America

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War Without End

ROBERT W. McELROY

Growing Up Berrigan

GEORGE M. ANDERSON

OF MANY THINGS

How do you get authoritarian leaders to step down before their stubbornness lays waste to their countries? When the Jasmine Revolution forced former President Zine al-Bidine Ben Ali to flee into exile in Saudi Arabia last month, hope seemed to awaken again that people power can topple dictators. Ben Ali had ruled Tunisia for 23 years. Across North Africa and the Arab world, people rose up in protest against their rulers: in Egypt, Yemen, Jordan and Syria.

In the first two countries, the longtime presidents promised not to run for office and not to back their sons as their successors. In Jordan, the king sacked the government with promises of reforms. But as Egypt's Hosni Mubarak rejects the crowd's demands that he step down immediately, Egypt's popular revolution has stalled. Mubarak seems to be playing a waiting game.

Mubarak is not the only authoritarian whom opposition seems unable to unseat. In Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe's misrule has impoverished what was once one of Africa's richest and most advanced countries; and Mugabe seems to be slipping out of the power-sharing agreement with Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. With Mugabe's new aggressiveness, the country has begun to slip back into a situation of economic and social distress.

In Ivory Coast, President Laurent Gbagbo has refused to step aside for the newly elected Alassane Ouattara, whose government is holed up in a hotel guarded by U.N. troops. Several African Union efforts to mediate an end to the standoff have not altered the situation. The union's threat to use force has proved an empty one. For a variety of reasons, West African governments are reluctant to take action against Gbagbo.

A major factor, certainly, in the obstinacy of delegitimated leaders is the military. Popular uprisings can lead to political change when the military stands aside, as it did in Tunisia in January or in the Philippines in 1988. In Egypt, however, the military's position has been uncertain at best. For this reason, the Obama administration is right to attempt to employ its longtime ties to the Egyptian armed forces to facilitate a transition in government. But what the military will do is hard to discern.

What is distinctive about Egypt is not only that the young people's uprising continues to grow, but that it has maintained extraordinary nonviolent discipline in its ranks. The protestors in Tahrir Square police their own trash, receive and protect visitors and tend to their wounded. More remarkable, there does not appear to be any training in the techniques of nonviolence. Violence has come from agents provocateurs, so-called Mubarak supporters with out-of-uniform police and secret police in their numbers. If the protestors' nonviolent resistance can be maintained as the movement grows, there may be opportunity for the kind of broad public campaign of noncooperation that could force the military to give up its lingering support for Mubarak in the interest of preserving its identification with the Egyptian people.

In sub-Saharan Africa, nonviolent resistance does not seem yet to be an option. Under the principle of the Responsibility to Protect, the removal of dictators depends on the international community. It appears that the African Union lacks the will and the capacity to force despots from power, so the responsibility falls to the United Nations. In the absence of a standing emergency force, however, the Security Council is also hamstrung. In the Arab world popular resistance may offer an alternative; in sub-Saharan Africa there seems to be no workable alternative to despotism yet.

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Cover: Members of the U.S. Navy carry a wounded comrade to a medevac helicopter in Kandahar Province in southern Afghanistan in October 2010. Reuters/Finbarr O'Reilly

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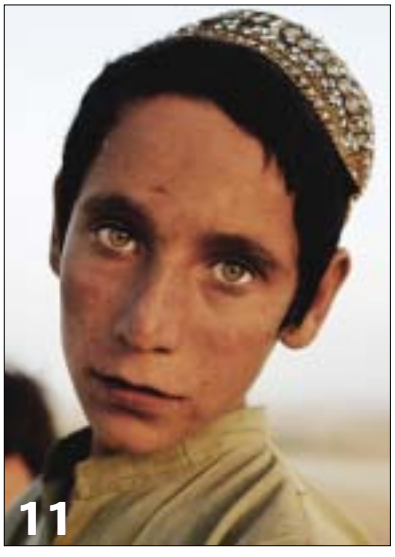

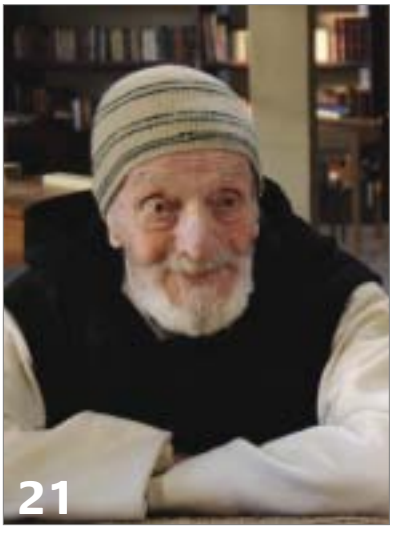

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ON THE WEB

Additional wisdom from **St. Thomas Aquinas**, right. Plus, Tim Reidy leads a podcast discussion of the 2010 **Oscar** race, and Jack McLain, S.J., reviews his favorite **Catholic apps**. All at americamagazine.org.

Through Arab Eyes

The world has turned upside down again. U.S. policy had imagined that "stability" in the Middle East and Mediterranean Africa came from support for Arab dictators—and unquestioning defense of Israel. Dictators might squelch democracy, but they would "keep the lid on." Unexpectedly, in Tunisia and Egypt the lid is now off.

Why are we surprised? Because the corporate media—cable and satellite companies, like Comcast and DirecTV—fearing pressure from the Bush administration during the Iraq war and from the Israel lobby at all times, have frozen out Arab voices.

Suddenly our media have discovered that Al Jazeera, the Arab television channel based in Qatar, has beaten them to the punch in Egypt with round-the-clock coverage in Cairo, Suez and elsewhere. Traffic to its English-language Web site increased by 2,500 percent in a single week.

Its journalists cover both sides, but they want to restore the balance lost by the West's media bias. In 2006 Al Jazeera opened a Washington bureau with Dave Marash, a veteran of ABC's "Nightline," as anchor. But viewers in the United States outside of Washington have virtually no access to Al Jazeera broadcasts.

The Web site Aljazeera.com demonstrates both the professionalism of its journalists and their dedication to ideals that Americans share. The American cable and satellite operators have a moral and civic obligation to carry Al Jazeera news. The alternative is to discover again, too late, what is wrong with a one-sided view of the world.

Lower Rate, Fewer Loopholes

Since the U.S. federal corporate tax rate (35 percent) is higher than that of many other countries, business interests claim the rate hinders their global competitiveness. Look for that argument to be made often, and for the current rate to be trotted out to justify a corporate tax cut if Congress takes up tax reform. Businesses would have a valid point if the 35 percent rate corresponded to what corporations actually pay. But it does not.

Legal loopholes allow many corporations to avoid paying the official rate. Some pay almost nothing. In one egregious example, The Carnival Corporation, a cruise line, paid a mere 1.1 percent of its multibillion dollar profits in taxes—federal, state, local and foreign combined—over the last five years (The New York Times, 2/2). To cite another example, one in five of the Fortune 500 companies paid less than 20 percent in taxes; 39 of those paid less than 10 percent. Such figures show that claims of lack of competitiveness due to high taxes is a ruse.

The two biggest loopholes, in terms of lost federal revenue, are deferred income from foreign sources and accelerated depreciation of equipment and machinery. Loopholes also cause problems: a focus on finding deductions can distort business decisions. And because some companies pay much higher tax rates than their peers, depending on the savvy of their tax lawyers, the current system lacks fairness. No tax cut alone would solve these problems.

Any reform worth the name must contain two provisions: a lower tax rate and the closing of loopholes, at least those that are the most significant for raising revenue and establishing peer fairness. A law with both provisions could make corporate tax reform a boon to government and to corporations, a win-win solution for all but the most loophole-dependent.

Health Care Myths Die Hard

Republicans pushed for a Senate vote to repeal last year's hard-won health care reform legislation, resurrecting a series of dubious or outright fraudulent assertions: Health care reform will kill jobs—it will not. Reform will bankrupt the nation—in fact, the Congressional Budget Office reports it will shave $143 billion from the deficit by 2019.

While legislative gestures like these make good political theater, they will not succeed in reversing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. In fact, they are not intended to. But there is evidence that the various rhetorical attacks on reform are having at least one desired effect—spreading disinformation. In a recent Kaiser Family Foundation pop quiz on reform, only 1 percent of people surveyed were able to respond correctly to 10 questions about the actual impact of health care reform. It is no surprise that Democrats scored best on the quiz—32 percent got 7 or more right. Only 18 percent of Republicans could match that unimpressive performance.

Many respondents still believe (mistakenly) that reform means the creation of a government-run insurance plan and that it will allow undocumented immigrants to receive government assistance to purchase insurance; 40 percent still believe the package includes the Republican-invented, fictitious "death panel" that can make end-of-life decisions for people on Medicare.

These survey results suggest that proponents of reform must do a better job of persuading the public of its benefits. They might begin by more aggressively defending against the mischaracterizations or outright fabrications by those who are attempting to kill this nascent movement toward a health care system that will provide for all with dignity and equity.

Laity Near the Top?

While the pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI has certainly enjoyed major successes, like the pope's visit last fall to England to beatify Cardinal Newman, the crises that have led to empty pews in the Catholic parishes of England, Europe and the United States persist.

The fundamental criticism of the institutional church is that its clerical, all-male establishment has not made room for other voices. There is no need to list the number of recent policy decisions, from Rome to home, which would have been more prudent if only a variety of laypersons had been consulted.

Jesus told his disciples that they were servants, that they were to feed the hungry and share their wealth with the poor and that they should demonstrate their love for one another by offering their lives in service. Some in church leadership have done the opposite, creating a culture of clericalism that too often values loyalty over accountability. In these circumstances, a project of reform is essential to rejuvenate church leadership and give greater voice to the whole church. As Pope John Paul II wrote in "Novo Millennio Ineunte," quoting St. Paulinus of Nola: "Let us listen to what all the faithful say, because in every one of them the Spirit of God breathes" (No. 45).

How to begin? No one should anticipate changes in the existing discipline on celibacy or in the teaching on women's ordination, but there are other ways to reform church structures to allow women and married men to participate in church governance. One proposal is simply to change canon law to admit laypeople to the College of Cardinals. The church could thereby continue its all-male priesthood, yet transform the "men's club" into a church with a face that more resembles the people of God described in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

A more realistic proposal, however, would entail two steps: First, reorganize diocesan offices so that laypeople constitute at least half of the bishop's principal advisers. (Increasing numbers of laity have already been hired as staff in many U.S. dioceses.) Second, create a new body, an international council of laypersons to share functions with the College of Cardinals. After attrition among the cardinals, each of the two bodies eventually could have 100 members. The lay members would be Catholics who love the church and are recognized for sound Christian judgment. They would come from a variety of occupations—education, health, religious life, law, the arts, business, science, government and labor. Church leadership would not be limited to elderly men but would be expanded to include men and women, married and unmarried, of different ages. Wisdom, after all, can be found from a multitude of sources, something that St. Benedict acknowledged when he urged an abbot at a monastery to solicit the opinion of even the youngest member of the community: "By the Lord's inspiration, it is often a younger person who knows what is best."

Some members of the council would direct Vatican offices; others would come to Rome for regular consultation. Membership could be proportionate to the Catholic populations throughout the world, chosen for a specified term on the recommendation of grass-roots representative caucuses of clergy and laity. The combined college and council would share three functions: administer the Vatican offices, advise the pope and select his successor.

These laypeople would offer much-needed perspective on the impact of the teachings and practices of the church, including such divisive subjects as contraception, the role of women in the church, the treatment of homosexuals and the failure of authorities to respond quickly and forcefully to the scandal of sexual abuse by members of the clergy. They would understand other pastoral failings, like the denial of the Eucharist to public persons because of their political positions, a too modest peace and justice agenda, lackluster liturgies with unprepared sermons and insensitive celebrants.

One may object that this initiative is a "pie in the sky" idea that the clerical establishment would never accept. Perhaps. Yet the implementation of specific alternatives like a lay council need not threaten the current leadership. For the authority of the church "is exercised in the service of truth and charity" ("Ut Unum Sint," No. 3). Nor would a council undermine the pope's authority. As Pope John Paul II wrote of the papacy: "The authority proper to this ministry is completely at the service of God's merciful plan and it must always be seen in this perspective" (No. 92). Discerning that plan is a task that Catholics should take on together.

Following Pope John Paul's example, we encourage our readers, clergy and lay, to evaluate this proposal and suggest other reforms that would achieve the same goals. The church has survived these 2,000 years because at key moments it chose the path of renewal. It may be that another such moment has arrived.

YOUNG CATHOLICS

A 'Lost' Generation Sighted At Fordham Conference

Who are they? Where did they go? Are they ever coming back? A search party of 600 or so braved mountains of snow outside Fordham University's Lincoln Center campus in New York to discuss the whereabouts of twenty-somethings in the Catholic Church on Jan. 28-29. The operating principle behind "Lost? Twenty-Somethings and the Church," a conference sponsored by the Francis and Ann Curran Center for American Catholic Studies and the Fordham Center on Religion and Culture, was the widely accepted notion that twenty-somethings raised as Catholics are swelling the ranks of the religiously unaffiliated.

Several studies have confirmed this suspicion, most notably a Pew Research study that found that 25 percent of adults under 30 describe their religious affiliation as atheist, agnostic or nothing in particular. James Davidson, an emeritus professor of sociology at Purdue University, noted his discomfort with some interpretations of the research. Davidson said it overstates the case to label the newly unaffiliated as "former Catholics."

"Viewing them as 'former Catholics' suggests that they have made a clean break with the church," Davidson said. "It is true they don't belong to local parishes or support the church in any other way.... But, by canon law, they are still Catholic, and—when you get to know them a little better than you do in a telephone interview—you learn that many of them are still very Catholic and think of themselves that way."

Professor Robert Putnam of Harvard University strongly disagreed. Putnam is a co-author with David Campbell of the recently published book *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. He judged Davidson's opinion to be far too optimistic. "The one-third who are not affiliated are not Catholic despite Jim wanting it to be so," he said, noting that this group has no measurable ties to Catholic practice or identity.

Campbell, a professor of political science at the University of Notre Dame, mentioned that a significant portion of those young adults leaving the church do so because they are uncomfortable with what they perceive to be an inappropriate mixing of

LISTENING AND SPEAKING UP

Irish, German Statements Seek Church Renewal

A "listening program" has been launched across the 88 parishes of the Diocese of Down and Connor, near Belfast in Northern Ireland, intended to draw the counsel of parishioners in church affairs. Noel Treanor, the diocesan bishop, said, "The history of the church includes moments when the people of God are called to reform and renew the church. This is one such moment." While the program is seen as a response to the widespread disappointment and anger felt by Irish Catholics in the wake of the scandal of sexual abuse by members of the clergy, Bishop Treanor insisted that "even if the scandals didn't happen, even if there were just as many priests now as there were 50 years ago, this process would still be necessary.

"We have been grappling since the 1960s with the whole idea of how we make the church more participative," he said. "This will be a step toward that, a step toward a church that is more open, transparent and where there is accountability." Bishop Treanor said he wanted "to live in a church where someone can feel free to say exactly what they think to a bishop and where a bishop can be free to say

"Lost? Twenty-Somethings and the Church," a conference at Fordham University

religion and conservative politics. Their own political instincts do not fit any neat categories. For instance, Catholics under 30 tend to be liberal on the issue of homosexuality but more pro-life than their parents.

Donna Freitas, associate professor of religion at Hofstra University and author of *Sex and the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance, and Religion on America's College Campuses,* spoke about "hook-up culture" on America's college campuses. Her study found that undergraduates—with the exception of evangelical Christians—are both sexually active and deeply unsatisfied, reporting feelings of loneliness despite frequent hook-ups.

One of the few panelists at the conference who was himself twenty-something, Patrick Landry, a middle school teacher, drew loud applause when he confessed that he was in the "murky, messy middle" in terms of the church's teachings on sex and felt that many of his friends likewise struggled to reconcile those teachings with their lived faith lives.

"We feel disconnected," said 23-year-old Jennifer Sawyer. "People are talking about us rather than to us." Sawyer also spoke of the "in-betweenness" she and her friends feel—unmarried, childless and working at entry-level jobs that seem to have little future. "We graduated into the worst financial climate since the Great Depression. Many of my friends are getting less optimistic that good things are ahead for us."

Sawyer is right to be concerned. Twenty-somethings are too often seen but not heard in discussions about the church's future, but her cohort is not the future of the church. It is the present. They might not look, act, think or believe the same way their parents did, but they are here now, seeking greater meaning and purpose in their lives. And they are keenly aware of how underserved they often are by their own faith community. They may be "seekers," but that does not mean they are lost.

For the church, their plight brings to mind a Gospel teaching: "Which of you, if you had 100 sheep, and lost one of them, would not leave the 99 in the wilderness, and go after the one that was lost until he found it?" (Lk 15: 4). The "Lost" conference raised the notion that perhaps the paradigm of the good shepherd has been turned inside out. Is the church more concerned with tending to the one remaining sheep than with the 99 roaming the wild? If that is the case, who is actually lost: twenty-somethings or the church itself?

BILL McGARVEY, *former editor of BustedHalo.com, spoke about the church and popular culture at the Fordham conference. Adapted with permission from The Tablet: http://www.thetablet.co.uk.*

exactly what he thinks."

The call for such active listening was not limited to Northern Ireland. On Feb. 3 an Irish priests' association issued a statement proposing a delay in implementing the new translation of the Roman Missal. Meanwhile, on the continent a statement was signed by more than 200 theologians in Germany, Austria and Switzerland calling for the church to address the problems of the priest shortage by allowing married priests, permitting women to have more active roles in church ministry and letting laypeople help select bishops and pastors.

The theologians said on Feb. 4 that they could no longer remain silent in the face of a lingering crisis within the church because of the sexual abuse scandals, the priest shortage and the increasing rate of Catholics "terminating" their relationship with the church. They said the church should "trust in people's ability to make decisions and carry responsibility" in their own lives and that it should "not revert to pater-

Bishop Noel Treanor commissions lay facilitators for the diocesan listening program on Feb. 2.

nalism." They praised the church's esteem for married and unmarried lives but said this should not exclude same-sex couples and divorced and remarried couples, though the statement stopped short of asking the church to officially sanction same-sex unions.

At a news conference in Dublin on Feb. 3, representatives from the Association of Catholic Priests appealed for a five-year postponement of the introduction of the new missal to allow further consultation with priests and the laity. They said the proposed literal translations from Latin had produced texts that were "archaic, elitist and obscure and not in keeping with the natural rhythm, cadence and syntax of the English language."

"We are saying very clearly that this new translation of the missal is not acceptable," said the Rev. Gerard Alwill, pastor of a rural parish in the Diocese of Kilmore, during the news conference. "We are deeply concerned that if these new texts are imposed, they could create chaos in our church. Our church doesn't need chaos at this time."

United by Democracy

Christians and Muslims are involved together in the democracy and reform movements bubbling up around the Middle East, and members of both communities will gain from their success and suffer if they are violently suppressed, said a leading Lebanese Muslim scholar. With demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt, simmering unrest in Yemen and government changes in Lebanon, "I am both worried and hopeful," said Muhammad al-Sammak, adviser to the chief mufti of Lebanon and secretary general of Lebanon's Christian-Muslim Committee for Dialogue. "It is true that the situation of Christians in the Middle East is not good," he said, adding that the region's governments must do more to protect the religious minorities in their midst. "The political outcome [of unrest] is likely to take different shapes in different countries," he said. "Christians in the Middle East are part of this change. They are not opposed to it; they are not leading it; they are part of it."

Indian Christians Reject Report

Christian leaders rejected a report that cleared Hindu fundamentalists of responsibility for a series of attacks on Christian targets in southern Karnataka State in India and demanded that the federal government conduct its own inquiry. "The Christian community is deeply saddened by this report," Archbishop Bernard Moras of Bangalore, president of the Karnataka Catholic Bishops Council, said during a news conference on Feb. 5. Attacks on three dozen churches and other Christian targets across the state in September 2008 were investigated. The commission absolved the state government, led by members of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, police and Hindu fundamentalist groups of the attacks despite contrary testimony from dozens of Christians. "We cooperated with the inquiry in the hope that justice will be done," Archbishop Moras said. "Shockingly, the report is biased against Christians, and it absolves the culprits."

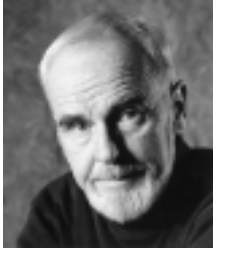
From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

David Beckmann

It is his faith in God, particularly "that biblical injunction to serve the least of these, that keeps me going and that keeps me from being overwhelmed," President Barack Obama said at the **National Prayer Breakfast** on Feb. 3. ✦ Bread for the World's president, the Lutheran pastor and economist **David Beckmann,** describes himself as a careful follower of Catholic social teaching, which he called a great resource for all Christians. ✦ Police in **Bogotá, Colombia,** were investigating the murders of two priests, Rafael Reatiga Rojas, 34, and Richard Piffano Laguado, 36, who were found on Jan. 26 shot to death after an apparent robbery. ✦ Responding to the increasing number of Christians moving into northern Iraq to escape violence in the south, the **Archdiocese of Arbil** on Feb. 2 announced plans for the construction of a university and hospital. ✦ On Feb. 4 **Prince Charles** became the first member of the British royal family to enter a Catholic church in Ireland, visiting St. Malachy's Church in Belfast to tour its restoration. ✦ San Salvador's Archbishop **José Luis Escobar Alas** hopes President Barack Obama's visit on March 22-23 will set the stage for a "radical reform" of immigration issues.

JOHN F. KAVANAUGH



Aquinas, Go With Me

For many years at Saint Louis University, as the deep winter turns, the Philosophy Club has sponsored a "Summathon." The goal is to read aloud, in any language, the entire *Summa Theologica*—at least its larger, meaty responses—of St. Thomas Aquinas. I think it's a great idea, and I have taken part over the years with our graduate and undergraduate students on the feast of the saint, Jan. 28.

At the time of this writing, we are approaching the last sections of the huge work; but somehow, I wish we could give a day to the key passages that embody Aquinas' spirit and wisdom. If you just "drop in" on the *Summa*, it can be like inspecting a cathedral with a magnifying glass, concentrated on some dusty nook or corner. You can forget the great arching edifice of the cathedral itself.

As I approach my 70th year, I realize that Aquinas has been a "home plate" for me, a place where my serious thinking started and the place to which I'm always led. There are many philosophers, writers and artists whom I have held close in inspiration, but Aquinas is always on my list of top 10 historical people for whom I give thanks.

I am reluctant to recommend the long and often arduous journey of reading Aquinas, but I would like to share with you some passages—reasons why this great scholar-saint has walked with me as a *vade mecum* on my groping way to God. With all the problems I could write about—ecclesiastical, political and global—so pressing and sometimes depressing, the words of Aquinas serve as anchors for me, a grounding against the winds of history. If that is hard to understand, here are just a few sentences of his that are probably more important than any ideas I might offer concerning the ways of the world and its history. Each is worth a day of meditation.

1. In the field of human science, the argument from authority is weakest.

2. There is nothing that does not share in goodness and beauty. Each thing is good and beautiful by its own proper form.

3. Evil does not exist, except in a good subject.

4. In every good, the supreme good is desired.

5. All desires presuppose love as their first root.

6. All fear springs from love. Ordered love is included in every virtue, disordered love in every vice.

7. Malice consists in emptiness.

8. Love is absolutely stronger than hate.

9. No human truly has joy unless that person lives in love.

10. The human person has a natural urge toward complete goodness.

11. Sins are as preposterous in morals as monsters in nature.

12. Every judgment of conscience, be it right or wrong, be it about things evil in themselves or morally indifferent, is obligatory, in such wise that whoever acts against conscience always does moral evil.

13. It must be said flatly that the will that disobeys conscience as reason's dictate is always in the wrong.

14. It is against reason to be burdensome to others, showing no amusement and acting as a grouch. Those without a sense of fun, who never say anything ridiculous and are cantankerous with those who do, these are vicious and are called grumpy and rude.

15. Justice without mercy is cruelty; mercy without justice is a waste.

16. Two main reasons why people fall short of justice—deference to the powerful and deference to the mob.

17. *Person* signifies what is noblest in the whole of nature.

> Aquinas has been a 'home plate,' where my serious thinking started.

These little maxims touch only the surface of Aquinas's depths; but they are worthy of being Christian mantras. What is more, they are never contradicted in the mighty conceptual cathedral of Aquinas's writings; and they are rock-solid, based on the teachings of Christ, for whom all of his written words were offered in love, as Aquinas said toward the end of his life.

St. Thomas Aquinas was a courageous thinker: a philosopher, a poet, a mystic. He was also a trouble-maker—condemned by the University of Paris and rejected by a number of bishops—often for his daring embrace of the pagan Aristotle and his Muslim interpreters. But what do we Catholics call him now? A doctor of the church.

Note: Most of the above translations are from Thomas Gilby's *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Philosophical Texts*. The specific sources and a larger sampling of texts are available online at americamagazine.org/aquinas.

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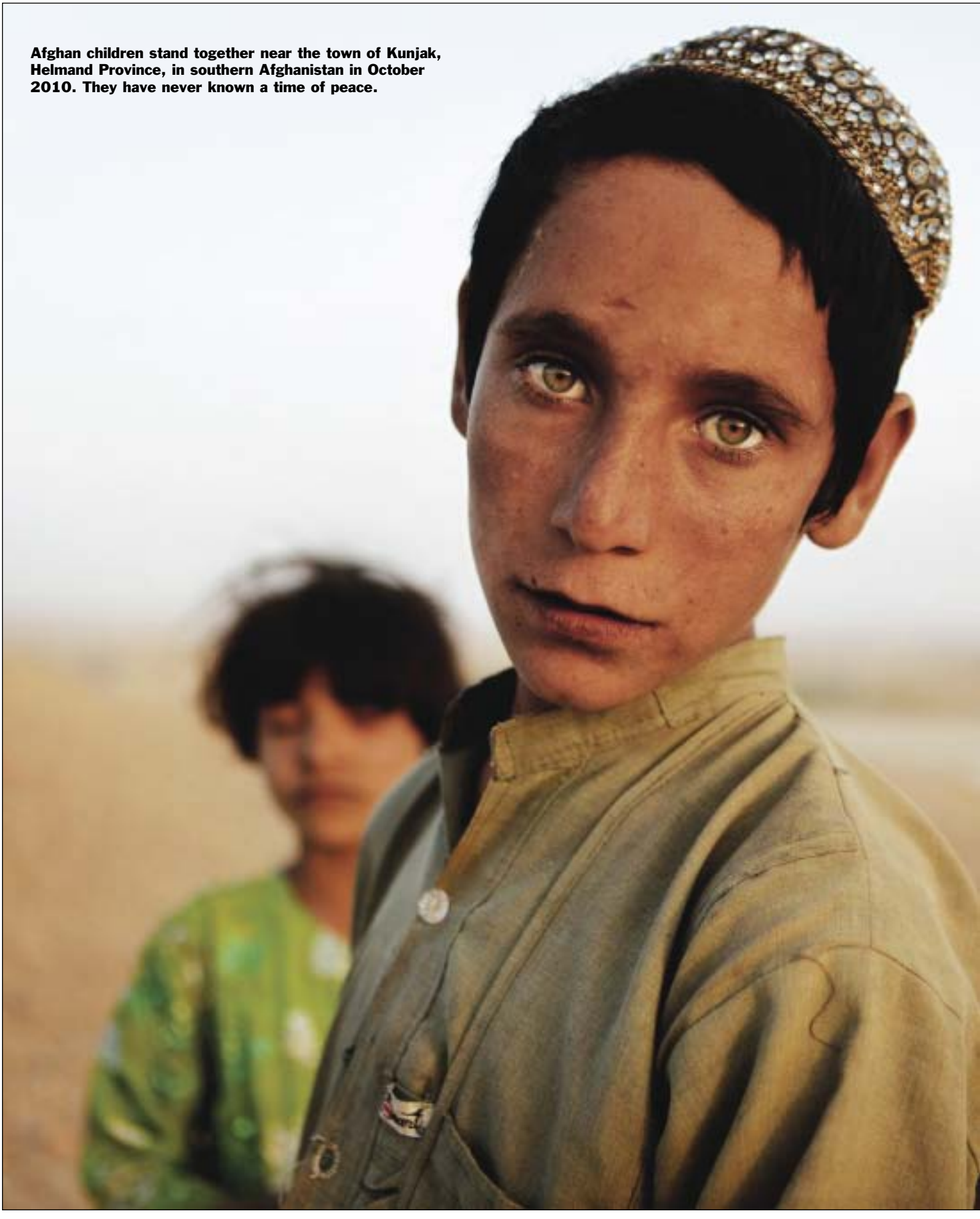

Afghan children stand together near the town of Kunjak, Helmand Province, in southern Afghanistan in October 2010. They have never known a time of peace.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FINBARR O'REILLY

After 13 years committed to war, it is time to be alarmed.

War Without End

BY ROBERT W. McELROY

The conflict in Afghanistan now stands as the longest war in American history. For this reason alone, as the United States approaches a decade of major warfare in a conflict that has shown little lasting progress, there should be a public debate that does not proceed from a blind commitment to "stay the course." On an even deeper level, a sustained national dialogue about the war in Afghanistan is vital to the future of the United States because it touches upon a chilling prospect: the danger that major warfare has become not an exceptional necessity but an ongoing way of life.

The United States has now achieved the capacity to wage major warfare over many years without greatly burdening its economy or its general citizenry. Three factors have made this possible: 1) the sheer immensity of the American economy and its ability to float credit, which has made the costs of major wars like Afghanistan and Iraq a relatively small blip in overall government expenditures; 2) the creation of instruments of war through modern technology that minimize American casualties in warfare and greatly enhance American tactical superiority; and 3) the existence of a professional army, which limits the layers of American society that absorb the terrible trauma of casualties in war, in contrast to a general draft like that utilized in prior wars.

The result has been, as the historian David Kennedy of Stanford University notes, a situation in which "the army is at war but the country is not. We have managed to create and field an armed force that is very lethal without the society in whose name it fights breaking a sweat." On a more ominous level, Kennedy warns, this achievement of a sustainable war-fighting capacity by the United States has created "a moral hazard for the political leadership to resort to force in the knowledge that civil society will not be deeply disturbed." This moral hazard has become realized in a decade-long conflagration in Afghanistan and in an indepen-

MOST REV. ROBERT W. McELROY *is auxiliary bishop of San Francisco.*

dent, elective major war in Iraq that lasted six years. Because the fractious commonwealth we have attempted to forge is fragile, the war in Iraq could re-erupt at any moment.

Invasion as Transformation

The moral hazard posed by America's vast capacity to wage war is compounded by its idealistic tendency to cast war aims in transformational terms. The United States seeks to establish as the goal of war, for example, a stable democracy no matter how inhospitable to democracy the history, institutions and culture of the country in which it intervenes. In Afghanistan the original goal of intervention was clear and circumscribed: Al Qaeda was to be rooted out from its safe havens and destroyed, and the repressive Taliban government that had given protection to Al Qaeda was to be punished and removed. In Iraq, by contrast, the goals of war were from the outset extensive and ill-defined: the removal of Saddam Hussein, the destruction of Iraq's capacity to use phantom weapons of mass destruction, the eradication of the hold that Saddam's Baath Party had on Iraqi society, the erection of a functioning democracy in the Middle East, the elimination of a serious threat to Israel.

The church's teaching directly challenges the embrace of warfare as a regular element of state action.

In both wars the goal of societal transformation and democratization came to dominate American aims and strategy, and that goal has limited the flexibility of the United States to withdraw early in the conflicts or to accept compromise outcomes.

The fear of failure deepens the moral hazard posed by U.S. power in the world today. Once committed to war, having cast the goals of war in transformational terms, the United States feels compelled to keep fighting in order to maintain its reputation for success on the battlefield and on the global stage. As a result, the United States suffers from a paralyzing inability to bring wars to a close.

In his recent book, *How Wars End*, the editor of Foreign Affairs, Gideon Rose, delineates the great human and material costs that have accompanied America's inability to end war. Mr. Rose proposes that much of this cost can be attributed to a failure of U.S. policymakers to be realistic when going into a war about what can actually be achieved. Vague or highly optimistic notions of victory have crippled war planning at the beginning, middle and end of every major American conflict since World War II.

Today, the United States is again paralyzed by an inability to bring war to a close. Afghanistan is no longer the central location for the fight against terrorism in general or Al Qaeda in particular. There are no clear grounds for believing that the corruption-riddled government that the United States points to as the incarnation of democracy in Afghanistan will ever attain national legitimacy and long-term stability. Afghanistan's deeply ingrained suspicions against foreign invaders are increasingly being directed toward the United States and its allies. Yet America fights on.

When the administration and Congressional supporters of the war recently pre-empted the promised debate on troop withdrawals scheduled for 2011 and instead focused on a long-term commitment lasting until 2014, the reaction was deafening silence. This can be explained only by the fact that the United States has entered into a new and radically different relationship with major warfare: even 13 years of ongoing major conflict do not constitute a cause for alarm or soul-searching. This indeed is a moral hazard, for the world and for the identity of the United States.

When does a nation have a moral obligation to end its participation in a decade-old war that has no clear prospect of success? How has continuation of warfare become the moral default position for cases in which the United States is fundamentally uncertain how to proceed? Has the United States allowed its wealth and technological achievement to combine with its idealism to create a society in which major warfare is a permanent part of its national life?

Catholic Teaching on War and Peace

For the Catholic community, these questions cannot be addressed without reference to the church's teaching on war and peace in the modern age. It should be a sobering reality for every believer in the United States that at the same time that America has come to a new acceptance of war as an ongoing part of its national life and identity, the universal church has grown increasingly skeptical of the legitimacy of warfare. The Second Vatican Council declared that "it is hardly possible to imagine that in an atomic era, war could be used as an instrument of justice." Pope John Paul II declared that war is never an appropriate way to resolve problems and never will be, precisely because war creates new wounds and new, ever more complicated conflicts.

The United States has found in the cutting-edge technologies of war the foundation for its ability to wage long-term war without generating massive American casualties; the church sees in these same technologies and their massive destructive capacities a clarion call to limit radically any resort to war. In an interview as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said that "given the new weapons that make possible destruction that goes beyond the combatant groups, today

we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a 'just war.'"

While still recognizing a delimited right to defensive warfare in extreme cases of aggression, the church's teaching directly challenges the embrace of warfare as a regular element of state action. This is not a challenge that occurs at the level of contingent prudential application of doctrinal principles to a particular war. It is a disagreement on the level of doctrinal principle about the legitimacy of the use of warfare as a regular tool of national policy.

Catholic doctrine does not permit war (or force of arms) to democratize other countries. There is no more pressing moral lesson for the United States to draw from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan than that it is morally illegitimate to use the weapons of war, with all their lethal and dehumanizing consequences, to remake foreign societies in our own image. Only major aggression counts in Catholic moral teaching as a just cause for war.

ON THE WEB
The editors on the start of the war in Afghanistan.
americamagazine.org/pages

Catholic doctrine does not permit the continuation of warfare in order to avoid the damage that will come to one's reputation from defeat. The church's teaching on right intention in war absolutely precludes starting or continuing a war out of this or any other political motivation.

Catholic doctrine does not permit the use of weapons and tactics that eviscerate the distinction between combatants and civilians. The use of drone aircraft for strikes that have generated increasing civilian casualties in Afghanistan and Pakistan represents just the type of "advanced" technology that lay at the heart of Pope Benedict's skepticism about the moral legitimacy of warfare in the present day.

Catholic doctrine does not permit continuation of war based on a mere wisp of hope. If the principle of proportionality in Catholic doctrine is to have any meaning, it must require that, in the absence of any clear probability of success after 10 years of major fighting, war must end.

The Central Question

This year should be a time of intense national debate on Afghanistan and America's approach to war. But almost certainly it will not be. In part this is a result of the nation's preoccupation with the current economic crisis that has created so much suffering here and around the world. On a deeper level, there will be no searing debate about Afghanistan despite almost 10 years of warfare precisely because the moral hazard that David Kennedy has identified is real. America's economy is too vast, its war-fighting skills too advanced, its ability to limit the number and social location of American casualties too successful for even 10 years of major warfare to burden the nation seriously. The country has truly learned to wage war "without breaking a sweat."

This is a frightening reality. It raises the possibility that a decade that has not known a single day without major warfare involving the United States may be succeeded by yet another decade of continuing American warfare overseas. The countries involved may change, but the themes will be the same. The world will always be a dangerous place, and dictatorships will always be in need of reform and "regime change."

The people of the United States need to engage in a deep and piercing national dialogue on the role of war in their national identity. U.S. citizens need to understand that this nation cannot transform the world by force of arms. They must recognize that war inevitably brings horrendous unintended consequences, like the persecution and destruction of the ancient Christian community in Iraq that is currently underway. The American people need to comprehend the human devastation caused by instruments of war that skillfully limit U.S. casualties but devastate cities and families and the lives of strangers. We the people need to recognize that good intentions do not constitute a just cause for war. If we do not, we may raise a whole generation of children who have never known an America at peace. And we may create a world that turns to war as easily as we do. A

Growing Up Berrigan

Portrait of a family of peacemakers

BY GEORGE M. ANDERSON

How could it have been otherwise? Frida Berrigan—the daughter of Philip Berrigan and Elizabeth McAlister and the niece of the peace activist Daniel J. Berrigan, S.J.—grew up in a community devoted to peacemaking and nonviolence. She, now 30-something, has followed in the family footsteps.

Frida's family was unusual. Her father, a World War II veteran, had been deeply affected by the violence of war. On leaving the Army, Philip Berrigan entered a Josephite seminary, was ordained to the priesthood in 1955 and became active in the civil rights movement. Two decades later, he left the priesthood and married Elizabeth McAlister, a former nun. In Baltimore, the couple founded Jonah House, a live-in community of people committed to peace and nonviolence.

"The first Gulf War began when I was in high school," Frida told me in a recent conversation. She explained that she, along with her younger brother and sister, often accompanied their parents on peace demonstrations in Washington. "At first I felt self-conscious and uncomfortable at the demonstrations as a youngster," she said. That changed because everybody at Jonah House took part in the demonstrations. "So we went, too, although there were times when I wished I could go to Washington just as a tourist."

As Frida grew up, she said she was "happy at some demonstrations simply to be part of something—not in stopping the war, but standing among people who felt they had a role and were not a number only." Eventually she realized, "This is where I want my life to be"—in opposing war and working for peace at all levels. As a young adult, she became increasingly active in planning the demonstrations. "You realize you'll never organize the one demonstration that will change the world, but it's important to be part of a movement that will raise the issues involved and provide a space for outrage at the destructiveness of war."

I asked Frida if she felt that her parents had passed on their values to her and her siblings. "My mother and father were very deliberately giving us a wisdom and a perspective and spending time with us as loving parents," she said. "They never pretended that a life like theirs would be easy, but they made it clear that this was their life's work and that even as children, it was our work too." Yet there was never any sense of the children being forced into it. "At heart, my parents were happy, whole people who were always truthful with us. My sister and brother have tried to be happy too, without replicating our parents' lives."

Life at Jonah House

The Jonah House community of eight to 15 people was established on what Frida called "three pillars": prayer, work and peaceful antiwar demonstrations. "There was a common purse and everyone contributed to it by painting houses—indoors in the winter, outdoors in the summer. We gleaned food from wholesale markets, finding leftovers that otherwise would have been thrown away. We also did some Dumpster diving. We shared the food with neighbors, because an element of service and sharing was part of what we were doing in the widest sense."

How did she and her siblings respond to a lack of middle-class, material comforts? "At certain points, we wanted things like nice clothes, so we did go through a little acquisitiveness. But our school friends were as poor or poorer than we were, and in time we saw the culture for what it was, trying to get its claws into us."

The Bible was an important part of community life and family life. "We had regular Bible study with Dad. And whenever we had to go somewhere in the car, even if it was only across town in Baltimore, he'd take a Bible from the glove compartment and say, 'Pick out a reading.'" That helped Frida realize that he too, even as a former priest, was still learning. These days she admits that it is an effort to read the Bible on her own: "For a long time, I just didn't do it but fell back instead on those early sessions with my father." She finds it helpful to work through the texts with others, usually at the Maryhouse Catholic Worker in New York City, where she was living at the time of this interview. She has since moved to Connecticut.

As a youngster, Frida was influenced by the stories of other activists, like the labor organizer Mother Jones. "Mother Jones was so alive, such a resister," Frida told me. She read about Oscar Romero, Gandhi and Martin Luther King—all strong influences—and understood that her own parents were already part of history because of their outspoken resistance to war, which resulted in periods of incarceration.

"When we were in elementary school, Dad handed us a copy of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*. It seemed strange to come to the section that talked about our own parents." Frida said schoolmates "thought it odd

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that we would be reading something besides what was assigned." She recalled the compassion of her junior high school teachers, "especially when our mother was in prison for her antinuclear activities."

As much as possible, Frida's mother and father tried to ensure that one parent would be at home with the children if the other was behind bars. Only once—for two months—were both parents incarcerated. The children were very young then. But when the separations are taken as a whole, they add up; Frida's parents were separated either from each other or from their children for 11 years.

Life at Jonah House was shared with people of various ages and from various backgrounds, some of them wealthy. "Many risked a lot in coming to stay with us, because it often meant breaking with their own family and rejecting their family's values in terms of lifestyle and political views on war," said Frida. "That was a positive affirmation for me of what Jonah House was doing."

Frida said her mother helped the children "keep a sense of family life" within the Jonah House community. "We were always confident that she was our mom and never felt in competition for her attention with others in the community. It was only later that I realized what a scholar and teacher my mother was—as she was always very modest about her gifts." As a Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Elizabeth McAlister had taught art history at Marymount College in Manhattan.

Back row: Frida Berrigan (center left), Liz McAlister (center right); bottom row: Daniel J. Berrigan, S.J. (center); with other members of the extended Berrigan family in November 2010.

PHOTO: CARMEN TROTTA, COURTESY OF AUTHOR

Prayers and Vigils

"'Make me an instrument of your peace' is cycling through my head constantly," said Frida, referring to the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, "especially when I feel scattered or nervous." At the Maryhouse Catholic Worker in New York she found strength in praying evening prayer with the staff and residents. Those present sit around a table near the kitchen, pray the psalms together antiphonally and add petitions for people struggling with particular challenges. "That is a time of genuine communal prayer," she said.

But one of the most traditional of Catholic prayers came to her late. "It was not until I went to Cuba in 2005, as part of the Witness Against Torture action, that I learned the rosary, which is strange in that my parents were a former priest and a former nun. Discovering the rosary is something I am grateful for." Frida identifies with Mary, especially her Magnificat, with its theme of lifting up the lowly and bringing down the mighty. During the fasts and vigils in front of the military base at Guantánamo, Frida and the others present regularly recited the rosary.

ON THE WEB
George M. Anderson, S.J., talks to Bishop Luis del Castillo of Uruguay.
americamagazine.org

In the last three years for 10 days in January, Frida and the group have fasted, prayed and made vigil near the White House as well, as a protest against the Obama administration's going back on its promise to close Guantánamo. "The vigil each day begins with a Bible reading, and someone in the group offers a prayer.... We also read from a book of poems written by the Guantánamo prisoners themselves." They stand in the cold for two hours at a time, wearing orange

jumpsuits like those worn at Guantánamo. "I try to go within myself and be in dialogue with the prisoners, lifting up their story to God. We try to be receptive to the people passing by on the sidewalk, who occasionally stop to ask questions about the demonstration's meaning."

While living at Maryhouse, Frida has been working at the nearby War Resisters League. The two groups have similarities. "There's an anarchical thread in both through their rejection of all war and violence, along with the simple lifestyle embraced by the two groups," she said. "It shows a shared commitment to the concept of downward mobility, that represents living close to the margins."

Frida's current life marks a personal shift. Previously, she had held a full-time job at the World Policy Institute, an organization that focuses on arms issues. "There I got a valuable education on those issues," she said. But she knew that a regular job of that sort was not for her. "I wanted time to work with my hands, doing the basic Maryhouse jobs of cleaning and washing dishes and just 'being on the house' for a six-hour daily shift"—to attend to the needs of the many older and often troubled people who stop by for clothes, food or just to talk.

Frida's brother, Jerry, has followed in his parents' footsteps, too. Married and living in East Kalamazoo, Mich., he and his wife started a Catholic Worker house three years ago, called Peace House. But the house does not focus on homeless people. "They see their mission as working with neighborhood children from poor families," Frida said. Her youngest sibling, Kate, lives in Oakland, Calif., works with disabled people and organizes for the abolition of prisons. Kate is also studying to be a physical therapist.

As adults, all three Berrigan children show the influence of their parents' values, which might be said to be in keeping with those of the Gospel. Each of the siblings lives them out in his or her own way. A

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Waking Up in Jerusalem

BY ALICIA VON STAMWITZ


A West Bank settlement

In my files I have a yellowed letter dated Sept. 10, 1978, from the office of the sixth prime minister of the State of Israel. An embossed seal, with olive branches cupping an ivory menorah, crowns the elegant letterhead.

"Dear Ms. Arellano" (my maiden name), Menachem Begin's secretary had typed. "Before leaving for Camp David, the Prime Minister asked me to thank you for your letter of August 6 and for your sentiments and good wishes." I blush to remember those sentiments.

I was a born-again Christian at Tufts University in Massachusetts that year, and many of us Christians were friends with the Jewish students. More than a third of the student population was Jewish, so we were naturally paired in dorm rooms, dining halls and college classes. We also felt a kind of spiritual kinship. "Remember, Jesus was not a Christian," the evangelical minister on campus said. "He was Jewish."

Newly enthralled by everything religious, I peppered my Jewish friends with questions about their traditions and history. I signed up for a Hebrew language class and pored over books and articles on the Holocaust, Zionism and the State of Israel. It was a compelling narrative: God was rescuing his chosen people, just as my highlighted and underlined Bible verses said he would.

In this state of spiritual exaltation, I wrote Mr. Begin. I told him about my studies and the Zion tree my roommate arranged to have planted "in the fallow hills of Jerusalem" on my 20th birthday. I thanked him for his leadership and concluded by saying that I hoped to visit the Holy Land someday.

A Journey Beyond Bias

All that passed, as youthful obsessions often do. After college, I returned to my comfortable Catholic faith and gradually forgot about my Zionist leanings—until this summer, when I received an invitation to visit the Holy Land. It did not come from Israel, though. I was invited by Palestinian officials to join a faith-based tour for Christian journalists.

A tour hosted by Palestinians?

I was skeptical at first, but a few e-mail messages confirmed that it was a legitimate event backed by the U.S. Agency for International Development. It was part of a new initiative to revive the Palestinian economy, beginning with the tourism industry. Even the Israelis were on board under the banner of "economic peace" in the Middle East.

So I went. But almost immediately I found myself fretting about unexpected things. Like the Jewish settlements. When the guide announced that our bus was passing a settlement on the left, I leapt out of my seat on the opposite side for a better view. At first, I couldn't locate it. Then the guide pointed to a massive compound

PHOTO: DAVID WILSON

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straddling a hilltop in East Jerusalem.

It was disorienting. My mental image of a settlement was of a humble farming community in an uninhabited desert place, not a modern city of 40,000 on prime real estate. It is probably an exception, I thought to myself. But I could not help wondering: *Is this where my Zion tree ended up—on one of these "fallow hills"?*

Then there was the separation wall. The 440-mile concrete and coiled wire barrier was an arresting sight from either side. The guide claimed it choked commerce and isolated Palestinian families: "It's like living in a prison or a ghetto." I bristled at his choice of words. A more balanced account would have allowed that the wall prevented terrorist attacks, I thought. Still, it was an eyesore.

As the days passed I grew increasingly irritable. The guide's monologues on the suffering of the Palestinian people, confiscated lands and bulldozed trees were annoying. I was here to see the holy sites of Judaism and Christendom, not to listen to propaganda.

By the time Israeli soldiers boarded our bus at a checkpoint outside Ariel, I was in no mood for political games. At all the other checkpoints, soldiers had merely glanced at our passports and waved us on. This time we were asked to disembark with all our personal belongings.

Grumbling, I collected my bags and followed my companions across the steaming asphalt to a cinderblock security station. We queued up to file through the lone metal detector, then waited to be interrogated by a stone-faced senior officer as she rifled through our bags. "Where have you been?" she asked. "Where are you going? Why are you going there?" An hour later we were permitted to return to the bus but were denied passage.

"Why wouldn't they let us pass?" I asked the U.S.A.I.D. representative accompanying our group as we headed back to our seats.

"They won't allow our Palestinian guide through," he said carefully, picking his way through the words. "There are Jewish settlers up the road, and the soldiers believe our guide could be a threat."

"So what's the problem," I blurted impatiently. "Can't we just go on without him?"

I regretted my words at once. After an awkward silence, the U.S.A.I.D. rep answered, "We don't want to do that. He hasn't done anything wrong." He was right, of course. I reddened and slunk into my seat.

What was happening to me? My ire should have been directed at the Israeli soldiers who had blocked our passage in order to protect the—for the first time I saw the need for a descriptive adjective—*illegal* settlers. Instead, I had turned on the Palestinian guide.

I was tired and a long way from home, yes; but a more accurate explanation of my agitation is that I was much further from the familiar stories of my college days. My misty Zionist narrative did not mention fortress-like settlements, graffiti-streaked walls and checkpoints. And it did not include indigenous Palestinians. In fact, it had explicitly denied their existence: "A land without people for a people without land."

Engaging Others

I slipped away from the group early that night to think. Reluctantly, I admitted to myself that I had never moved beyond my youthful biases. If anything, much of what I had seen on television or read in newspapers since then had reinforced them: Israelis are our friends and noble allies; Palestinians are uncivilized and unreasonable—a "problem" to be dealt with. In the past few days, I had seen and heard things that challenged my biases, but I was afraid to let go of them.

The next day and from that day forward, I made an effort to engage our

Palestinian guide and hosts in conversation. Where before I had huddled with my American companions, I now sought out and sat beside the Palestinians at our gatherings.

It was difficult at first. I think my hosts sensed my discomfort, my self-conscious attempt to reach across the divide. But they were eager to talk, to tell their stories. As they described the joys and challenges of their daily lives, I carefully wrote down their Arabic names and studied their lined faces. I leaned in when they showed me photographs of their children, and I shared photographs of mine. One night I recited a poem I had copied into my spiral notebook, "The Plea," by Sue Sabbagh. My dinner companions nodded appreciatively and printed the names of their own favorite poets in my notebook: Imru' al-Qais, Al-Mutanabbi, Mahmoud Darwish.

Slowly my defenses melted away. The more Palestinians I met and the more closely I listened, the easier it became to dismiss my sad caricatures of rock-hurling fanatics and fundamentalist terrorists.

This does not mean that I am now anti-Israel or pro-Palestine. If I learned anything this summer, it is that there are legitimate arguments and grievances on both sides and a dizzying history I'll never master. The only thing I am fairly certain of is that Palestinians and Israelis will be living side-by-side for years to come. It will take a miracle for lasting peace to settle here, but this, at least, is one thing on which all who have any stake in the Holy Land agree: miracles have taken place here before.

I will forever remember one young mother, beaming with pride, who gestured to a seat beside her and said in her charming English, "Will you please to enjoy us here?" As I smoothed the fuzz on her infant's perfect head, hope swelled in me for her, for her infant son, for all who live in this scarred, contested land. A

FILM | JOHN ANDERSON

THE MONKS OF TIBHIRINE

Xavier Beauvois's 'Of Gods and Men'

Like Easter, the film **Of Gods and Men,** by the French director Xavier Beauvois, is based on a murder story. This story concerns the abduction and beheading in 1996 of seven Trappist monks by Islamic extremists in Algeria. Although Beauvois is not in the allegory business, his parable is a Passion play of a very modern sort, one in which each character has to crush the gnawing worm of his own mortality and doubt and thereby remain true to his faith. The result is one of the more profoundly spiritual films of this year or any other.

Despite the prepositional mischief of its title (Can anyone avoid thinking "Of Mice and Men"? Or, better still, "Of Human Bondage"?) "Of Gods and Men" is a serious movie and a violent one. Not all the mayhem arrives via the bloodletting of the Mujahadeen or the counter-brutality of the Algerian military. Although this French-made Sony Pictures Classics release (originally "Des Hommes et des Dieux") is set in a monastery of Trappists living the contemplative life, the battle each man wages for his soul and conscience is intense. If one were looking for an intellectual and spiritual "Rambo," this would be it. The tension created, not by the dramatization of physical peril so much as spiritual peril, is palpable—the soul's equivalent of a car chase replete with flaming wreckage.

They lead a rigorous existence, these monks. The landscape around an unnamed village near Tikrit in Morocco (in fact, it was Tibhirine) occupies some middle ground between

Lambert Wilson as Christian, left, and Jean-Marie Frin as Paul

PHOTO: MARIE-JULIE MAILLE / WHY NOT PRODUCTIONS, COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

lush French countryside and scrubby desert. The Monastery of Our Lady of Atlas is also a community center for its Muslim neighbors, a place for medical care from the aged Brother Luc (played by the French film legend Michael Lonsdale) or advice from the intellectually inclined prior, Christian (Lambert Wilson).

Like the rest of their religious brothers, Luc and Christian are poster boys for personality types. Luc looks kindly and bearish, and is. Christian appears hawk-eyed, intellectual and slightly pinched; even his haircut shouts "French intellectual." The fretful Brother Christophe (Olivier Rabourdin) wears a worried, mournful look, even while tilting his watering can over the carpet of edible greens he cultivates; the bright-eyed, aged Brother Amédée (Jacques Herlin) is possessed of a constitutional twinkle; the haunted-looking Brother Paul (Jean-Marie Frin) has a past only hinted at, and his expression suggests that he, and perhaps others also, would rather not have his calling questioned. The allegiance the casting shows toward surface appearances is significant, given the central crisis of the film, which concerns not only life and death, but also identity and truth.

Who are the gods and who are the men? As healers, teachers and abstainers from most worldly pleasures, the Trappists are looked upon by their Muslim neighbors as occupiers of some lofty plane; perhaps the monks themselves have indulged similar thoughts while going about their daily business, tending the needs of their constituency, caring for one another and participating in their daily prayers, whose chanting can be heard intermittently throughout the movie. As he does with the scenes of monks chanting the psalms, the director imbues each aspect of the monastery's daily life with nobility, purpose and the suggestion of divine gravity.

But the sense of physical security that rises out of routine is quickly torn asunder, first by the slaughter of some immigrant workers at a nearby construction site, then by the Christmas Eve invasion of the monastery by fundamentalist militants, led by the ferocious Ali Fayattia (Farid Larbi). Fayattia, figuratively disarmed by Christian's steadfast refusal of aid—and his recitations from the Koran—decides to leave, trailing begrudging respect but none of the monks thinks he is gone for good. Their garden of sanctuary having become a target for terrorists, each brother begins, in a sense, sweating blood.

This is the heart of the film. Congregating around their kitchen table, the brothers—though not all—counter Christian's argument that they must stay put. "We didn't elect you to decide things on your own," they tell him. The group is rattled; some members want to flee. Christian's leadership is questioned, as is each individual conscience. The brothers have devoted themselves to a mission, aspiring to live in imitation of Christ, and the moment of truth has arrived: What does it mean if they leave? What will *they* mean, as men, if they leave? Each monk experiences a different level of fear, but all share the same crisis of mortality. Everyone dies, they know. The question is how well.

Beauvois's ability to crawl inside a real event, invent unknowable but plausible possibilities about it and then use the fiction to illuminate greater truths is nothing new, even if few others have used fact on behalf of such transcendent fiction. Oliver Stone tried it, many would say unsuccessfully, in "World Trade Center,"

which embellished the experiences of trapped rescue workers. "Das Boot," years ago, imagined the hothouse atmosphere of a German U-boat and the existential crises of its crew. The recent "127 Hours," about an imperiled young explorer, borrows from a real event to make larger statements. If most of these examples seem to be about men, they are. But there are other examples.

Although the filmmaking couldn't be more different, "Of Gods and Men" strongly evokes "Black Narcissus," a 1947 film by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, about conflicted nuns in a Himalayan convent. In that film, the crisis was about sensuality. In "Of Gods and Men" it is about survival. But both films are set within a community in which hardship and deprivation are personal choices made out of spiritual commitment and in which that commitment is intruded upon by a temporal world that can never be entirely shut out. The alternately disturbing and comforting conclusion is that communities may come and go, but the fate of the soul is a personal responsibility from which there is no escape.

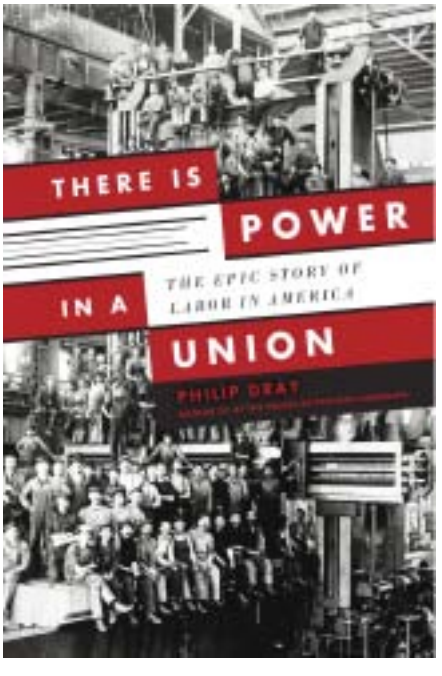
There may be viewers who are immune to the qualities found in "Of Gods and Men," who cannot share the sense of dread and uncertainty that affect its characters. They will probably, then, also be immune to the joy Beauvois bestows on certain scenes, such as one in which Brother Luc, in a gesture of defiant optimism, opens two bottles of wine and puts on a tape of "Swan Lake" (the inherent fatality of which is unremarked upon but poignant nonetheless). As the music plays, each man occupies the frame for a valedictory moment. Each of those memorable faces warms under the gaze of the camera; the blood rises to the surface of the skin, illuminating each with his own humanity.

It is cinema, of course, but vaguely miraculous just the same.

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

BOOKS | WILLIAM J. BYRON

GETTING ORGANIZED



THERE IS POWER IN A UNION

The Epic Story of Labor in America

By Philip Dray
Doubleday. 784p $35

This unusually interesting book delivers on the promise of its subtitle. It tells the truly epic story of labor in America from the early 19th-century textile workers in the nation's first industrial city, Lowell, Mass., to the November 1999 protests when the World Trade Organization met in Seattle. As Andy Stern, then president of the Service Workers International Union, observed amid the Seattle discontent, "Trade is global, capital is global, and labor too must become global." But, as the award-winning author and historian Philip Dray asks toward the end of this very long story, "How would one begin to write some sort of global Wagner Act, an international baseline of workers' rights, let alone enact and enforce it?"

Senator Robert F. Wagner is one of the names Dray lists on the last page of this book by way of rounding up the leading figures in the movement he chronicles so effectively. The list includes Eugene Debs, Mother Jones, Joseph Ettor, John Reed, Big Bill Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Carlo Tresca, Joe Hill, John L. Lewis, Jimmy Hoffa, George Meany and Walter Reuther.

The Molly Maguires and the Haymarket martyrs along with Triangle Shirtwaist and place names like Lynn and Lawrence in Massachusetts, Homestead in Pennsylvania, Pullman in Illinois, Trinidad in Colorado, the New York City waterfront and the farm fields of California also figure prominently in Dray's narrative.

Franklin D. Roosevelt (whom Saul Alinsky saw as "an aristocrat with an intellectual sympathy for labor") and his New Deal secretary of labor Frances Perkins (she thought the department should be called the "Department *for* Labor") are likewise integral to this history.

An investment of several hours a day for a week or more will reward the interested reader with the context needed to interpret past economic, social and cultural trends in the United States, as well as a useful range finder to view the future. Dray is gentle in posing the challenge. He is not optimistic about the state of organized labor. Nor is he optimistic about the future, although he is an unapologetic admirer of what organized labor has done to protect human dignity and promote justice in the American workplace.

Sobering statistics enliven the record Dray provides. He notes the toll of workplace suffering that "has always been something of a hidden detail of the American work experience." He cites the years 1880-1910, when as many as 10 thousand to 15 thousand American workers a year died in on-site accidents, not to mention the thousands more who were injured or sickened, mostly in mining and railroad work.

Readers will appreciate the author's clarifications of many familiar but not necessarily fully understood aspects in the labor narrative. For instance, in its original usage with reference to the garment industry, *sweatshop* "was not a reference to the temperature in the workplace (although in summer that may have been appropriate) but rather the management practice of 'sweating' labor." This meant assigning specific jobs on lots of garments to ever-smaller shops or units within the same factory. It also meant that manufacturing costs were "sweated" downward, to lower-level shop owners and floor supervisors. The workers themselves had to negotiate and renegotiate wages and production deadlines. This left many workers vulnerable and with little or no job security.

Similarly, the famous response of Samuel Gompers to the question "What does labor want?" was not a monosyllabic (and dollar-focused) *more*, as many of us have long believed. Dray provides a fuller statement first published in 1893: "What does labor want? It wants the earth and the fullness thereof.... Labor wants more schoolhouses and less jail cells; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures, and to make mankind more noble, womanhood more beautiful, and childhood more happy and bright."

Dray is fair but tough in assessing events associated with President Ronald Reagan's decision to fire 11,000 federal air traffic controllers in 1981 for failure to follow his order to return to work. This destroyed the union. In Dray's words, Reagan "turned his back on eight decades of labor progress, by whatever name it had ever aspired to be known, from industrial democracy to collective bargaining."

I would have been happy to see reference made to the Jesuit-run labor schools that sprang up on the East coast in the late 1930s and early '40s. They educated union members in the exercise of their newly acquired rights under the Wagner Act. Mention is made, however, of the film "On the Waterfront," in which Karl Malden portrays John "Pete" Corridan, S.J., who organized longshoremen against corruption on the New York and Jersey City docks.

Teachers' unions are also overlooked in Dray's account. To be fair, though, no single book can cover everything, and this one comes closer than any other I have read to offering a balanced and comprehensive coverage of a force for American progress that is now in danger of becoming a relic of our storied past.

WILLIAM J. BYRON, S.J., *is university professor of business and society at St. Joseph's University, Philadelphia, Pa. He is the author of* Next-Generation Leadership *(Univ. of Scranton Press).*

PIOTR FLORCZYK

THE WORLD IN ALL ITS RICHNESS

HERE

By Wislawa Szymborska. Trans. by Clare Cavanagh and Stanislaw Baranczak
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 96p $22

When the Nobel committee chose the Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska as the recipient of its literature prize in 1996, few in the English-speaking world had ever heard of her, even though American translations of her poetry began to reach the bookshelves early in the 1980s. Fortunately for everyone involved, Szymborska was quickly embraced by American readers, many of whom thought her to be not unlike the great Elizabeth Bishop: reticent in her writing of poems yet deeply humane and keen on rigorous examination of people, including herself, and our tangible and metaphysical surroundings.

Yet judging by the dust jacket that enfolds *Here*, the 87-year-old Szymborska, who appears with a gentle smile, eyes closed, while sitting at a table with a cup of coffee in front of her and holding a lit cigarette in her hand, should also be viewed as someone deeply engaged with the present moment, the proverbial here and now, where the momentary suspension of the world's tumult not only gives way to far-reaching reflections but also reminds us of the world's wonderfully perplexing richness.

Szymborska's poems belong in the realm of free verse, that great invention of the 20th century. Many if not most of her poems are built around lists or catalogues. It is as if the poet were holding up to the light the objects that make up her surroundings, rotating each one time and again. The outcome is often a mixture of doubt and astonishment, as in the opening title poem, in which the lines "I can't speak for

elsewhere,/ but here on Earth we've got a fair supply of everything" give way to musings on things culinary, familial and even intergalactic, among others. What makes the marriage profoundly compelling is the way Szymborska's poem opens onto the world, thus magnifying what most of us hold in our own existential crosshairs ("I know what you're thinking next./ Wars, wars, wars."). But the tone of the poem remains cool and precise, a rare occurrence in our increasingly fragmented and complicated world. The poem predictably ends in the speaker's disarming acceptance of the varied reality of human life, calling it a bargain; and the moment that played host to cool fact-checking remains where we found it—that is, in the here and now, where "the walls reveal no terrifying cracks/ through which nowhere might extinguish you."

The subtle predictability of Szymborska's method, both meticulous and carelessly offhanded, ultimately turns out to be less a handicap than an authentic reproduction of a mind and spirit hard at work. Much of that reinforces the truth that we know less than we think we know not only about ourselves but also about the world at large. Standing on the side of caution allows Szymborska to take up subjects on which most contemporary poets, many of whom seem to find pleasure in glib experiments tangled up in theoretical dismemberment of language and form, have long turned their backs. Take, for example, "Teenager," which opens with "Me—a teenager?" only to end with bewilderment at the continuity of the human experience and memory by way of a scarf left behind by the teen. A scarf "of genuine wool, in colored stripes/ crocheted for her/ by our mother," which like an heirloom the speaker still owns. While some may try to disqualify the poem as an example of the poet barely scratching the surface in her quest for gotcha moments, it is nonetheless impossible to deny that even when Szymborska talks about herself in a voice harnessed to her own singular vision, her conclusions, however fleeting they may be, are relevant to all.

It is hard to believe that no poet has been deemed worthy of the Nobel Prize in Literature since Szymborska—there is something profoundly engaging and long-lasting in the way her poems open up to wide vistas and invite us to do the same. Whether we think about memory as a source of both pain and delight or gaze with admiration at "clouds in progress, ongoing roads," we inhale fresh air and remain "stunned by the world." By tapping into the unpredictability of our experience, regardless of how rooted we might be in a particular place or memory that allows us to connect the dots between our past and future, Szymborska is able to remain above the brooding and the sentimental. Nothing escapes her, no matter how highbrow or lowbrow. This is why in "Metaphysics," the passing of time is punctuated by something as pedestrian as "having a side of fries."

Alas, time marches on. The process of living in the moment, yet expecting each moment to renew itself, is a gift many find too elusive these days. Just in case we are about to become unglued in the face of impermanence, Szymborska reminds us that "The next day/ promises to be sunny,/ although those still living/ should bring umbrellas." It is precisely her ability to live simultaneously in the present and yet be curious enough to explore what good or evil lurks around the corner that makes Szymborska a poet for today, tomorrow and for what is yet to come.

PIOTR FLORCZYK *is editor and translator of* Been and Gone: Poems of Julian Kornhauser *(Marick Press) and of the forthcoming* Building the Barricade and Other Poems *(Calypso Editions).*

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LETTERS

A New Welcome Mat

Paul Crowley's "Tomorrow's Theologians" (2/7) gives all Catholics hope. Though Father Crowley is a Jesuit teaching at a Jesuit institution, his message calls for a more effective Catholic education. As a child of the 1960s I am encouraged by the young, by respect for diversity and the benefits of crosscultural and cross-religious experience. This only strengthens the Catholic faith; this culture is not the culture of death. Without discounting the problems of modernity, Father Crowley says we should not fear it. The goal is not to divide the church but solidify it, not do away with the hierarchy but help it to focus on the real message of Jesus, who never turned away sinners. It is for welcoming the divorced and remarried, the homosexuals and the marginalized. Great article!

MICHAEL BARBERI
Carlsbad, Calif.

Catholics Might Still Kill the Bill

In response to "'Fixing' Health Care Reform" in Signs of the Times (2/7), I think we, as socially responsible Catholics, need to look at the local impact of the health care reform bill on its intended beneficiaries, the poor, marginalized and uninsured. Yes, there is an abortion component; and we all are, or should be, against abortion. Representative Dan Lipinski finds the mechanism in the bill to withhold federal funding of abortion "dangerously fragile." Others, like myself, find it adequate under the circumstances. (In a pluralistic society others with different views have a right

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to basic services.) The bill may not be perfect, but it is better than nothing. And with the strident opposition coming from some Catholic circles, Americans are likely to end up with nothing by way of universal care for many years to come.

TONY PODLECKI
Vancouver, B.C.

They Deserve to Die

Visigoths and Vandals no longer pillage and kill, but to imagine that violence is permanently a thing of the past is beyond naïve. Interpersonal, unspeakable violence does occur and can be magnified by the media. But it must be condemned in the strongest terms. Contrary to the stand of your editorial "Giving Back Lives" (2/7), a commonsense reading of Western history points to the importance of the death penalty. To allow a mass murderer to live beyond the weeks allocated to justice is immoral. America's freedom allows you to move around without reporting to local police, criticize the government, own your own gun, peaceably assemble and protest. In return you are expected to respect the rights of others. If you take another's life, you forfeit your own right to life. To those who oppose capital punishment, I say, grow up.

CHRIS MULCAHY
Fort Myers Beach, Fla.

Mistakes Kill

The editorial "Giving Back Lives" (2/7) neglects to emphasize that the church teaches that capital punishment is wrong. Pope John Paul II called it "cruel and unnecessary" and removed language from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* that could have been used to justify it. While society may have to kill a person under some circumstances, it does not have to kill someone who is captured and under the control of authorities. Traditional Catholics not only follow the teaching of the pope and bishops; they have the mature judgment to recognize that human institutions, including legal systems, are imperfect and may lead to decisions with unjust results.

JIM AXTELL
Bolingbrook, Ill.

What We'll Lose

I am absolutely sure that Americans would drop their jaws after reading the last paragraph of John J. DiIulio Jr.'s "The Value of Nonprofits" (2/7). Indeed, what would happen if Catholic institutions suddenly shut down? The contribution is so great that it is now taken for granted in social work, education and health care. Indeed, parochial schools complement public schools, both great equalizers in society. Unfortunately both were neglected, and now we wonder why we cannot be civil to one another.

NORMA NUNAG
Worcester, Mass.

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Why Worry?

EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A), FEB. 27, 2011

Readings: Is 49:14-15; Ps 62:2-9; 1 Cor 4:1-5; Mt 6:24-34

"Do not worry.... Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Mt 6:25, 33)

Shortly after Bobby McFerrin's hit song "Don't Worry, Be Happy" won the Grammy Award for Song of the Year in 1989, I was invited to Jamaica to give a workshop on the Gospel parables. Everywhere I went, the song was playing, and people were wearing T-shirts with the slogan, especially in the poorest barrios. I struggled to make sense of the irony: people living in grinding poverty with their smiling faces professing happiness.

The saying "Don't worry, be happy" is attributed to Meher Baba, an Indian mystic and spiritual master (1894–1969), but it could just as well be derived from Jesus' words in today's Gospel. Three times Jesus insists that disciples not worry, whether about life, food or drink, the body or clothing; and he urges reliance on divine providence.

How this instruction is heard and taken to heart depends on one's socioeconomic position. To those who have all they need to eat, drink, wear and sustain their bodily health, Jesus gives a warning not to center their efforts on accumulating more. Coupled with the introductory verses about serving God and not mammon, the Gospel admonishes those who have enough of life's necessities not to give in to greedy desires that continue to escalate.

But what about those who are struggling just to survive, who truly worry about how they will feed their families? What good is it to voice assurances that God will provide? It would be especially pernicious if people mired in poverty hear "O you of little faith" (v. 30) as an accusation that their neediness flows from their lack of trust in God.

The key can be found in verse 33, in which Jesus instructs his disciples, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides." When the focus of one's desires is on the right relations that characterize the reign of God, then those who have enough of life's necessities are not fixated on a quest for more. Rather, they cooperate with God in providing for those in need. Those who are poor can let go their worries about survival, and those better off can be released from anxiety that derives from enslavement to possessions. These are the kinds of worries that Jesus invites disciples to let go. Worry on the part of those who are comfortable about others who are struggling can be a good and productive anxiety if it proves to be a catalyst to rectify unjust distribution of goods.

The Gospel does not advocate that disciples should be passive in the face of genuine need, simply tossing off a happy-go-lucky assurance that God will provide. It is more akin to Meher Baba's fuller saying: "Do your best, then don't worry; be happy in My love. I will help you."

The help God provides is like that of a mother who could never forget her infant, as the first reading asserts. Likewise, the Gospel speaks of God making motherly provision by feeding and clothing not only her human children but wild flowers and birds and grasses of the field. Since God is both fatherly provider (v. 32), who sows and reaps, and motherly caregiver, who feeds and clothes, all that has come forth from the divine womb is tenderly cared for before their needs are even voiced. As children of the Creator, we too, tend and nurture all life, taking every measure possible to bring more fully to birth God's kingdom and divine righteousness, letting go of worry and entrusting ourselves to the One who wills true happiness for all.

BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Talk to God about your worries. What response do you hear in prayer?
- How does your care for the fragile creatures of earth reflect God's tenderness for the children of God's womb?
- What is the meaning of "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"?

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.*

Lent 2011

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Most Rev. Gerald Wilkerson
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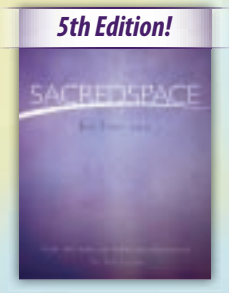

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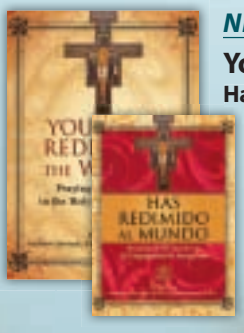

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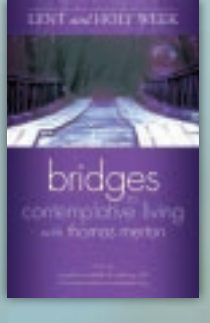

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Watch for Our

40 Days of Soup

Lenten Event

(Recipe from *Open Our Hearts.*)

Tomato Vegetable Soup

Serves 4-6

INGREDIENTS

2 tablespoons olive oil or olive oil cooking spray
1 large sweet onion, chopped
4 stalks of celery with leaves (cut into small pieces)
1 small package shredded carrots
2 large cans chicken or vegetable stock
1, 8-ounce can chopped tomatoes
1 package sliced mushrooms
1 teaspoon celery salt
1 tablespoon basil
4 twists of ground black pepper
1 tablespoon dried parsley flakes (or 1 cup fresh chopped)
1 teaspoon Kosher salt (to taste)
Shredded rotisserie chicken (optional)

PREPARATION

In a large soup pot, heat olive oil or spray; sauté onion slowly until clear. Add celery and shredded carrots and sauté until tender. Add stock, tomatoes, mushrooms, and spices. Taste before adding salt. Simmer on low for about 20 minutes until hot. You can add one cup of couscous (whole wheat or semolina) right into the soup. Or cook rice or small pasta (e.g., orzo) separately and add later. Garnish with Pecorino Romano or shredded cheddar or other cheese of your choice.

Find featured recipes and tips to inspire your Lenten season.

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