice McDermott; but other essays introduce lesser-known writers and establish their relevance as important Catholic authors. I found the three essays on Catholic poets (Robert P. Lewis on Mary Karr, Stephen McInerney on Elizabeth Jennings and Les Murray, and Gary M. Bouchard on Dana Gioia, Desmond Egan and Sherman Alexie) to be particularly informative and insightful. Bouchard, for example, makes unexpected but fruitful connections between the central theme of loss in almost all poetry and its particular resonances with such typically Catholic themes as redemption, sacramentality, incarnational spirituality and the central mysteries of Christian faith.

There are some curious additions as well as omissions in the collection, though Reichardt acknowledges its 304 pages are not meant to be an exhaustive catalog so much as an invitation to explore further. I was surprised that the American fiction writers Ron Hansen and David Plante did not receive more mention, as well as by the inclusion of only a single essay on memoir (Nan Metzger and Wendy A. Weaver's "Some Contexts for Current Catholic Women's Memoir: Patricia Hampl and Her Contemporaries"). As the 800-pound gorilla of the literary world in the past two decades (and the preferred genre for many a disaffected or "returned" Catholic), the memoir is for better or for worse quickly becoming the bildungsroman of our time.

A striking commonality among all the authors covered in this volume has perhaps less to do with their Catholic vision than with their participation in modern existence: a conscious grappling with the notion of mystery and its possibility in contemporary life. What is sacred, what is ineffable, in a world of the glow-in-the-dark plastic Jesus and drive-through spirituality? And where can the individual find mystery when nothing is sacred? As Daniel S. Lenoski notes ("How Far Can You Go to Therapy—Catholicism and Postmodernism in the Novels of David Lodge"), even postmodern atheists like Derrida have focused much of their philosophical work on their struggle with "the Mystery, of explaining the infinity and numinous using the finite, imperfect language of the world of phenomena."

In other words, we are all in search of the sacramental, regardless of how that might be defined or how we might define ourselves. In that sense, Catholic literature today may be less identifiable as such than in previous generations, but it remains just as germane to any writer or reader's exploration of the human condition.

JAMES T. KEANE, S.J., *a student at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, Calif., was an associate editor of* ***America****.*

CLASSIFIED

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LETTERS

Catholic and Corporate

Drew Christiansen, S.J., rightly says in "A Conspiracy of Bishops and Faithful" (9/27) that a revival of the church in the United States "will be fully realized when there is wide consultation and cooperation by the bishops with Catholics of varying shades of opinion bringing the Gospel to life in our increasingly secular culture."

Unfortunately, the "official" church, both here and in Rome, all too often presents itself in the guise of a global monopolistic corporation. The hierarchy too often presents itself as the senior management and board of directors who have the right and power to determine, on their own, the "corporation's" policies, practices and senior appointments.

Lay people are encouraged to assume that they have nothing to say about these matters. And for the most part, they are satisfied with the situation. The few voices that speak out against this corporate model are treated like "crank" shareholders at annual corporate meetings. They get very little attention. Their influence is almost nil.

Practically speaking, only the hierarchy, through concerted effort, can change things. Is there any significant evidence that it is interested in "wide consultation and cooperation"?

BERNARD P. DAUENHAUR
Bethlehem, Pa.
Anaheim, Calif.

You're Eating My Pizza

Your editorial "Israel's Choice" (10/11) reminds me that Gideon Levy, Israel's pre-eminent journalist, was in the United States in September and saw no hope for negotiations with Netanyahu at the helm. The meetings are largely photo-ops to keep the United States and Europe at bay. Israel continues to play the United States like a harp, always holding out some dismal hope that they are sincere partners for peace. They are not. They hold all the cards and can do to Palestinians what they want. This is the reason they always refuse international watchdogs with any clout like Desmond Tutu or independent United Nations observers. As one Palestinian told us in August, "How can you negotiate over a pizza when one side keeps eating it?" The only way settlements will stop is by external pressure, and Obama has political energy only for the economy. He will not go to the well on this issue and stop the settlements.

Another annoying point is the Catholic groups, potential witnesses to the oppression, who embark on nostalgic tours to buildings, holy places and the like but miss the "living stones" of the Palestinians.

TED SCHMIDT
Toronto, Ont.

The Elephant in the Room

As I read your editorial "Israel's Choice" (10/11), it seemed to me there

is one person truly suitable to bring peace to this troubled land: a man who can understand the Jewish way of thinking and pretend to understand that of the Arabs, who is aching for his place in history and has all the ability to do it—Bill Clinton.

If President Obama were to give him this job and carte blanche, he would come closer to the holy grail than anyone else. His experience in Ireland and his failed experience in the Arafat dealings would place him in good stead. He understands the need to temper idealism with pragmatism, and the saving of countless lives there could make amends for his position on abortion.

If Clinton were to work full time on this problem, I am sure that within a couple of years we would see real progress. I hope the president is aware of the seriousness of this matter and the need for resolute action. The Palestinians are the wounded elephant in the American dining room.

DAVID POWER
Rome, Italy

The Means Is Extraordinary

The article "What's Extraordinary," by Gerald D. Coleman, S.S. (8/30), both informed and concerned me. I write as a retired professor of biology and hospital chaplain. He uses the term "nutrition and hydration" 14 times. I wonder whether he thinks the two are cojoined in medical practice. The two are unequal in importance, physiologically and medically, and should be treated that way by ethicists as well. He mentions "tube feeding," which bypasses the mouth by placing food/fluid directly into the stomach. Fluids can also be delivered by intravenous infusion, which bypasses the entire digestive system.

If I read Father Coleman correctly, he accepts that "giving of nutrition and hydration is considered ordinary care even when medically administered."

I agree that food and fluid are truly "a natural way of conserving life" and so can be considered "ordinary" in that context. But when food and fluid are delivered in a medical way, they are "extraordinary." Reasons: They are prescribed by medical doctors, using medical solutions processed for use only by prescription and delivered by medical personnel using invasive procedures in a medical situation. Considered in a worldwide context, where poverty, the lack of medical expertise and the lack of proper, medically safe products and equipment are scarce, too expensive or entirely lacking—how can artificially administered nutrition and hydration be classified as "ordinary"?

Father Coleman uses two papal sources and one from the U.S. bishops; but he omits the *Catechism of the Catholic Church:* "Discontinuing medical procedures that are burdensome, dangerous, extraordinary, or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be legitimate; it is the refusal of 'over-zealous' treatment. Here one does not will to cause death; one's inability to impede it is merely accepted."

JOHN OSTDIEK, O.F.M.
Quincy, Ill.

Eyes on That Intimacy

Robert Brancatelli argues in "Liberating Catechesis" (9/13) that we have too many rules and regulations for catechesis, many coming from church publications. He has in mind perhaps the *General Catechetical Directory* (1971) and the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997). The second, considered a revision of the first, shined as a bright star for the world of catechesis. It could liberate catechesis. Its theme is intimacy with Jesus Christ.

I returned recently from two months in southern Africa, where I saw many catechetical activities at Mass each Sunday. The elderly, middle-aged, young adults, teens and children, over the course of three hours of celebration, sang, danced, processed, presented offerings and received the Eucharist. With no choir practice and no accompaniment except a single drum, their multipart singing surely rivaled that of the angels. They knew why they were there, what they were doing and to whom their prayers of praise were directed.

Catechesis has many expressions and can overcome difficult circumstances. It should be guided by the *General Directory for Catechesis*. If regulations get in the way, keep our eyes and ears focused on the theme: intimacy with Christ.

ELAINE McCARRON, S.C.N.
Nazareth, Ky.

Acid Plus Debris Equals Steel

Kyle T. Kramer's "Appalachia's Wounds" (10/4) makes the evil of mountaintop removal obvious. But mining corporations have long been engaged in destroying the environment of Appalachia's residents by polluting rivers and streams with acid mine drainage and blocking up valleys with debris and causing destructive flooding.

In addition, property owners often own only the surface of the land and find that the property becomes undermined and collapses. If these concerns had been part of the equation, so that mine tunnels were not left to collapse and debris was not dumped into valleys, it would be possible to morally support the extraction of coal, since it is unfortunately needed to manufacture steel, a metal we cannot do without.

MARIE REHBEIN
Las Cruces, N.M.

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Out on a Limb

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), OCT. 31, 2010

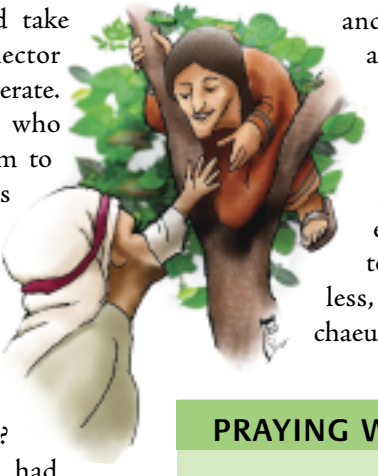
Readings: Wis 11:22–12:2; Ps 145:1-2, 8-14; 2 Thes 1:11–2:2; Lk 19:1-10

"The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost" (Lk 19:10)

Jesus was accustomed to going out on a limb for people who were poor, sick, possessed by demons or marginalized. He deliberately sought out such people. So when Jesus got to Jericho, with its luxurious villas of the rich, he did not even plan to stop there (Lk 19:1). The elite gravitated there because it was balmy all year round. Only 23 miles from Jerusalem, which has an elevation of 2,700 feet, Jericho lies 770 feet below sea level—the lowest city on earth. Moreover, the Dead Sea lies only 10 miles to the south, with its spas and healing waters laden with salts and minerals. With its perennial spring, Jericho is an oasis in the desert, dotted with palm trees and producing luscious fruit all year round. The people who could afford to live or vacation there were not the sort who were looking for what Jesus had to offer.

In addition, Jesus may have wanted to move quickly past Jericho because the Herodians, who wanted to kill him (13:31), had winter palaces there. Luke notes that Herod (Antipas) had long had a desire to see Jesus (9:9), a desire that is finally fulfilled after Jesus' arrest (23:8). In today's Gospel, Zacchaeus also desires to see Jesus and goes to extraordinary lengths to do so.

Zacchaeus has become rich himself, but through a most ignoble profession. Hated by his own people as a quisling of Rome, he would also have been despised for lining his own pockets with money extorted in his work. No one would take the job of tax collector unless he were desperate. Rare would be one who could work the system to make himself as rich as Zacchaeus. One wonders what it had cost him to become chief tax collector. What values had he compromised? What people had he defrauded? What relationships had been sacrificed?



In an instant Zacchaeus risks the social stature he has so carefully built up. Small in physical stature, he acts in a most undignified way, racing ahead of the crowd and climbing a tree. When Jesus sees how far out on a limb Zacchaeus has gone, he does the same. Calling him down, Jesus announces he must stay at Zacchaeus' house. Grumbling and criticism of Jesus for staying with a sinner immediately follow. But the risk Jesus takes for Zacchaeus is worth it.

Like Martha, who received *(hypedexato)* Jesus into her home (10:38), and like Mary Magdalene, whose discipleship was expressed in financial service (8:3), so Zacchaeus receives *(hypedexato)* Jesus with joy, opening his heart and his wallet in generous outreach. Zacchaeus declares that half his possessions will go to the poor, and any ill-gotten money he will repay four times over. In addition to his dignity and reputation, Zaccheus now risks his financial security and his social standing among his rich cohorts. The Gospel is not specific about the ways in which Zaccheus felt lost, nor what prompted him to look to Jesus to be found. Nonetheless, Jesus perceives Zacchaeus' need and leaves with him the saving grace to negotiate the challenges ahead.

Jesus does not ask Zacchaeus to leave behind his profession nor to give away the rest of his possessions. Rather, he meets him in the place of his seeking and opens up a saving way forward within his circumstances. One wonders what it will cost Zacchaeus to live out of this saving grace. Will he be ostracized by the Jericho elites? Will he follow Jesus out onto the final limb, the tree of the cross? Will his life, like that of Jesus, seed new shoots of hope and life? Will ours?

BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

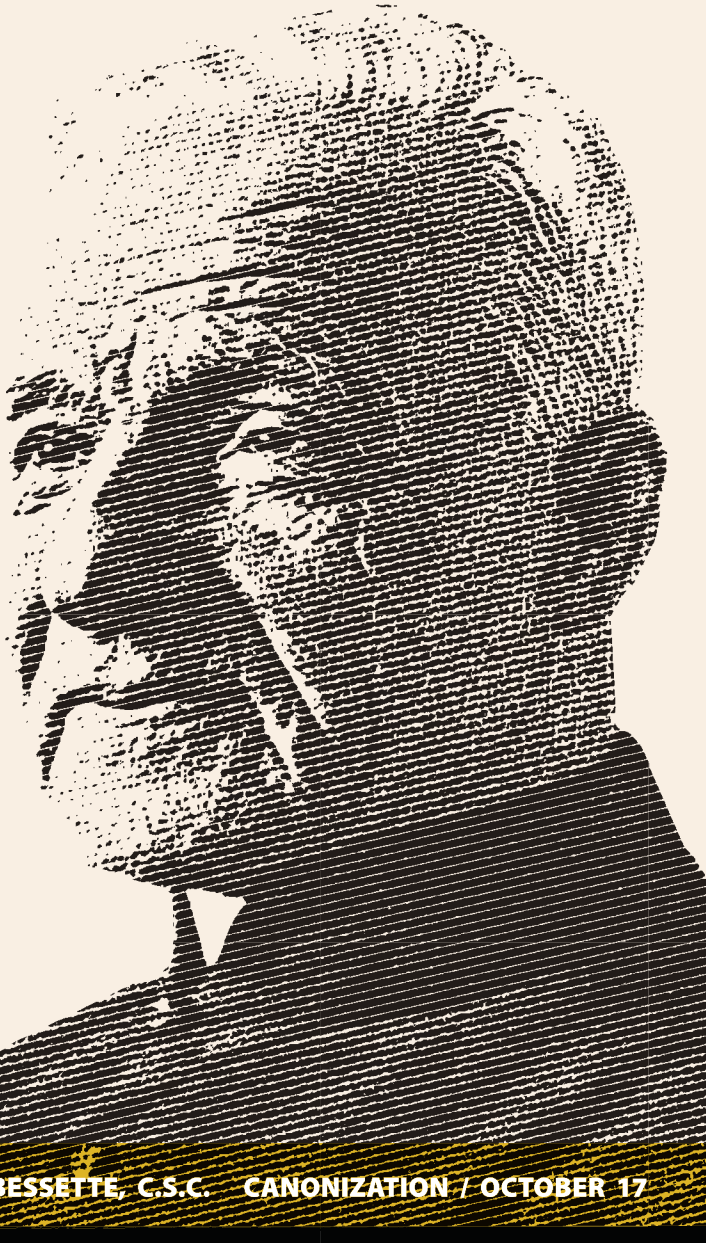
- Pray with gratitude for the times that Jesus has gone out on a limb for you.
- How does Jesus empower you to take risks for the sake of the Gospel?
- Join the chorus of all the saints who praise God for the gift of salvation.

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.*

Brother André

Celebrating a Saint



BROTHER ANDRÉ BESSETTE, C.S.C. CANONIZATION / OCTOBER 17

CONGREGATION OF HOLY CROSS
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Join us in celebrating the canonization of Brother André Bessette, C.S.C. This humble man, the first Holy Cross religious to be officially recognized as a saint, gave his life to the Lord and to the people of God, especially to the sick and afflicted. Through him many came to know of God's healing grace. **Does God have similar plans for you?**

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