America

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The World Nursing Crisis

GARY L. CHAMBERLAIN

St. Teresa's mysticism today

ALLEN HUBBARD JR.

OF MANY THINGS

Am I the only one bothered by the curt self-introductions that seem to have become the fashion among the young? "Hello, I'm George," a perfect stranger will say as he takes a seat next to me at a soiree or other event. That's it. As he sips his coffee or wine, I am left to wonder, "Oh, that's nice, but who are you?"

When I turn to him quizzically, the game of "20 Questions" begins. What brings you here? Where are you from? Where do you work? What are your connections with anyone else in the room? With me, for instance?

I am unprepared for this, since I am a recent transplant from the Pacific, where I have spent over 40 years—most of my adult life. The islands on which I served—Chuuk and Pohnpei, which appear on the globe as two microdots, if they appear at all—are neighborly places that exude all the personal warmth and charm usually associated with the South Seas. (Think of Michener or Maugham and you get the idea.) People in the islands take social obligations—including meeting and greeting strangers—very seriously. That is why whenever I suffered through an abbreviated introduction by a young American back in the Pacific, I would turn to the islanders in the room and watch with amusement as their faces fell. While the visitor stood there with a sense of duty done, my island friends would desperately search for social cues that might allow them to connect with their new guest.

Islanders, even more than the rest of us, need a starting point to begin to establish the link between this stranger and themselves. They were all but begging him to help them plot him on their social map. Accept me for who I am, the American seemed to be insisting, as he offered his first name and stood pat.

Newcomers as much as anyone else have to be located on the social map somehow if islanders are to have any meaningful contact with them. Micronesians, like others, try to construct a social chain that links them to the person who just presented himself or herself in the office or on the phone. Those six degrrees of relationship that supposedly connect an individual to just about anyone else in the world are essential in a society that is highly dependent on personal relationships.

I remember walking into a village on a distant island that I had never before visited and encountering a young man whom I had never met. When I told him that I was a Catholic priest working on Pohnpei, he blinked and his face remained unchanged. Only when I mentioned that I had once taught at Xavier High School did the networking begin, as we discovered that I had taught his wife's father during my early years at the school. Once that link was made, I found myself on the social map, and he began retelling the horror stories, so often repeated by his in-laws, of the impossible demands I would make on students during the daily physical education class and how I would chase students around the field, driving them on whenever they fell behind in their laps. The bond between us was established then and there. After the laughter came an hour or two of satisfying talk on other things.

Pacific Islanders or Americans, we all require an identity if we are to connect. A face and a first name are just not enough. So give us something to work with, George. Let us go about the business of trying to figure out common ties: six links is all we need before we have you in our sights. Do us the courtesy of at least making an effort to help us pin you on our social map. The pin won't hurt and the position on our map won't confine you in any way. An introduction, after all, is precisely that—just a beginning. Who knows, good conversation and even friendship may follow.

FRANCIS X. HEZEL, S.J.

America

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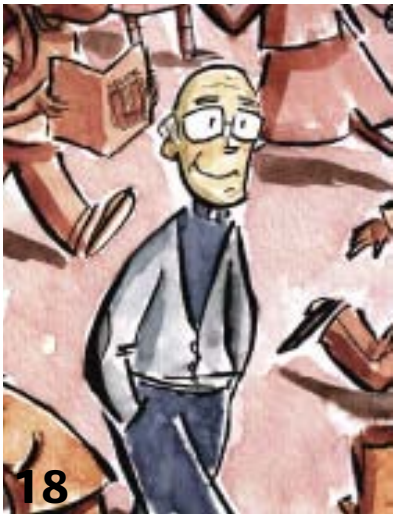

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ON THE WEB

Francis X. Hezel, S.J., right, talks about his ministry in Micronesia on our podcast. Plus, Clayton Sinyai reviews two documentaries on the **Triangle Shirtwaist factory** fire. All at americamagazine.org.

Blame Enough

The blame and shame for the continued existence of our prison in Guantánamo Bay must be widely shared.

President Obama vowed to shut it down because the prison's history of abuse was perceived as violating basic American principles. Postponing that closing to "someday" is a disappointment for human rights activists.

But a commander cannot lead without troops. According to a Gallup poll, 65 percent oppose shutting the prison. Congress blocked a proposal to transfer detainees to several prisons on the U.S. mainland. Even though no one escapes from the so-called Supermax facility, public fear of terrorism is so irrational that the mere thought of terrorists anywhere in the country, even in prison, petrifies people. The proposal to try Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, a planner of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, in a New York City civilian courtroom a stone's throw from the crime site panicked otherwise tough Manhattan politicos and their constituents. Meanwhile, although the administration has found new homes for 38 detainees in 16 countries—including Bermuda, Bulgaria, Palau and Portugal—our "friends" in France, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and elsewhere balk. They say, Let America take some first.

Two things are going forward. Military trials will resume, after a two-year suspension, for 80 of the 172 remaining prisoners. Some might gain release. But the 47 prisoners who cannot be tried because evidence is classified information or was gained by torture are subject, under new guidelines, to indefinite preventive detention without trial. The stain remains.

Philadelphia's Shame

The story is incomprehensible, particularly so many years after the U.S. bishops' meeting in Dallas in 2002, during which the "zero tolerance" policy for sexually abusive priests was initiated. After a grand jury indicted three priests in Philadelphia last month and found "substantial evidence of abuse" in the cases of 37 more, Cardinal Justin Rigali, the diocese's archbishop, stated there were no priests in active ministry with "established" allegations against them. A few days later he removed three priests from ministry; three weeks after that, he suspended 21 more. Philadelphians were further outraged by the details: One priest still in ministry had been flagged earlier by the pastor of the parish, the parish school principal and the director of religious education.

How could this happen nine years after Dallas? How can priests facing credible accusations still be in active ministry almost a decade after the abuse crisis broke in Boston? After Pope John Paul II said there was "no place" in the priesthood for abusers, after agonizing testimony from victims, after millions of dollars of legal settlements and countless lawsuits, after the resignation of Bernard Cardinal Law of Boston, after the founding of the Office of Child and Youth Protection at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, after "safe environment" programs were instituted in every diocese and after Pope Benedict XVI met personally with abuse victims during his visit to this country in 2008—in short, after years of agony?

The disheartening news from Philadelphia shows that the church still has not fully faced the scourge of clerical sexual abuse, that victims and their families must still speak out, that lawsuits still seem insufficient to wake up some church officials—and that resignations are in order.

No More Death Penalty

Governor Pat Quinn of Illinois may not have deliberately picked Ash Wednesday as the day to sign into law a bill that abolishes the death penalty in his state, but the state's bishops' conference liked his timing: "As we begin the Lenten season on this Ash Wednesday, and we reflect on the crucifixion of Jesus and the mystery of his death and resurrection," the Illinois bishops said in a prepared statement, "there is no better time for this landmark law to be approved. The end of the use of the death penalty advances the development of a culture of life in our state."

Illinois thus becomes the fourth state since 2004, after New York, New Jersey and New Mexico, to dispose of the death penalty. And none too soon. Plagued by revelations of prosecutorial and police misconduct, including confessions in capital cases extracted under torture, Illinois has had an especially poor record on capital punishment. Since 1977 the state has had to exonerate 20 death row inmates. "That is a record that should trouble us all," Governor Quinn said. "To say that this is unacceptable does not even begin to express the profound regret and shame we, as a society, must bear for these failures of justice."

Unfortunately Illinois's performance cannot be described as an anomaly. In recent years it has become increasingly clear that injustice accompanies the process in virtually every state that still accepts capital punishment. Governor Quinn approved Illinois's abolition after concluding that the system was "inherently flawed...that it is impossible to devise a system that is consistent, that is free of discrimination on the basis of race, geography or economic circumstance, and that always gets it right."

The Lessons of Libya

The world had little time to celebrate the triumph of Cairo before it was faced with the chaos of Tripoli. The stunning success of Egypt's protest movement gave hope to all those who believe in the transformative power of nonviolence. The civil war in Libya is a bracing reminder that violence remains the drug of choice for the world's dictators. That the oppressed and disorganized people of Libya responded in kind should come as little surprise.

So the international community again faces a conundrum. Should it intervene to prevent a ruthless leader from killing his own people? Or are economic and political sanctions enough? The course of action in Libya is clouded by the psychosis of its leader. To all the world, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi is a madman bent on clinging to power by whatever means necessary. Yet this is the same man who in 2003 renounced his nuclear ambitions in a shrewd bid to curry favor with the West. He may not be as mad as he appears.

These are familiar questions, of course. Whether the leader in question is Slobodan Milosevic or Saddam Hussein, the international community is well acquainted with the cunning of despots. Unfortunately, the proper course of action in Libya is just as unclear as it was in the Balkans or in Baghdad. In theory, experience should serve as preparation for such confrontation, but it has not done so. The varieties of evil, sadly, are infinite, and once again the United States and its allies face a multitude of uncertainties.

Questions persist even though military options are limited. As of this writing, Qaddafi's forces are advancing on the last rebel strongholds. Meanwile, the United Nations is considering a resolution calling for a no-flight zone and perhaps more aggressive steps. Wisely, the Obama administration has indicated it will not act without multilateral support. But will it endorse military action without the imprimatur of the United Nations? The White House is wary of engaging in another conflict in the Middle East, even at arm's length. It is also concerned that there is no obvious successor to Qaddafi among the various rebel groups. That there is no national institution, like the military in Egypt, to steer the ship of state after the revolution is also a factor.

The issue of succession is crucial. In the just war tradition, the long-term consequences of military action must be taken into account under the rubric "probability of success." Of course, the ultimate goal of any just war is the protection of innocents, and here the tradition shares common ground with a newer set of diplomatic principles called the responsibility to protect. Endorsed by 105 nations at the 2005 U.N. World Summit, this represents a new norm of international security, and Libya surely will serve as a case study in its effectiveness. Clearly, Qaddafi has violated the first principle: that a state has an obligation to protect its people. The second calls on the international community to help states meet this obligation through "confidential or public suasion, education, training and/or assistance." Unfortunately, the events in Libya have moved too quickly for the United States and its allies to explore this option.

The international community is now wrestling with the final element of the norm: it has an obligation to mount a "timely and decisive response." Unfortunately, the window for a timely response may have passed. And in some quarters, questions still remain about the need for a military solution. The purpose of the responsibility-to-protect norm is to "prevent and stop genocides, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity." Proponents of intervention argue that the Qaddafi regime has perpetrated "crimes against humanity." Members of the Obama administration, meanwhile, have suggested that military action will not be considered unless Libya threatens to become another Bosnia or Rwanda.

The question of how much death is too much death is a vexing one to ponder. Yet that is the moral quandary the United States now faces. Mired in Afghanistan and still deeply tied to Iraq, the United States is right to exercise caution when considering military action. At this moment, with momentum in Libya shifting in Qaddafi's favor, the calculations grow even more complex. Whether the international community succeeds in imposing a no-flight zone or not, the lessons of Libya are already starting to surface. As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said recently, the days of large ground wars are coming to an end. At a time of smaller but persistent conflicts around the world, the U.S. military must be leaner and more nimble. Together with the United Nations, the United States should encourage nations to fulfill their responsibility to protect, and in cases where nations fail in that responsibility, the international community should respond with speed and precision. Perhaps out of the ashes of Libya a new international regime can emerge, truly dedicated to quelling conflict and restoring peace.

JAPAN

Church Offers Hope Amid Tsunami Devastation

Japanese church officials are setting up an emergency center to coordinate humanitarian aid operations in Sendai, the area most devastated by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami. The center will be managed by Caritas Japan and will draw on the resources of numerous Catholic volunteers who have come forward in the wake of the disaster. Japan's bishops decided to establish the center and initiate other relief efforts under the supervision of Caritas at an emergency meeting in Sendai on March 16.

Describing the scene in Sendai after the earthquake and tsunami, the Rev. Daisuke Narui, executive director of Caritas Japan, said: "The panorama of destruction is striking.... Now we'll have to roll up our shirtsleeves. People are expecting our help."

"Today the dominant feeling is fear," Father Narui said. "The biggest concern is the nuclear power plant in Fukushima. It is a ghost from Japanese history coming back to haunt us. But it must be said that the people are not indulging in panic; instead, they are reacting with poise and dignity."

After the magnitude 9 earthquake, cooling procedures were fatally interrupted, and reactors at Fukushima were damaged by a number of explosions. Japanese nuclear engineers were working with increasing desperation to prevent a meltdown. Thousands have been evacuated from communities near the reactors. Father Narui said, "In the worst-affected areas, the main problem is the lack of food and fuel. As there is no fuel, people cannot move. And they are left feeling powerless in the face of this tragedy."

Bishop Martin Tetsuo Hiraga of Sendai said that residents, cut off without electricity and with phone service only partially restored, were unaware of the worsening situation at the Fukushima plant. "You living in other countries have a much better idea of the tragedy," the bishop added.

"We are terrified," the bishop said. "We only have the government announcements; we have no other source of information. We don't even know what has happened to our parishes in the towns and villages along the coast. We have no way of contacting them. I can only hope that the people of my diocese can stand together and be strong enough to overcome this disaster." Japanese officials estimate about 10,000 people have perished.

Bishop Hiraga said: "We Catholics in the Diocese of Sendai are a few more than 10,000, a little flock. However, we continue to pray for the victims, and we will do everything possible to bring relief, to testify, at this time of suffering, to the message of Christ's love." Bishop Hiraga said the catastrophic events after the March 11 earthquake have left Japanese citizens "exhausted and disoriented." He said that for this reason, "hope is exactly the gift Christians can make to the country at this time of suffering."

As the magnitude of the disaster in Japan unfolded, international aid organizations stepped up efforts to respond. Bishop Isao Kikuchi of Niigata, president of Caritas Japan, said: "We have received so many e-mails from all continents, filled with words of compassion and prayer. We are very grateful for this solidarity. We believe that aid activity is needed, but prayer is also important in such a situation."

EGYPT

Copts Confront New Reality

The end of the 30-year reign of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt has led to an outpouring of new hope for the future of a democratic Egypt even as it has raised new uncertainties about the fate of the nation's Christian minority. Coptic leaders

A man cries next to his destroyed house in Onagawa, Japan, March 17. His mother is buried in the rubble. Officials estimate at least 10,000 people were killed and more than 400,000 made homeless by the March 11 earthquake-tsunami.

were initially reluctant to support the spontaneous people-power movement against Mubarak. Many of their parishioners, however, were eager to join Muslims in Cairo's Tahrir Square in the demonstrations that led to Mubarak's dramatic ouster. Even as the Mubarak regime began its death spiral, the church's head in Egypt, Pope Shenouda III, offered his support to the regime in an interview with state television, apparently deciding Egypt's Coptic community had more to fear from a resurgent Muslim Brotherhood than a continuing Mubarak dynasty.

During the uprising, there were many instances of Christian and Muslim cooperation, but after Mubarak resigned on Feb. 11, some of the worst fears about the potential for sectarian tension in his absence were realized. A number of clashes erupted between Copts and Muslims, and a Coptic priest was found brutally slain in his home. On March 12 the Shahedin Church in Helwan Province was burned, the final act in a communal feud that had its origins in a dispute over a romantic relationship between a Coptic man and a Muslim woman. After the church arson, "some of the Muslim mobs in the area took the land and put [up] a sign that it's now a mosque," said Michael Meunier, president of the U.S. Copts Association. When Copts demonstrated for greater security in response, stone-throwing between angry Muslims and demonstrators began and security forces intervened. In the resulting chaos, 13 people were killed, including both Muslims and Christians.

Other demonstrations began outside government media offices in Cairo by Copts demanding the rebuilding of the church and an end to what they called government persecution and discrimination. Those demonstrations were voluntarily suspended by Copts after negotiations with government officials, but violence still broke out as Egyptian military personnel swept through the protesters' camp before they could depart. Many Copts were injured seriously.

Despite the turmoil, there are signs that Egypt's new leaders recognize that stronger efforts are required to protect communal harmony as the nation tries to regain its footing. Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyib, the grand imam of Al Azhar University in Cairo, issued a statement on condemning the attack on the church as "a distortion of Islam" and calling on Muslim residents to help rebuild the church and to refrain from sectarian violence. Egypt's new prime minister, Essam Sharaf, met with the protesting Christians in Cairo and assured them he would speak to the military council about taking back the land and rebuilding the church.

Meunier said, "That's the first time a seated prime minister has addressed any protesters in Egypt." Meunier added that the prime minister appeared to be sincerely trying to address the problems of Egypt's minority Copts, but "he's not fully authorized. It's still the military council that holds all the cards." Soon after the prime minister's outreach, Egypt's military in fact agreed to assume responsibility for restoring the church.

The Rev. Nabil Fayez Antoun, the national director for the Pontifical Mission Societies, assessed the "tense" conditions in Egypt. He said the "youth revolution" released potent forces long suppressed in Egyptian society. "[W]e are undergoing a very confusing phase which is difficult to navigate. However, we hope that reason will prevail over violence." Father Nabil added, however, that with all the change being pressed upon Egypt, perhaps some room to breathe could also open up for Christians.

A Muslim holding a Koran and a Coptic Christian holding a cross are carried by demonstrators in Tahrir Square in Cairo on Feb. 6.

Maronite Catholics Elect New Patriarch

Church bells rang, horns blasted and firecrackers echoed throughout Lebanon as it was announced on March 15 that Bishop Bechara Rai of Jbeil, Lebanon, had been elected the new patriarch of the Maronite Catholic Church. The Rev. Joseph Mouawad, vicar general of Jbeil, predicted that Patriarch Rai would begin a pastoral renewal of the church. "I think his first mission will be to confirm us in our faith here in Lebanon, and, as head of the church, he will try to unite Christians, the different parties, and to consolidate the communion among the Maronites," Father Mouawad said. "He has a deep spirituality and he is very sociable and open to the others, and he has great courage. He says the truth even if someone doesn't want to listen to it," Father Mouawad said. "I think on a national level in Lebanon, he will work to conserve this country to be a country of conviviality of all religions—between Christian and Muslims."

Cloud Over Efforts To End Abuse

A recent grand jury report alleging past sexual abuse by members of the clergy and other church personnel in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia "puts a cloud over everything" the church is doing to prevent abuse, said Teresa Kettelkamp, executive director of the U.S. bishops' Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection. The archdiocese placed 21 priests on administrative leave on March 7 in its ongoing response to the grand jury inquiry. What needs to be examined, said Kettelkamp, is the extent to which dioceses are following the "spirit and the letter" of the "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" adopted by the U.S. bishops in 2002 at their Dallas meeting. As the Philadelphia cases of alleged abuse are re-examined, Kettelkamp said it should become clear if unreported cases of abuse were the result of human failure or a weakness in the process itself.

Flight From Abyei

Violence in the contested Abyei region of Sudan has displaced thousands of families and threatens to derail talks leading to the birth of Africa's newest country in July. Satellite images show troops from both north and south digging in around Abyei, a contested region where at least 149 people were killed in fighting that began in late February. Aid groups estimate some 45,000 people have fled the region. "The few people still in Abyei are gathering their property and preparing to leave as well," said the Rev. Peter Suleiman, pastor of Our Lady of the Annunciation Parish in Abyei. The violence stems from a conflict between the nomadic Misseriya, a Khartoum-backed tribe that takes its cattle to Abyei during the dry season, and its permanent residents, mostly members of the Dinka Ngok tribe, who support the southern Sudan government in Juba. Eric Reeves, a Sudan expert at Smith College in Northampton, Mass., fears that an attempt by the Khartoum government to seize Abyei is imminent. He said tanks, artillery and soldiers are moving into position for an attack that could come anytime.

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

Ricard in Nigeria, September 2010

Pope Benedict XVI has accepted the resignation of **Bishop John H. Ricard, S.S.J.**, 71, of the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee, Fla., because of health concerns. ✦ Among 4,700 people who will be received into the Catholic Church this year in the United Kingdom are **900 former Anglicans**, including 61 former Anglican clergymen. ✦ Nahdlatul Ulama, an Indonesian Muslim organization, expressed concern on March 14 about the level of **intolerance toward Christians** shown by extremists, citing authorities in Bogor, West Java, who were preventing Christians from taking possession of a church they had constructed. ✦ Catholic Relief Services (www.crs.org) and Caritas Internationalis (www.caritas.org) are **accepting donations** to support their response to March 11's earthquake and tsunamis in Japan. ✦ At a penitential service on March 11 in Philadelphia's Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, **Cardinal Justin Rigali** acknowledged "the grave offense to God and the great harm to innocent victims of the evil of sexual abuse of minors, especially by members of the clergy." ✦ The Vatican established a Facebook page for **Pope John Paul II** at www.facebook.com/vatican.johnpaul2.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE

The Constitution, by Heart

Our first-grader recently came home excited to enter the school talent show. She surprised us by announcing, "I am going to sing the Preamble of the Constitution." Against the percussive sounds of her siblings playing with blocks and the back beat of family meal preparation, she practices her a capella Schoolhouse Rock melody. "We the people, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

It's been a good soundtrack for the Jasmine Revolution and the U.S. budget battles. "We the People" of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and neighbors are seeking a "more perfect union" than provided by their corrupt kleptocrats. It is a return to their post-colonial hopes for a more just social order, hopes stolen decades ago by autocrats, who obstruct justice, tranquility, welfare, liberty and concerns for posterity. The outcomes of their struggles are uncertain, as these "Jurassic Park" leaders rage against their own extinction. But the glaring disparities in age and wage, greed and need, opportunities and dignity between the autocrats and the governed will continue to generate resistance. And the revolution's tipping point of high food prices will continue (thanks to global climate change, rising demand and vulnerable supply).

In a too-rare moment of bipartisan agreement, voices across the U.S. political spectrum urge support for democracy abroad, while ironically doing much to damage democracy at home. Our new Congress made quite a show of starting the session by reading the Constitution aloud. But I wonder if they listened to the words. Forming "a more perfect union" is not an optional commitment. Placed first among government's core purposes, it is democracy's key challenge. It is not easy and not for the faint of heart. Like our faith's challenge to seek "communion," it requires us to seek greater union among people with whom we fervently disagree, people who do not share our viewpoint, class, demographic or ethnic group.

Forming 'a more perfect union' is not an optional commitment.

The budget battles reveal a lack of commitment to union, even as a goal. Disunion is seen as a "badge of honor;" seeking union and domestic tranquility are decried as selling out. Justice and promotion of the general welfare are spurned as "Nanny-state socialism." Securing the blessings of liberty is touted as incompatible with a distorted view of the "requirements" of defense. Posterity is given short shrift by all. Faux fiscal conservatives rightly decry excessive budget deficits while hypocritically leaving military spending, the largest part of the discretionary budget, untamed.

The United States spends more on "defense" than the rest of the world combined. No politician dares suggest a return to anything near spending levels prior to Sept. 11, 2001 ("merely" $277 billion). This spending benefits politicians of both parties and military contractors, while servicemen and servicewomen who serve in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan struggle for their veterans' benefits and food to the poor is cut. This is entrenched corporate welfare, not promotion of the general welfare. As Bishop Howard J. Hubbard of Albany said, "It is morally unacceptable to balance the budget on the backs of the poor."

This sort of wealth-shifting, while neglecting the economic pain of the unemployed and working classes, is creating revolutions abroad. Our leaders decry extremist ideologues abroad while sanctioning them at home. We denounce the murder of the moderate Pakastani minister Shahbaz Bhatti while easily evading any troubling societal responsibilities for the Arizona murders, which politicians of both parties conveniently dismiss as merely the crime of an isolated madman. How long did the vaunted post-Arizona enhanced civility last in these budget wars? We urge moderation abroad, while we fail to practice it at home. Cheering democracy on from a distance is easy. Building it with political opponents at home is hard.

Upon hearing our daughter singing the preamble, a neighborhood kid said, "Cool. Do you actually know what all those words mean?"

"I'm learning," she replied. That is something we all need to do.

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Around 12,000 newly qualified nurses take their oaths in Manila, March 17, 2008. Thousands of Filipino health care workers, including doctors, leave the Philippines every year for better-paying jobs overseas, which causes a shortage of well-qualified staff at home.

PHOTO: REUTERS/ROMEO RANOCO

THE ETHICS OF RECRUITING FOREIGN HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Nursing Shift

BY GARY L. CHAMBERLAIN

During a recent hospital stay, I was impressed by the care, dedication and efficiency of the nurses and nursing assistants. Yet I could hardly fail to notice the heavy demands made upon them, physically and emotionally. Many work 10- or 12-hour shifts, maintain computerized records on nearly every move their patients make and still manage to smile and be courteous. Several of my nurses and assistants were from outside the United States. They worked just as tirelessly as the others; I wondered whether they received the same pay and benefits. At times, some talked about the demands of the job and their physical fatigue.

The largest nursing strike in U.S. history took place last June, as more than 12,000 registered nurses in Minnesota mounted a protest to pressure hospitals to cap the number of patients per nurse. The imposition of such caps would benefit patients as well as nurses. A study by the University of Pennsylvania revealed that smaller workloads lower the risk of death to patients during surgery.

The United States is suffering a severe and troublesome nursing shortage. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than one million new and replacement nurses will be needed by 2016. As baby boomers age, they are requiring more care. The need for trained nurses is rising even as the supply is diminishing, and the nurses themselves are aging. In a recent survey 35 percent of nurses between the ages of 45 and 60 said they plan to retire, switch to a less demanding role or work as a travel nurse in the next few years. Surprisingly, nurses under the age of 30 show the same inclinations: Fully one-third said, even before they grad-

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uated, that they would leave nursing within a year of graduation. The realities of the work itself include dissatisfaction, burnout, turnover and physical and emotional stress.

Where can the nation obtain qualified nurses? From abroad, of course. To paraphrase Pete Seeger's popular ballad from the 1960s: "Where have all the nurses gone? To the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, every one." Currently, about 5 percent of all nurses in the United States are foreign-educated. In 2003 foreign-educated nurses made up 14 percent of all newly licensed nurses; the proportion continues to rise. Most of the recruiting has been undertaken by health care agencies using private organizations and government agencies. More recently private, for-profit agencies have entered the market with little regulation nationally or internationally. These agencies, many of which are run by private individuals, often operate on behalf of developed countries. The recruitment process raises a host of ethical questions: Is such recruitment simply the operation of the free market in a globalized economy? If so, are nurses now seen as commodities?

The continued globalization of nurses could spell long-term disaster for developing countries while failing to solve the long-term problem of host countries.

Certainly the push-and-pull factors affecting the decisions of nurses to emigrate are powerful. Push factors include low pay, poor working conditions, limited career and educational opportunities, economic uncertainty and dangerous situations like those involving H.I.V./AIDS and war.

Nursing opportunities in the United States, the United Kingdom and elsewhere offer nurses better salaries and more benefits than they can obtain in their own poorer countries. These nurses also learn new methods of nursing, skills, remedies and techniques. Most can send part of their salaries home in the form of remittances to relatives, who benefit from the income and spend it in their local economy. At the same time, recruitment of nurses from the developing world leads to a brain and resource drain, not just of nurses in general but of those who are most highly qualified. The export of nurses means fewer are available for the home country, a decline in the quality of its patient care and a weakening of its health system.

The Philippine Experience

The Philippines serves as something of a case study, demonstrating these factors at play. More than 150,000 nurses from the Philippines are working internationally (85 percent of all their nurses currently employed). Yet the Philippines has a nursing shortage of its own—with some 30,000 unfilled positions. This affects poor and rural communities the most. Such unregulated recruitment resembles a new form of poaching, by which a poor nation's scarce resources are drawn away for the benefit of a developed country.

In the countries that import foreign nurses, nursing associations have raised objections. First, they say, the practice merely rotates nurses; it does not actually increase the number of nurses worldwide, which is required to solve global shortages. Second, as nurses from countries with very traditional cultures and fixed gender roles enter the United States or other nursing systems, they indirectly undermine the ability of local nurses to establish more positive and independent roles in relation to doctors, administrators and others in the medical establishment.

A further consideration concerns the issue of H.I.V./AIDS. Many countries exporting nurses, like South Africa, have large populations with H.I.V./AIDS. The resulting infections and deaths put a tremendous strain on the nurses who stay while others leave. At the same time, nurses in those countries experience the "push" factor to earn more in order to support those at home who are ill and cannot work or provide for themselves. Do the benefits to individual nurses imported to developed countries outweigh the losses of those same educated nurses to their own countries, where nursing shortages are keen?

Catholic Social Teaching

Foreign nurses may face discrimination in the workplace—subtle prejudices that affect promotion, shift rotation and support. After the right to a just wage, perhaps no other right is as essential to protecting the workers' basic dignity as is the right to organize and build unions. In his encyclical "On Human Work" (1981), Pope John Paul II wrote: "The experience of history teaches that organizations of this type [unions] are...a mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice, for the just rights of working people in accordance with their individual professions." But do foreign workers organize or join existing unions? Can they?

As globalization affects the nursing profession, the principles of the common good and the church's preferential option for the poor raise other questions: Is the recruitment of foreign nurses sustainable? Does it contribute to the well-

being of the nurses and also help promote the health of developing countries? Do the current arrangements guiding international recruitment of nurses accentuate existing poverty gaps by straining resources in the exporting country, leaving more people, usually the poorest and most marginalized, without health care?

The code of the International Council of Nurses reflects several of the major principles of Catholic social teaching. Many code provisions, for example, are based on the principle of human dignity. The guidelines address concern for fair wages, healthy working conditions, a balance of interests around the common good, protections for poor nations with a shortage of nurses, the right to join nursing associations and freedom from discrimination. Of special note is the I.C.N.'s concern that while nurses have a right to migrate, international migration may have adverse effects on the "health care quality in countries seriously depleted of their nursing workforce." The I.C.N. strongly condemns recruiting by countries that have not dealt with the basic problems that cause their own nurses to leave the profession.

Three possible approaches could be taken in developing guidelines for the international recruitment of nurses. The first relies on a cost/benefit model and adopts the perspective of free market capitalism. This approach considers the situation as an open market in which nurses, as free agents, look for the best wages, the best setting in which to develop their skills and increasing economic and political security.

The second approach takes a highly critical view of the current arrangements, calling continued reliance on market forces unsustainable and unjust, an irresponsible drain upon the scarce resources of developing countries. In this structural view, adopted by liberation groups and human rights workers, the globalization of nurses, primarily women, is part of a pattern of trafficking, a new colonialism of people as "resources." The recruitment of foreign nurses should proceed only under heavy international regulation. The goal would be to address the dysfunctional health care systems in host/importing countries, while sustaining health care systems in developing countries.

The third approach, which follows the themes of Catholic social teaching and the code of the I.C.N., stresses the protection of human rights and the improvement of working conditions through cooperation among national and international groups and nongovernmental organizations. Initially, there is a call to the host countries to compensate developing countries formally for the loss of their scarce resources. Then, international regulation and supervision must ensure both that host countries revive their nursing recruitment programs at home and that developing countries are not left with too few nurses to serve their own people.

A 2003 statement of the American Federation of Teachers health care program refers to "a delicate balance" among the needs of host countries and the strains and losses to the health systems of the exporting countries. The difficult circumstances faced by many developing countries—such as H.I.V./AIDS pandemics, poor nutrition, high rates of communicable diseases, along with inadequate health services and the loss of nurses to fill the shortages in the developed world—indeed raise critical ethical questions of justice.

Without such remedies as compensation and international regulation, the continued globalization of nurses will result in benefits for some nurses and a short-term solution to shortages in host countries; but it could also spell long-term disaster for developing countries while failing to solve the long-term problem of host countries. National regulations for managing international nurse recruitment have been introduced in some countries, but they are difficult to enforce. The nurse-recruitment process must undergo some form of international regulation. The crisis in the United States and in the international recruitment of nurses calls for immediate international regulation and oversight. Meanwhile, the developed countries should redouble their efforts to train nurses of their own. A

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A Recurring Vision

The present-day significance of St. Teresa's mysticism

BY ALLEN HUBBARD JR.

As a biology major with little experience with religious texts, I first came to the writings of St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-82) through the required reading list of an undergraduate religious studies course. Reading St. Teresa opened up a new genre of Christian literature for me, and it helped me understand her relevance for contemporary young adults. The saint's work illustrates how the union of one's personal sufferings with those of Christ creates a text for anyone who has struggled to articulate questions of divine love and human frailty. As she alternates between rapture and despair, Teresa shows that much of the mystic experience revolves around embracing the reality of pain as a necessary step on the path to spiritual knowledge.

In her autobiography, St. Teresa addresses the nature of the soul's relationship to God and considers the ability of persons to know the ultimate nature of both the spiritual world and the physical. The pursuit of such knowledge, as documented in her writing, involves searching for meaningful symbols with which to identify—a timeless quest. In an increasingly secular culture where many are desperate for answers, misguided efforts may yield little insight into the human condition, especially for those who fail to ally their experiences with faith.

"ECSTASY OF SAINT TERESA," BY GIANLORENZO BERNINI PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/NAPOLEON VIER

Mysticism, however, by synthesizing sensory depth with improved intellectual awareness, allows an exercise of the spirit beyond the scope of most modern lifestyles. Studying Teresa's experience can provide a new perspective on one's own life and on the nature of life itself.

Though I have never known the heights of her ecstasy or rapture, I can empathize, as can most people, with their essential counterpart: a despair of having lost one's faith and spiritual bearings. Frequently Teresa mentions as a necessary part of the mystic experience the feeling of being lost in a spiritual void. With surprising composure she acknowledges it as typical, perhaps normative. In fact, this same darkness,

ALLEN HUBBARD JR. *is an undergraduate at Saint Michael's College in Colchester, Vt.*

which has long intimidated great thinkers and compelled many to seek enlightenment through physical means, forms a strong core of the meditative tradition of mysticism.

The "dark night," for example, the image of the mystic St. John of the Cross, became the subject of his most famous work, as well as an enduring symbol of artistic despair by those who seek beauty in art and literature. The dark night is a state to be considered thoughtfully and not shied away from, Teresa writes, because the strength of faith will allow one to prevail.

Emptiness, Not Nothingness

The other day, I was thumbing through Carl Sagan's book *The Varieties of Scientific Experience*. At one point, the author discusses how the universe is mostly nothingness; but because people are so convinced of the significance of their lives, they regard existence as the focal event of the universe when, in reality, grains of matter are little more than the cosmic equivalent of dust in the wind. Purely because existence is tangible, as if satisfying some aesthetic sense, he writes, it appears to be the dominating element of the physical universe. In reality, he concludes, that which exists is eclipsed readily by an overwhelming expanse of nothingness. The illusion that humankind and its immediate awareness are the center of the universe is a powerful and contagious one. It was and remains easy to believe that God created the universe for human happiness.

Christian mysticism, like modern cosmology, requires that the salvation of humankind does not comprise the center of the universe. Instead, it is the sparse moments of unity with God, buried in the void of existence, that make life meaningful—life being the grains of matter and the dispersed foundations for existence. Despite people's relatively minuscule stature in this context, the memorable interactions between divinity and individuals, as illustrated in Teresa's ascent to Christ, evolve into a covenant symbolic of God's enduring interest in humanity, as well as a secure reminder of God's attention.

Teresa effectively declares that the universe of faith, while filled with nebulae of experience that make it beautiful, is still mostly emptiness—the substance of the dark night. In many ways, then, mysticism is a type of faith easily adaptable to disordered times, filled as they are with the angst of political unrest and economic uncertainty. In mysticism Christ is to the Christian what Sisyphus is to Albert Camus: a figure who bears pains similar to ours and provides a symbol of identification. Otherwise, it is easy for people to turn away from a religion that they perceive as

ON THE WEB

From 1982, John W. Donohue, S.J., on the charm of St. Teresa of Ávila.
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revolving around salvation, when the immediate vantage point of life affirms that suffering is and will always be an essential component.

St. Teresa also shows that the mystical experience regularly generates profound art. Mysticism is a powerful catalyst for the human mind as it tries to make sense of contemplation. Like the concept of the muse, mysticism emerges as a transformative force of the personality, rather than as simply a mechanism of worship. Its intense emotionality brings about states of mind that might otherwise have gone unacknowledged, especially during episodes of rapture—the mystical complement to the dark night—represented by glorious moments of direct communication with Christ.

Mystic Rapture

Though we may understand the subtler side of mysticism as characterized by the dark night of the soul, its visionary stage of rapture is equally enigmatic. This component, with its unmediated access to God, may be the hardest to account for in the context of traditional Catholicism. It is, after all, a blessing that few people have received. And its influence, though compelling, is evidently evanescent.

St. Teresa sheds powerful insight into rapture. Her language consistently alludes to the carnal aspect of the feeling. This use of similar language to describe the two seemingly opposed mental states of mystical rapture and sexual ecstasy presupposes continuity between divine and human love. Though it appears radical at first, this suggestion provides a powerful insight. For if faith is a specialized form of divine love, then the rapturous side of mysticism may be defined as being to faith what passion is to mortal love: a complementary, though not necessary, component. This relationship justifies the passing character of mystic rapture (sometimes it is there and sometimes it is not: the dark night). It also explains its value within the context of organized religion as a factor that may enhance spirituality but is not essential. Just as one can and will have love without passion, one can and will have faith without mysticism.

Despite its complexities, mysticism remains an essential element of the Catholic tradition. If nothing else, life is essentially a mystical experience requiring faith that the whole will emerge as greater than the parts, in which one is consumed by darkness. For if darkness is more common in the world, then light will still prevail as the defining aspect of life by virtue of its rarity. And if life is essentially a mystical experience, then it is also an artistic one. For in the mystic tradition, as long as the powers of expression exceed the capacity of the soul to suffer, a fragile equilibrium emerges between pain and beauty that enables the soul to nurture a unique breed of inspired art. Otherwise it is, as F. Scott Fitzgerald said, the true dark night without the illumination of faith or hope, "which really always comes at three in the morning." A

FAITH IN FOCUS

Good Counsel

Six lessons for the younger set

BY FRANCIS X. HEZEL

"Life gets simpler as you get older," I said to a friend who has celebrated almost as many birthdays as I. He chuckled and then launched into a litany of ailments: arthritic joints, inability to climb stairs without getting winded, embarrassing memory loss, putdowns from younger colleagues at work and, worst of all, a general *tedium vitae*. When I tried out the same remark with another friend, it evoked an even longer list of woes.

At 72, I have experienced many of the symptoms my friends described. Transit card discounts and seats for the disabled are reminders of age. I've become a "senior citizen," entitled to the sympathy and respect of the younger, more active set. But there is much more to old age than this. We seniors have something to share with the youngsters who relinquish their bus and subway seats for us. Here are six life lessons.

1. Relax and let instinct take over. When the young struggle aloud to "figure out" their lives, we seniors can smile sympathetically. Long ago we shared their concern as we, too, tried to decide a college major and a career path. But how do you tell earnest seekers that the most important things in life not only emerge, but they take control of you in a way you would never have thought possible when you were young?

We seniors recognize that we have never been in charge of our lives as we once thought we were. Most life-altering "decisions" are hardly decisions at all. They are not the product of our own choices. Take my decision to enter the Jesuits. It wouldn't have happened if my uncle had not insisted that I enroll in a Jesuit high school rather than the Christian Brothers' school I so badly wanted to attend. And the decision to volunteer for work in Micronesia, where I have spent almost all of my adult life, was impulsive rather than cool-headed. Perhaps "impulse" and "instinct" disguise something more mysterious at work.

"We old-timers have learned to run on instincts," I used to tell the young Jesuit Volunteers in Micronesia who sought counsel. If they asked what I meant, I would explain that as one ages, one learns to put the purely rational and prescriptive in its proper place. We are constantly being handed formulas—prescriptions for finding happiness, losing weight, managing an office and raising a family. Formulas for belief are presented as church teachings. These formulas may help beginners (sheet music for the untrained), but why turn to the sheet music when we all have the melody playing in our heads? Young people may need formulas for a time, but with age one begins to trust intuition. Each year, one hopes, that intuition will be better honed.

2. The big choices are simple. If life becomes simpler with age, so do life choices. Some people my age would like to believe that unifying principles simplify existence. They are like scientists forever on the lookout for the unifying principles of energy, motion and matter itself. My experience with Pacific Islanders, Asians of every stripe, Americans and Europeans suggests that all of us, whether believers or not, are called to make one fundamental life choice: does a spiritual presence accompany or guide us, or do we walk alone? (This choice doesn't necessarily determine theists and atheists because some may not name that spiritual presence "God.")

In other words, all of us, equipped with wider horizons and greater hopes for ourselves and the world, must decide whether these horizons and hopes are deceptive or legitimate. Each must decide whether to reach beyond the narrow confines of limited self-interest to something richer that guides us to self-surrender. Perhaps that is what Karl Rahner meant by his assertion that all are called to, and ultimately judged on, a readiness to say yes to the divine invitation from within. What could be

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simpler, or more universal, than that?

3. *We see better with our hearts.* As we age, our vision blurs. We see men as trees, as the Gospel has it, Indians as Iraqis and Europeans as Africans. Or perhaps our vision is improving. The hues of ethnicity and the tones of language seem less important than they were. They become almost incidental. As our mental and physical powers decline, our hearts enlarge enough to embrace the whole world, it seems. "*Cor ad cor loquitur*" can mean more than the conversation between God and myself; it includes the strange bonds that develop between myself and any other human being, even the frauds and cheats of the world.

Sympathy also comes more easily with age. Why shouldn't it when we've developed calluses on our rumps from landing on them so often? We, who have prodded others into battle, have acquired the scars to remind us of what we've been asking of them. No wonder we old-timers change tack and find ourselves whispering encouraging words much more often than shouting challenges. Halfway measures may be incomplete, but they can also be understood as honest attempts to do the right thing. Good intentions do not just pave the road to hell; they are the substrata of the path to heaven. Old age is wonderful, as we become more forgiving, more understanding, more tolerant. Why didn't we learn all this earlier?

One could argue that as our minds become feeble, our judgments are necessarily less demanding. Still, the aged perspective gets better the farther down the road one moves. As we age, we begin to see the world from a greater distance, as if the camera moves back farther and farther until we can see the entire globe. Our view of the world and our life should become fuller as we age.

4. As life lengthens, the ego shrinks. The long perspective also shrinks the ego. The sense of self-importance we had in youth diminishes in old age. We seem to have less concern for ourselves, our reputation and others' approval of what we say and do. Sometimes this comes across as crankiness or inflexibility—a hardening of the aged brain. Yet it might be the beginning of a freedom we have long prized. We may begin to experience a lightness of spirit we have long sought. We see our life and all we have done as a gift of the Lord rather than as a list of accomplishments. We learn that the loss of ego is a blessing. Good riddance.

"Now I live—not I, but Christ who lives in me," St. Paul wrote (Gal 2:20). For years I thought of this as pious drivel (though I would never have admitted that to my novice master). Age and experience have brought a change of heart. The question of who I am and what I am capable of becoming seems unimportant because the process is nearly complete and the end product is clear for all to see. The spiritual writers we once dismissed as inhabiting an alien universe may have been right after all. Once the fascination with ourselves drops off, we discover that we can become absorbed in Christ in a new way (not reserved for the saints). Evidently, this happens to the not-so-old as well, to lay people and to religious. (What else could explain the three searching conversations on prayer and self-surrender I've recently had in a single week with fellow seekers?)

5. Prayer is a warm-up for life. For years I had thought of prayer as an exercise, like push-ups or sit-ups or laps around the track. It was training, a test of endurance that would sometimes end in a warm but short-lived feeling called consolation. Whether or not one felt a surge of spiritual energy, one was developing spiritual muscle and strengthening the fiber of the soul. I could never imagine how to live "a life of prayer" as the saints did. Wouldn't this be like living in the gym doing push-ups and sit-ups from morning to evening without respite?

Age brings insight: we old-timers now know that what we once called prayer is just a warm-up, not the real game. I have come to regard as prayer not just the 45 minutes in the morning when I twist myself into the semi-lotus position on my bed, but the whole day. I now see my whole life as one long prayer to the Lord. The most poignant moments often come not when I am engaged in the conditioning exercises called formal prayer, but as I walk to the subway, take a shower or wait for the elevator.

6. Our hearts expand as expectations contract. What about those great deeds we meant to do? Like many Jesuits, I once shared a fondness for knights on horses: the teams of Canisius High School in Buffalo, N.Y., were the Crusaders; McQuaid High School in Rochester had the Knights. All Jesuits aspire to do great things, I suppose: win over kingdoms and do battle with evil, like our founder Ignatius did. But as our hearts expand, our expectations contract. And the demons we fight can take strange shapes. What are we to do when we find the demons within us? These battles are not jousting contests, easily decided when one of the combatants is unseated, but long and painful campaigns in which it is not easy to tell whether one is winning or losing.

Old-timers may be battle-weary, but we are still swinging our swords. To put it another way, we have the same shortcomings, the same rough edges and pettiness as ever, but this just does not seem as important to us as it used to. While regretting that we are not better, we can integrate all we are into our offering to the Lord. As the years go by, my prayer increasingly is simply, "Lord, kindly accept the little I have to offer." No dragons slain, no heads of enemies dangling from the belt, but we are still in for the whole campaign, however long it takes.

What could be simpler than that? So, maybe we elders have something to say to younger people, after all. I wish I could remember what it is. A

FILM | ROBERT BARRON

MASTER PLAN

The flawed theology of 'The Adjustment Bureau'

"The Adjustment Bureau" is one of the most explicitly theological films of the last 25 years. Unfortunately, it proposes an extraordinarily bad theology.

The movie, based on a short story by Philip K. Dick, tells the story of David Morris (played convincingly by Matt Damon), an up-and-coming American politician. After Morris loses a Senate election, he meets Elise (Emily Blunt), a woman for whom he feels an immediate attraction. She gives him her phone number, and David, after his electoral defeat, is eager to pursue this new relationship.

Then something strange happens. When he arrives at work, David notices that everyone in the office is frozen in place, and mysterious men in fedoras are, performing a kind of operation on his friend's head. Horrified, David tries to call 911, but is chased by the invaders and hustled out of the office and into a cavernous warehouse, where a number of agents are urgently discussing his "case." It is at this point that he (and we) discover what is going on.

David, like everyone else, is part of a great master plan managed by a shadowy figure called the Chairman (clearly meant to represent God). David's relationship with Elise, however, runs dramatically counter to the Chairman's intention. The men in fedoras are not ordinary human beings but something like angels, whose purpose is to correct any glitches in "the plan" caused by chance or stubborn free will. The bizarre invasion of the office and David's kidnapping are part

Matt Damon, seated center, in "The Adjustment Bureau."

of this "adjustment." Firmly but not cruelly, the agents inform David that they will prevent him from establishing a relationship with Elise and that he must never tell anyone what he knows, lest they be obliged to erase his memory and identity.

Thus the central conflict of the film is established as a struggle between divinely imposed fate and individual human freedom. But does anyone in 21st-century America really have a doubt which of these will win? Despite what he knows and despite the herculean efforts of numerous agents, David manages to run into Elise again and foster a romantic friendship with her. At this point, a particularly powerful agent named Thompson (played by the English actor Terence Stamp) arrives on the scene. He kidnaps David and tells him why he must not see Elise. According to the plan, David is meant to become president of the United States and Elise a world-famous dancer; if they stay together, they will not fulfill their destinies.

Both David and Elise in the end decide to resist the plan, outfox its numerous enforcers and pursue their relationship with full romantic abandon.

The film deals with two things that human beings desperately want: personal freedom and a plan. We want, of course, to be free. Liberty is the supreme value in most Western societies. At the same time, most of us want things to make sense. We don't want the world to be simply a jumble of chance occurrences, coincidences and meaningless pursuits. We savor the idea of a grand plan. But the simultaneous realization of these two desires is, it seems, impossible. Freedom and fate, we tell ourselves, are mutually exclusive.

This is why "The Adjustment Bureau" is informed by what I would term bad theology. In the modern telling, evident in the writing of thinkers from William of Ockham to Jean-Paul Sartre, God's supremacy looms over against a self-assertive human freedom. The two wills—human and divine—are locked in a desperate zero-sum game, in which the more the divine will advances, the further the human will has to retreat. That is "the plan"—overwhelming, powerful, strictly enforced—against scrappy, determined human liberty.

ON THE WEB
Clayton Sinyai on the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire.
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None of this, however, has anything to do with classical Christian theology. One of the most basic truths that flows from the Incarnation is that divinity and humanity are not competitors. Jesus is not somehow less human because he is also divine. On the contrary, his divinity raises, perfects and enhances his humanity. Therefore God's freedom does not suppress human freedom but rather enables and awakens it. Liberty is not repugnant to the plan; it is an ingredient in it.

Take a simple example. A good piano instructor lays out a plan for her charges. Over the course of many years, she takes them through a series of exercises and practice sessions. She introduces them to relatively simple pieces of music and then, gradually, to Chopin, Mozart and Beethoven; she invites them to play ragtime and boogie-woogie. She might finally demonstrate the process of composition and encourage them to compose their own music. All the time, she is awakening and informing her students' freedom, pointing it toward the good, giving it purpose. Her ultimate goal—if she is a good teacher—is to establish perfect liberty in her students, in other words, the capacity to play whatever they want.

This is not a case of a plan in opposition to freedom; it is a plan undergirding freedom. God, whose glory is that we be fully alive, is something like

that piano teacher.

What God is decidedly not like is the shadowy Chairman of this film. God is the great will, which is nothing but love. Hence God's plan does not compete with human freedom, but rather guides and fulfills it. Toward the conclusion of the *Divine Comedy*, Dante wrote a line that contrasts with the theology of "The Adjustment Bureau" but is perfectly congruent with classical incarnational theology: "In your will, O Lord, is our peace."

REV. ROBERT BARRON *is the Francis Cardinal George Professor of Faith and Culture at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Ill., and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries.*

BOOKS | PETER HEINEGG

DEVIL-RIDDEN DIXIE

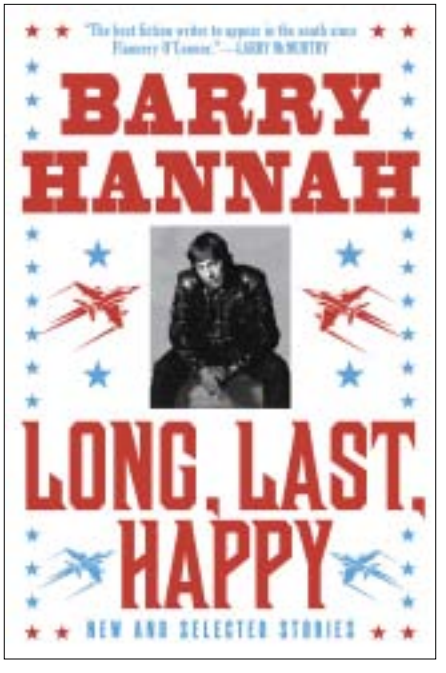
LONG, LAST, HAPPY
New and Selected Stories

By Barry Hannah
Grove Press. 464p $27.50

Barry Hannah's posthumous anthology comes garlanded with praise most fiction writers would not dare to imagine: tributes gathered throughout his fertile, tormented (by alcohol and other demons) career, from the likes of William Styron ("an original"), Philip Roth ("fierce and pitiless southern comedy"), Thomas McGuane ("a voice so original and enduring"), Cynthia Ozick ("explosive"), Richard Ford ("incomparably fresh") and John Grisham ("just fearless"). Newcomers to Hannah (d. 2010) are bound to be astonished by the dazzling quickness and quirkiness of his language, his insatiable appetite for passion, pain and pessimism, his vast technical knowledge on subjects like hunting and fishing, military aircraft, music and firearms of every description. But readers, unless they are fellow professionals studying his craft, may well find his endlessly haunted characters a bit much.

Born, raised and mostly educated in Mississippi, Hannah presents us in these 31 stories with a desperate collection of philosophical southern losers inhabiting a landscape blighted by violence (notably arson), memories of war (Civil, Korean, Vietnam, Gulf), racism (Hannah's blacks are seen and hated but not heard), drunkenness, moribund old-time religion, dysfunctional marriages and families, talents squandered and guilt over all of the above.

In "Rat-Faced Auntie" Edgar, a gift-



ed, hugely successful young jazz trombonist, surrenders to booze, loses his gorgeous wife, stops playing, then heads to grad school with plans to write a thesis on "bums in Chicago" with the help of steady welfare checks from his odious, impossible Aunt Hadley. He finds another loving woman, Emma, who in a rage over his fecklessness hurls a bowl of Lysol in his face, almost blinding him—but right afterward promises to stay with and care for him till death. As the story ends, Edgar discovers a twisted sort of vocation: his aged aunt will pay him to turn her voluminous diaries into a book, which he plans to call *Rat-Face Confesses*. Meanwhile, he tells Emma, "I release you body and soul.… Have at the kings and princes."

In "Hey, Have You Got a Cig, the Time, the News, My Face?" a prosperous, seemingly in-control hack writer named E. Dan Ross watches and worries over his self-destructive son Newt, a poet and creative writing teacher—Hannah spent 28 years on that job at the University of Mississippi—who lurches drunkenly from job to job and wife to wife (Hannah had three). Newt crashes and does time in a mental hospital, runs away to be a Mormon preacher and winds up, temporarily sane, a quasi-evangelical, in charge of a brutal reform school. His "normal" father, it turns out, can't recover from the trauma of having sent a dozen Marine buddies to their death in Vietnam by directing them to land on the wrong beach and now likes to blow off steam by driving around and peppering random people with the air rifle he keeps in a specially designed compartment.

Much of this doomed world recalls the sodden male misery that Raymond Carver was so adept at ushering us into. But whereas Carter's men were typically clueless, muttering types, Hannah's men (and narrators) span a whole spectrum of eloquence. One deftly sketches a situation:

> A man back in the twenties came to town and started a poker game. Men gathered and drank. Peter lost his money and started a fight. The man took a chair and repeatedly ground it into his face while Peter was on the floor. Peter went out into the town, found a pistol, came back and

shot the man. The brothers went about influencing the jury, noting that the victim was trash, an out-of-towner. The judge agreed. The victim was sentenced to remain dead. Peter was let go.

Typically, however, Hannah goes for more lyrical riffs, like this:

> He slipped over easily into the brogue of love, that long hill-country moan that required slow action around the tongue and almost no lip opening to a song against coherence. Without her around he despised it, listening to men gossip at the barber's, the cafés in Holly Springs and Oxford. General Grant was headquartered in Holly Springs, where the antebellum mansions still stood, although in a flat of lackness, frozen in brine, much like those in Natchez, a back-lot set for zombies in a costume feed.

Whew. Spending half a lifetime literally in the shadow of William Faulkner has its costs.

Say what you like, Hannah was a natural, a torrent of shrewd observations and apothegms: "Life was a long wonderful thing. It was so good you expected some official to show up and cancel it." This, in fact, is the conviction that prevents Hannah's people—most of them, anyhow, and not least of all his authorial persona—from solving their problems with suicide or silence. But, riveting as the author's voice can be, the reader remains stuck inside the mind of the speaker, who is almost always a witty, educated white male with a drinking problem and a sorry past. Women appear mainly as impermanent appendages of men; children are few and far between. Adults don't develop, they devolve.

Well, such gloom can be real enough; but is that all there is? Deputy James, a man hell-bent on revenging the murder of his photo-journalist father during the bitter desegregation of the University of Mississippi in 1962, wonders whether "he himself might be just one of another confused but adamant sect." Exactly. Hannah's "sectarians," for all their wretchedness, are an unforgettable lot. But couldn't they, some of them at least, just go into rehab and get a life?

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

THOMAS MASSARO

THE GOLDEN RULES

TWELVE STEPS TO A COMPASSIONATE LIFE

By Karen Armstrong
Knopf. 240p $22.95

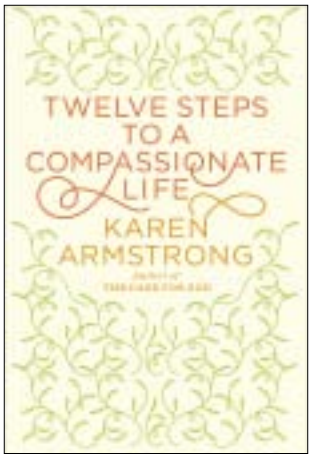
This volume is a departure for Karen Armstrong. Known for an impressive series of studies of world religions and the history of religious ideas and practices, Armstrong used the resources afforded by her 2008 TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) award to launch a multi-stage project focusing on the theme of compassion. The project culminates in a global collaboration that produced the Charter for Compassion (www.charterforcompassion.org), as well as this intriguing and most accessible volume.

The medium and the message cohere closely here. The charter was drafted online with the input of thousands of contributors and subsequent deliberation of leaders from many religious communities around the world. Already translated into dozens of languages and endorsed by tens of thousands of people worldwide, the charter has gathered scores of partner organizations that commit themselves to a shared agenda of promoting the many faces of compassion. This book is the most substantial resource in this unabashedly idealistic project, one that is hardly shy about wearing its very big heart on its sleeve. It explores what makes empathy possible and effective—within each one of us and in the wider world beyond.

A potential shortcoming of this volume is the sheer familiarity of the major claims and themes covered. Alleviating suffering, honoring the sanctity of all, refraining from egotism and violence—don't we all already recognize these as key agenda items for a better future? Taken at face value alone, Armstrong's suggestions for change might be dismissed as mere pablum. Yet the patient reader is treated to a commendably methodical description of the human condition and an insightful program for how to improve life on all levels: the personal, interpersonal, societal and global. Even if the self-help style packaging of the book's message may be a bit off-putting, nobody will turn from this work either expecting a quick fix or unprepared for bumps along the path of progress.

Armstrong is at her best when she taps into her particular areas of expertise: the spiritualities of world religions and religious texts and practices. While the book begins with the obligatory nods to universality and inclusion, the most engaging sections reach beyond generalizations about compassion into particular devotional traditions, relating stories about real-life figures who have pursued ideals like the Golden Rule, often at great personal cost. Armstrong appeals not to some least common denominator of feel-good altruism, but consistently to

the concrete efforts of sages, philosophers and religious leaders from many eras, whose lives speak eloquently of empathy and selflessness.



Dare we quibble that a small and predictable cadre of figures (Jesus, Gandhi, Confucius, the Dalai Lama, Buddha, Albert Schweitzer, Nelson Mandela, Thich Nhat Hanh) seems to keep coming up as the most exemplary? Actually, there is something new here for almost anyone, for Armstrong highlights the contributions of numerous lesser-known practitioners and proponents of compassion. Many are our contemporaries (e.g., Christina Noble, the international crusader for abandoned children), while others championed compassion as long ago as the Axial Age. The latter phrase refers to the era from roughly 900 B.C. to 200 B.C., first labeled by Karl Jaspers and analyzed in earlier works by Armstrong, which witnessed an explosion of religious ideals and spiritual practices to foster compassion and altruism. After reading this volume, you will know something about the Chinese philosopher and mystic Zhuangzi, for example, who appealed for the practice of more compassionate discourse as firmly as did Socrates, his near contemporary in the West. And you will never be able to read Sophocles, Aeschylus or Euripides in quite the same way after encountering Armstrong's interpretation of the social function of Greek tragedy.

Armstrong is a sure-footed guide in diagnosing the key dynamics of human behavior. It is easy to agree with her observations that our interactions too often suffer from a deficit of empathy. Virtues like hospitality and equanimity hold the promise of healing human relationships, if only we commit ourselves to transcending envy, resentment and xenophobia and challenging the irrational boundaries that divide us. Less convincing is the author's account of darkness in the human heart. Armstrong repeatedly attributes selfishness and aggression to the reptilian brain we have inherited, a neurological endowment that emerges as the seat of aggressive impulses, locked in conflict with "the soothing regulatory system" of the higher brain.

While the field of neurobiology has indeed advanced our understanding of the roles of the hypothalamus and neo-cortex in influencing human behavior, the model presented here comes off as simplistic and unduly mechanistic. A good corrective would be to recast the issue primarily as a matter of the soul and the will, opening space for more thorough coverage of the doctrine of evil and sin in world religions, a topic on which Armstrong could easily speak with much authority. Christian moral anthropology, for one, certainly contains ample resources to address the uneasy co-existence of dark and light within us, and would provide superior insight into this volume's most profound question: is compassion natural to humans?

Regardless of how evil and tribalism arise, nothing could be more important than Armstrong's agenda to "retrain our responses and form mental habits that are kinder, gentler, and less fearful of others." All people of good will and open minds will admire the Charter for Compassion and its promotion of more constructive patterns of social behavior. Only time will tell whether the practices and disciplines described in this inspiring volume will be effective in bringing about that vision. But beyond doubt is Armstrong's resolute belief that compassion is not an impractical dream but rather a real possibility for our world. Let us hope that she is right, and that the vision of a more humane world as developed over millennia of religious thought proves to be contagious.

THOMAS MASSARO, S.J., *teaches social ethics at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry in Chestnut Hill, Mass.*

TOM DEIGNAN

A DOOMED LOVE

GHOST LIGHT
A Novel

By Joseph O'Connor
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 256p $25

In the short story "Silence," from Colm Tóibín's acclaimed recent collection *The Empty Family*, the Irish writer Lady Gregory is depicted as observant and yearning, a dutiful wife striving to be more than simply some "dowager from Ireland." And yet, in Joseph O'Connor's latest novel, *Ghost Light*, the same woman seems almost pushy, as she chastises J. M. Synge because of the doomed playwright's love affair with the young actress Maire O'Neill (born Molly Allgood).

Neither Tóibín's nor O'Connor's depiction of Lady Gregory is completely correct. What these divergent views do illustrate is the flexibility of historical fiction, not to mention Ireland's ongoing obsession with the past, especially the country's revered literary figures.

The troubled lovers, Molly and Synge, are at the center of *Ghost Light*.

The former is from the "lower orders," a fiery actress with dreams of international fame and of marriage to the author of the incendiary play "The Playboy of the Western World."

Molly says: "And if I had emigrated to America. [Synge] and I used to speak of it. The brave young country where differences do not weigh and all must create themselves over. They love and respect the outsider." If Molly's view of America is generous, it is because Ireland at the turn of the 20th century was so plainly disdainful of outsiders.

Synge, for example, is from a respectable Protestant family, presided over by a merciless matriarch who strongly disapproves of her son's romance with Molly.

"Have I not been wounded and cut at sufficiently to placate the wicked selfishness you appear to regard as a devoted parent's due," Mother Synge bellows at one point.

Molly's family is equally suspicious of Synge. In fact, as O'Connor makes clear, even the well-bred circle of artists around Synge, who launched the Abbey Theatre and revered native Irish folklore, held hypocritical attitudes."We have devoted our lives to that class of people who have inherited nothing but their courage," Synge declares at one point. "But in life, one is to hold one's nose to them?" *Ghost Light* is something of a departure from O'Connor's previous two best-selling novels. *Redemption Falls* (2007) was a sprawling, multi-perspective tale exploring the Irish on both sides of the U.S. Civil War. *Star of the Sea* (2004), meanwhile, was a literary thriller set on an Irish ship headed to America during the 1840s famine.

Ghost Light, though it has a fair share of history and social observation, is essentially a tragic love story, whose conclusion is actually well known. Synge died of Hodgkin's disease in 1909 at the age of 37; Molly appeared on stage and in films for 30 years before dying in London at the age of 67.

O'Connor, though, has set out to explore the interior lives of Synge and Molly, the unspoken, unrecorded facets of their short, tumultuous time together. He alternates time periods, from Molly and Synge's courtship to

Jersey City Memorial

He slumps back
against a battered tree trunk,
head nodding to the left and
eyes closed.
His broad shoulders thrown back,
his torso,
as with all gods and heroes,
muscular
and bare.
Bare legs
jut out from tattered pants, and
the corrosion that turns all weathered bronze to green
streams down like blood
oozing from his wounds.
An ammo belt encircles his waist,
and an empty bayonet scabbard
dangles from his side.

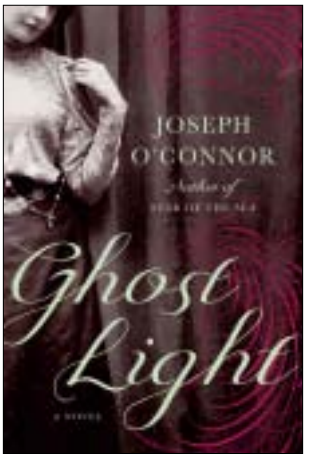
The pedestal too
is bare, save for three rusted bolts
where four once held the bronze plaque
now long gone
from the lawn
behind the iron fence
at Jersey City's Abraham Lincoln High School.

Who will tell the students who this is?
Why he died. What artist carved this beautiful young man
long dead.
Eighty? Seventy years ago? What mayor, alderman,
school board president stood here, unveiled this
bronze corpse, and swore that the sacrifices
of this boy
would live forever
in our hearts?

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J., *is an associate editor of* ***America****.*

Molly's hard, final years in post-war London. By then the onetime star is entering Norma Desmond territory, wallowing in delusion and drink. O'Connor's prose, as he describes Molly's later years, is both desperate and uncompromising.



Most provocatively, O'Connor has taken these true life characters and—as he admits in his acknowledgements—fictionalized key details. Too often, questioning such an approach is dismissed as an infringement upon the novelist's artistic license.

But it is fair to ask: Why not simply invent fictional characters similar to Synge and Molly? In the case of *Ghost Light*, using the actual figures allows O'Connor to illuminate broader aspects of class, history and culture, especially in Ireland. Ultimately, Synge and Molly represent something broader. As with so many folks on that beautiful, doomed island, class, religious and familial conflict often blurred the lines between attraction and revulsion, between love and war. (Liam O'Flaherty's brilliant short story "The Sniper" also comes to mind.)

In the end, those expecting another sprawling yarn from O'Connor will not get it here. The book's title derives from the tradition of leaving at least one lamp burning in a theater, so that spirits "can perform their own plays." The title is apt, for Molly and Synge themselves are ghostly forms, performing for audiences who are sometimes hostile, sometimes curious and sometimes absent altogether.

O'Connor's more heightened prose occasionally feels breathless, even turgid. But overall the writing here is powerful, compressed and expressive. The love story, meanwhile, is compelling even if its outcome is known.

In a scene near *Ghost Light*'s conclusion—which in all likelihood takes place entirely in Molly's head—the stage veteran offers advice to an up-and-coming actress that seems like a blessing but may well be a curse.

"Permit the words to lead you to the heart words come from," Molly declaims. Such passion is undoubtedly what true love and art are made of. But they can also lead to the kind of unfulfilled desires that preyed upon Molly for the rest of her life. It is to Joseph O'Connor's credit that he makes Molly's life as poignant and consequential as that of the more famous, tragic artist she loved.

TOM DEIGNAN, *a columnist with The Irish Voice newspaper and Irish America magazine, is working on a novel about a New York City high school.*

LETTERS

The 'Real' Drinan

If I understand Raymond A. Schroth, S.J. ("Career Interrupted," 3/7), he prefers that the late Congressman Robert F. Drinan, S.J., be remembered as a champion of many worthy causes and one whose storied political career was cut short by the Vatican and pro-life activists.

I believe Drinan will be remembered as the Catholic priest who defended abortion. It is not that he dissented from the Catholic Church's position on just one issue but that he callously turned a blind eye to an evil that ended up destroying tens of millions of unborn children whose only "crime" was being inconvenient. The tragedy of Father Drinan is that while earning substantial acclaim for his moral principles, he found himself unable to defy the powerful abortion lobby within the Democratic party and dissent from the prevailing orthodoxy of his fellow law professors who erroneously believed that legal abortion would keep the world population in check and help solve other social ills, like poverty and crime.

DIMITRI CAVALLI
The Bronx, N.Y.

Why Obey?

I am a Jesuit, 83 years old. When I read "Career Interrupted," I said thank God for the gift of Father Drinan. What an example for me! To be so inwardly free—"indifferent," to use St. Ignatius' term—to say, "Let your will be done." This is also the virtue of Father Pedro Arrupe when he was ordered to lay down his office as superior general of the Jesuits by Pope John Paul II. I have a visceral dislike for those who persecuted people like Arrupe and Drinan. Then, why obey them? Because I have been taught as Drinan and Arrupe were.

M. MARIALOUIS, S.J.
Madurai, India

A Refreshing Change

As a retired Michigan teacher, I was happy to read "Hard Times No Justification for Clamping Down on Unions" (Signs of the Times, 3/7) and appreciate Archbishop Jerome E. Listecki's standing up for the rights of workers. It is a refreshing change. For too long we have heard vocal support only for pro-life causes and politicians, which unfortunately may be one reason why Tea Party candidates have gained power. Seeing them in action is frightening.

LINDA PFEIFER
Bluffton, Mich.

Something Wrong

In "Irish Church Collapse?" (Signs of the Times, 3/7), Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley, O.F.M.Cap., is perhaps a bit optimistic in his assessment. It may have already collapsed into irrelevancy for its most vital demographic, the 30-somethings. Several years ago, before the recent revelations, while my wife and I were in Ireland, we asked our driver, a vibrant, charming, insightful 30-something, what he thought of the church and, in particular, careers in the church. I used the word careers purposely. His reply sent a chill through me. He and his friends, he said, thought "there must be something wrong with anyone wanting to do that." Something wrong with working for the church! It had gotten to that! If that's what the next generation in Ireland thinks, then Ireland is like the rest of Europe already.

JOHN D. FITZMORRIS
New Orleans, La.

Give Peace a Chance

Bravo to Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., for his wisdom (Of Many Things, 2/28). The seeming impossibility of

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finding common ground for both the Israelis and the Palestinians is not a failure of moral imagination after all; it is a failure of nerve and a severe lack of courage to buck the sad status quo. Father Schroth's good flood of memories from growing up, when Jewish neighbors were supportive and the world was kinder, struck chords. Today the greed and crazed thinking of so many lead us into wars over land or oil rather than to the peace we say we all want. The intractable devastation in Israel is partial proof of this state of affairs. When will it end? Only when both sides take the biblical challenge seriously and choose life rather than destruction, and when narrow nationalistic interests finally take a back seat to peaceful reconciliation.

PETER MURRAY, S.J.
Auriesville, N.Y.

Blame the Robber Barons

In your Current Comment "Union Busting" (3/14), the collective bargaining issue is not about money. It is about voice and control. The robber baron types want to take away the workers' voices and their resistance to their schemes to outsource their jobs or bring in inexpensive labor to replace them. Let's put the blame where it really belongs: on the Federal Reserve, on Congress for mismanagement of the country's resources, on state and local politicians for mismanagement, on the global banking cartel, including Wall Street, who, through the Fed, ripped off the American taxpayer and have never been held accountable. Why are the workers paying for the screw-up and criminal actions of the country's elite?

JOHN SIEGMUND
Portsmouth, Va.

Ever Love a Janitor?

When I think of union busting (Current Comment, 3/14), I think of the people who are most dependent on the services of public employees—poor children, homeless persons, those suffering from chronic physical or mental illness, the unemployed. They cannot "buy their way out" of the public service system, as can affluent citizens who arrogantly criticize anything provided by government. I wonder if any of these wealthy folks have ever come to love or respect a janitor or a guard who works so hard for so little. Have they ever experienced the gift of a public school teacher who helps a homeless child succeed in college or in the trades? Have they so lost touch with the virtue of solidarity that they cannot feel the joys and sorrows of their neighbors, the ones they are to love?

HELEN DEINES
Louisville, Ky.

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Unlikely Leaders

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (A), APRIL 3, 2011

Readings: 1 Sm 16:1-13; Ps 23:1- 6; Eph 5:8-14; Jn 9:1-41

"It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind" (Jn 9:32)

A world-transforming movement was born through the most unlikely leader. One morning in 1995, 12-year-old Craig Kielberger was captivated by the story of Iqbal Masih, a South Asian boy sold into slavery at age 4, who lost his life for speaking out for children's rights. Craig gathered 10 of his friends, and the movement Free the Children was born. Today it engages over a million children in peer education in 45 countries and has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

In today's first reading, we hear of a similarly unlikely choice of a leader. It goes against traditional thinking to look to the youngest to lead into the future. The prophet Samuel was sure that Eliab was the one to be anointed, but God instructed him not to judge by appearance and invited him to see as God does, by looking into the heart.

Today's Gospel is also about seeing with the heart and about the unlikely leadership of a man who had been born blind. By allowing the works of God to be made visible through him, he becomes able to lead others to faith, even if not all accept his testimony. This same thing can be said of Jesus—he is an unconventional leader in the eyes of other leaders, whose objections and denials end with their refusal to see the works of God being made visible through him.

The man who was blind is open to the simple instructions of Jesus. He allows Jesus to put mud on his eyes, an ancient technique thought to have curative properties, and he obediently goes to the Pool of Siloam, washes and comes back able to see. In the lengthy exchanges that follow, first with his neighbors and then with the Pharisees, the man becomes more and more able to see with his heart, understanding more and more clearly who Jesus is, and grows in his ability to lead others to faith. He moves from not knowing Jesus (v. 12) to recognizing him as a prophet (v. 17), a man of God (v. 31), the Son of Man (v. 38). In the end he worships him as Lord (v. 38).

The other characters in the narrative throw up one obstacle after another, tenaciously refusing to see. The neighbors first debate about the identity of the man, insisting they do not see what they see. When the healed man settles that issue, they shift to the question of how the healing was done. Resisting the explanation of the newly sighted man, they turn to their leaders, who pick up the debate with the question of how the cure was done. The Pharisees latch on to another obstacle: Jesus must be a sinner because he did the healing on a sabbath. When they turn to the healed man for his interpretation, he counters with, "He is a prophet." Unpersuaded, the leaders then revert to questioning whether there had actually been any blindness. The parents confirm the identity of their son and his congenital blindness but say no more, out of fear.

Coming back to the healed man, the leaders have now made up their minds about what they see: that Jesus is a sinner. They circle back to question the fact of the healing and how it was done. They shore up their certitude about what they know and what they see, claiming their faithfulness to Moses and finally end by dismissing the healed man as a sinner, too. What Jesus does is unheard of (v. 32). The person he calls to lead others to faith is unconventional. The logical arguments why it cannot be so are endless. Those who allow themselves to quell their objections and to see with the heart can lead the way into a transformed future.

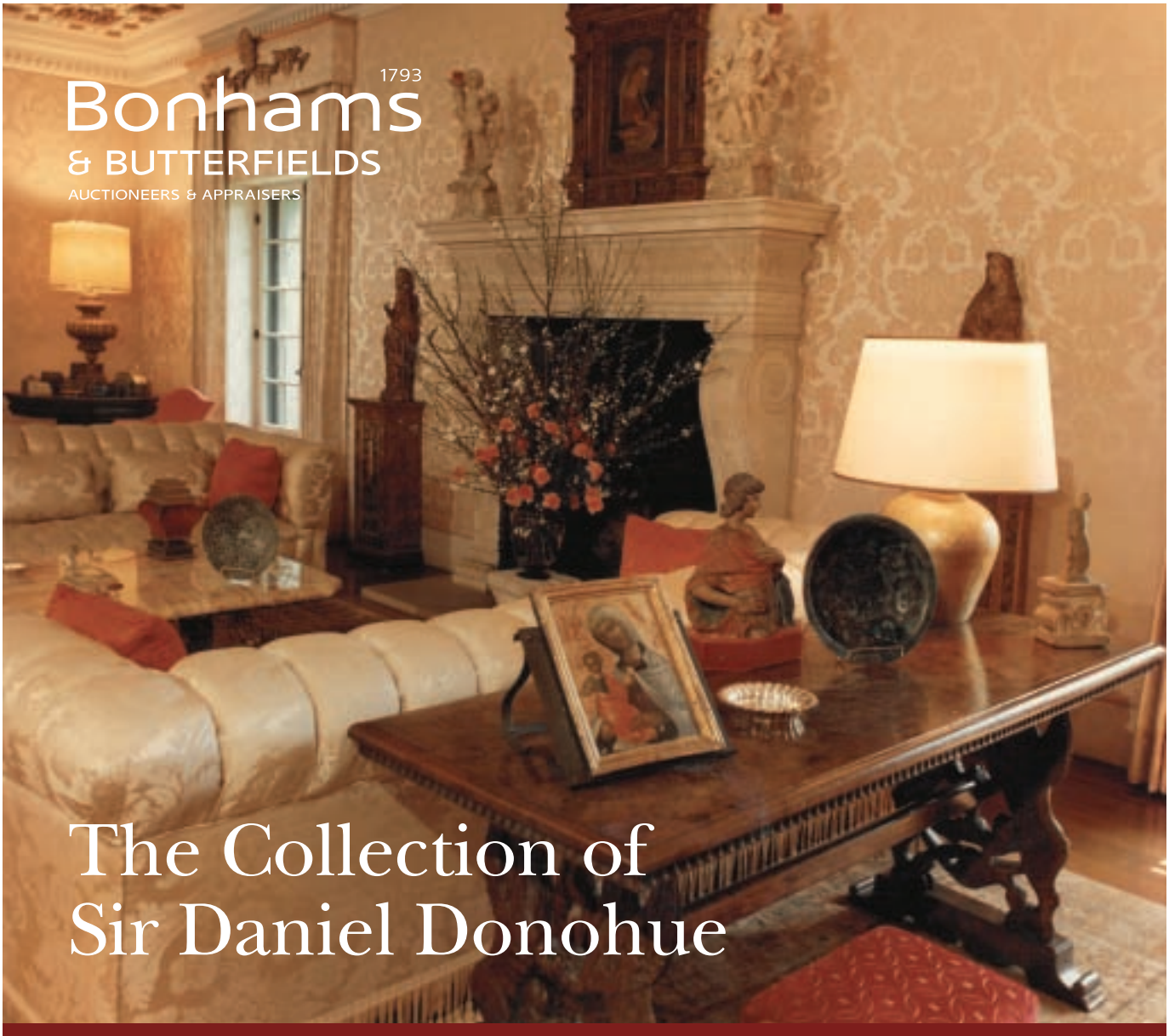
BARBARA E. REID

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- How are your Lenten practices helping you to see with your heart?
- What are your objections to seeing as Jesus sees?
- What has never been done before that you see as possible?

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.*



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