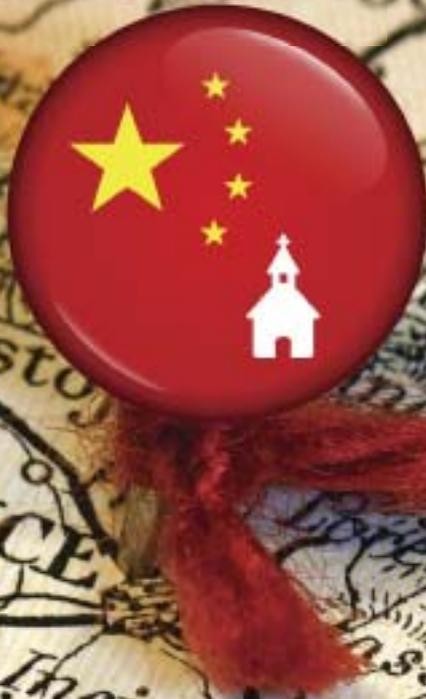


America

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A New Home For Chinese Catholics

JEAN M. LIM

OF MANY THINGS

Transitions punctuate our collective experience. As a Jesuit I have always viewed transitions as opportunities to see afresh St. Ignatius' insight about seeking and finding God in all places, people and things. It is hard to say when the moment of transition from university administrator to magazine publisher took place for me. Was it when I last glanced at Omaha's revitalized riverfront or during a retreat in rural Wisconsin or at the moment I turned *my own* key in the door at America House in New York? Whenever it occurred, it ended a 40-year career in higher education and ushered in the unknown.

Over nearly four decades I have had the privilege of crafting opportunities for students to experience a Catholic Jesuit education, watching them become women and men of competence, conscience and commitment. Along the way these students, their parents and my colleagues befriended me, supported me and loved me. I have witnessed their weddings, marveled at their professional competence and generosity of spirit, baptized their children and buried their parents. The consolation comes in seeing the words of Pedro Arrupe alive in our graduates, noting that we celebrate our success "by what our students become." More than a few of them have been agents of social change.

We all experience changes in life. As William Bridges notes in his book *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, change involves three interrelated elements: the ending, the neutral zone and the beginning. The ending comes before the beginning. So you might ask, what did I do between the ending of a career in academe and moving to New York? My response: *Nothing!* From July to November I lived in varying degrees within the neutral zone—bereft of old identities and former realities. It was an opportunity to see the world differently between one life phase and the next and to do so

with renewed clarity and purpose.

My annual retreat was a discernment retreat—an affirmation that the next step was endorsed by the "Boss." From the beginning this retreat was not routine. Over the week I never moved beyond the Spiritual Exercises' first day's prayer of gratitude for God's gifts as I reviewed my spiritual odyssey across the years—faces, places, emotions, tears and laughter, successes and failures—and reaffirmed God's generosity and love. On the fifth day of the retreat I told my director that a door had closed and, in complete freedom, another opened—the *end of the ending*.

For years I had planned a sabbatical trip to South America. I spent a month in Brazil, Argentina and Chile. I visited the Iguazu Falls, the Jesuit Reductions and the Estancias in Argentina. In Chile I was introduced to the legacy of St. Alberto Hurtado, S.J. It is a living legacy animating the university that bears his name in its attempts to build an educated middle class. That same charismatic spirit guides Mensaje, the magazine that he founded in 1951. Drawing on the experience of existing Jesuit-sponsored magazines—*America* and *Études*—Hurtado summarized the purpose of his periodical: "This magazine will be neither literary nor pious, but rather more universal in scope. The project is an urgent one when you consider the lack of [Catholic] orientation especially among the young.... It will help awaken the conscience of the Catholic laity, incarnate the faith in daily life and present Catholic positions as reasonable and serious.... It will help destroy the artificial separation between faith and life."

Just as Hurtado drew on *America* for his initial inspiration, I embrace his vision as I take on my new responsibilities as president and publisher of *America*. I believe this transition presents another graced opportunity to explore the observation of Jerome Nadal, S.J., that "the world is our house." **JOHN P. SCHLEGEL, S.J.**

America

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Rights War?

American Catholic social thought has been critical of what Mary Ann Glendon called “rights talk” for its litigiousness rooted in an absolute sense of entitlement. The Catholic rights tradition acknowledges the need to adjust rights claims to one another and upholds the role of political authorities in promoting the common good. It is disconcerting, therefore, to witness how the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has begun to cast so much of its agenda as a struggle over religious liberty.

To be sure, anti-Catholicism remains an unspoken American prejudice. There are also legitimate issues to address: threats to conscience clauses for Catholic professionals and institutions, for example, and the increasing pressures brought by the A.C.L.U. and professional groups against such accommodation. Other issues, like alleged prejudice in denying grants to Catholic service providers or the administration’s failure to defend the Defense of Marriage Act, however, are more difficult to characterize as violations of religious liberty. There are, of course, strong differences of policy, but they do not rise to the level of a violation of the religious liberty of Catholics or of the church.

Extending the litigious model of the “zealous advocate” to a broader public policy agenda is highly imprudent. It will reduce the church’s still considerable influence in many fields, like migration, overseas development, education and health care; and by labeling every disagreement, dissatisfaction or fear a basic rights violation it will diminish the credibility of the bishops as teachers of social morality. An approach by which people look to accommodate competing rights claims, where they show respect for the prudence of elected authorities and where the church continues to advocate for its policy agenda would be more consistent with the Catholic rights tradition.

A Vote for Civility

Russell Pearce, the state senator who authored Arizona’s controversial immigration law lost his seat in a special recall election on Nov. 8. The Arizona law requires immigrants to carry documentation papers at all times and, among other provisions, allows police with a “reasonable suspicion” of a crime to question anyone about his or her immigration status. So far these provisions have been blocked from taking effect. After a lower court ruled them illegal, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit upheld the ruling. But Arizona is still pursuing its case in court.

Meanwhile, organized opponents of Senator Pearce’s

hard-line approach to illegal immigrants had gathered the requisite 10,000 signatures to force the vote. Although Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County campaigned on his behalf, Mr. Pearce lost the election to a political novice, Jerry Lewis. The two candidates have much in common: both are white, conservative, Mormon Republicans. Mr. Lewis, however, ran a shoe-string, door-to-door campaign under the banner “civility as a sign of strength.”

Few observers think this election will do permanent political harm to Mr. Pearce, whose views are still popular throughout Arizona. Yet in ousting an extremist, voters won a victory more significant than the west Mesa district seat. They embraced civil discourse, which could embolden other voters and candidates to do likewise, in Arizona and in other states.

Unhappy Valley

Visitors to Penn State University will easily notice the centrality of both football and the legacy of the school’s head coach, Joe Paterno. An addition to the school’s main library is named for him, and the local ice cream store features “Peachy Paterno.” In Happy Valley, as the area is called, Mr. Paterno was seen as the public face of the school. But allegations about Jerry Sandusky, a longtime defensive coach, of having committed serial sexual abuse of minors since 1991 led to the firing of Mr. Paterno and Graham Spanier, the school’s president. The similarities between abuse in the Catholic Church and at Penn State are obvious. In both cases accusers reported their concerns to higher-ups, whose response was inadequate. Trusting in the leadership, those who came forward assumed that the matter would be dealt with. Most tragically, in both cases more young people were hurt by predators.

The Penn State scandal also shows that sexual abuse is not a “Catholic thing” and does not stem from celibacy (Mr. Sandusky is married). Sexual abuse infects many institutions that work with children—religious organizations, the Boy Scouts and public schools among them. In every institution, in families and in society at large, abuse must be combated with education, vigilance and universal agreement that the first reporting must be to the police.

But there is an important difference. Once those at the highest levels of authority discovered proof of crimes, the university’s board of trustees acted decisively, unlike church officials. While Penn State can learn something from the institutional standards of the U.S. Bishops’ Office of Child and Youth Protection, the church may be able to learn something about what it means to hold its top leaders accountable.

War Is Not an Option

An updated report from the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, charges that Iran has been, and probably still is, hiding a nuclear weapons program behind its nuclear energy research. This is not particularly surprising, but it is hardly good news. Despite Iran's many denials, it seems clear that it has been seeking to establish a miniature version of mutually assured destruction in a strategic balance with Israel, an undeclared nuclear power.

The I.A.E.A. report has put additional pressure on the Security Council members Russia and China to support more aggressive economic and political sanctions against the regime in Tehran. It has provoked a new round of F-16 rattling in Israel as a parade of strategic leaks provides details about preparation for a pre-emptive military strike to neutralize the Iranian threat. Some voices in Washington have likewise called for more serious consideration of a military option.

Regarding the use of force against Iran, President Obama said, "We are not taking any options off the table." But, diplomatic posturing aside, a military strike is just the kind of option that the United States should take off the table. A pre-emptive attack, whether conducted by the United States, Israel, the United Kingdom or all three, fails to fulfill basic just war criteria. Not only is the practical threat from Iran too difficult to assess (just cause) but the outcome of such a strike is too difficult to predict (probability of success). Any attack, moreover, could be enough to begin a widespread war in the Middle East. Iran is not Gaza. It has a conventional military capability, including medium-range missiles, that could lead to a prolonged and brutal conflict. Any attack is also likely to draw in Iran's surrogates, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.

Worse, such an attack is unlikely to achieve greater security for Israel. The Iranian program has been widely dispersed and driven underground. It is unlikely that an attack would succeed in crippling Iran's nuclear weapons development; it might even accelerate the program.

But beyond the moral and strategic problems associated with a pre-emptive attack, the last thing the United States needs is to undertake another military adventure in the Islamic world. Another debt-financed war could be the final blow to the staggering U.S. economy. Investments in human capital and infrastructure, not more war-making, are where the nation's diminished resources are most needed now.

Israel, as a sovereign power, can of course come to a different conclusion about the threat posed by Iran. Cynical observers are already suggesting that a messy conflict with the puzzling Islamic republic is just the diversion Israel needs to slow down the accelerating movement for Palestinian statehood for at least another half-decade. That would be a cruel and short-sighted calculus for Israelis and a plain disaster for Palestinians; it would also be a strategic and economic catastrophe for the rest of the world.

The global economy twitches in anxiety each market day. It remains unclear if the Arab Spring will lead to reform or ruin. As a new generation of Muslim youth begins to perceive an alternative to the violence proposed by Islamic extremism, the West could not make a more counterproductive gesture than an unprovoked attack on Iran. The Islamic Republic of Iran has already done much to diminish its legitimacy in the eyes of its own restive people; a pre-emptive strike would be just the kind of event the regime could use to reassert its hold on power.

Four rounds of U.N. sanctions have already proved somewhat effective. Peaceful options to a resolution of this stand-off remain. Previously proposed nuclear fuel swaps could provide confidence-building diplomatic successes while normalizing broader international oversight of Iranian enrichment efforts. But an attack on Iran would no doubt begin a regional war and demolish whatever prospects remain for a democratic transition in Tehran. The Obama administration needs to wave Israel off from an air strike in the clearest possible terms, publicly and privately. The penalties for such a foolish act, in terms of loss of diplomatic support and military aid, should be plainly delineated. If a bold strike is required, let it be for peace, not war. Now would be a good time for all parties to sit down for a serious discussion about what it would take to establish a nuclear-free Middle East.

An attack on Iran now would at best only further isolate Israel and drag the United States right along with it. At its worst, however, it could mark the beginning of a broader regional conflict that could have incalculable human costs, intensifying global jihad against Israel, the United States and Jews and Americans anywhere. The prospects for peace, not only in the Middle East but everywhere, would be set back for generations.



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

U.S. BISHOPS

‘Religious Liberty’ on Agenda In Baltimore and White House

A lengthy report opening the U.S. bishops’ annual fall meeting in Baltimore, Md., on Nov. 14 painted a dour picture of the state of religious liberty in the United States. But an “extraordinarily friendly” meeting at the White House seemed to reduce some of the tension that has been building between the Obama administration and the U.S. bishops in recent months. Following a meeting with President Obama on Nov. 8, Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said he left the Oval Office “a bit more at peace about this issue than when I entered.”

Archbishop Dolan described the meeting as “very candid.” According to the archbishop, the president promised to look “long and hard” at the church and state conflicts that have arisen over the last year that the bishops argue represent infringements on religious liberty.

“I would say there were areas of agreement and disagreement,” said Archbishop Dolan; “I found the president of the United States to be very open to the sensitivities of the Catholic community” regarding its concerns over religious liberty. Those concerns have recently been provoked by conflicts over gay marriage and civil union laws that have been driving Catholic agencies out of social services

and proposed federal requirements that would compel that all health insurance packages include contraception, sterilization and abortifacients.

Archbishop Dolan said the meeting touched on a wide range of topics but that by mutual agreement with the White House, details of the meeting would not be made public. He added that the current issues related to religious liberty might be an area where there is room for compromise “as long as we’re not compromising our principles.”

Speaking at the general assembly, Bishop William E. Lori of Bridgeport, Conn., chairman of the new Ad Hoc Committee for Religious Liberty, outlined a range of actions by government agencies perceived by the U.S. bishops as threats to religious rights. He explained the Constitutional and natural law concerns the ad hoc committee aims to address and cited some

specific clashes between Catholic teaching and federal laws and initiatives. In addition to the interim health care requirements, the Department of Health and Human Services also recently denied a one-year grant to the U.S. Catholic bishops’ Migration and Refugee Services to aid foreign-born victims of human trafficking. The attention has focused on requirements in the guidelines for the new grants that called for agencies to offer the “full range of reproductive service,” including abortion and contraception, to victims.

Bishop Lori also cited the Department of Justice’s shift from defending the Defense of Marriage Act to opposing it in court “as an act of ‘bias and prejudice’ akin to racism, thereby implying that churches which teach that marriage is between a man and a woman are guilty of bigotry.”

He said the bishops see a pattern in

Bishop William E. Lori, left, and Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan at a press conference in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 14.



culture and law to treat religion “as merely a private matter between an individual and one’s own God. Instead of promoting toleration of differing religious views, some laws, some decisions and some administrative regulations treat religion not as a contributor to our nation’s common morality but rather as a divisive and disruptive force better kept out of public life.”

GUATEMALA

President’s Past Raises Human Rights Concerns

Concerns about the potential for the return of human rights abuses in Guatemala have been raised now that a retired general with a controversial past has been elevated to the presidency. Otto Pérez



Molina directed a military intelligence unit during Guatemala's 36-year war. His victory was widely predicted, but Catholic leaders remain unsure what to expect when the soldier-turned-politician takes office in January.

"As a candidate, he made some promises, such as the creation of a ministry of social development, that I would like to see him follow through on," said Bishop Álvaro Ramazzini Imeri of San Marcos, a department in Guatemala's highlands. "But until he starts to name his cabinet and set priorities, it's hard to say...how the Catholic Church's relationship with his administration will be."

Pérez Molina has promised an aggressive campaign against the Central American nation's crime problem. What that means remains to be seen, but the rhetoric troubles some Catholic leaders.

"The church, the human rights com-

munity, we do not support the iron-fist approach that he's in favor of," said Nery Rodenas, director of the Archbishop's Human Rights Office in Guatemala City. Rodenas said that strategy is ripe with the potential for abuse, similar to the problems Guatemala experienced in the past.

"It's not the answer to criminality," Rodenas said.

Pérez Molina defeated Manuel Baldizón in a presidential election marked by populist messages and promises to confront insecurity. He captured 54 percent of the vote on Nov. 6 and immediately vowed to tackle crime.

The uncertainty over how Pérez Molina will govern is fed by his complicated role during the war. He commanded forces in a rural area where the military carried out brutal massacres as part of a scorched-earth campaign.

Later, Pérez Molina directed the military intelligence unit D-2, which has been accused of taking part in the abduction and torture of a guerrilla leader. Pérez Molina, who has never been charged, has denied allegations that he committed human rights violations during the war.

"He is seen as a more modernizing element of the Guatemalan military," said Michael Allison, a political science professor at the University of Scranton in Pennsylvania. "While he was still part of the military during that time, he has a reputation for not being one of the strongest advocates of the scorched-earth approach."

Pérez Molina has dismissed the findings of a U.N.-sponsored truth commission that concluded gov-

ernment forces were responsible for 93 percent of the war's estimated 200,000 deaths and disappearances. He has also been quick to criticize the findings of the Catholic Church's own truth commission. Former Auxiliary Bishop Juan Gerardi Conedera of Guatemala City presented that commission's report in 1998. It charged that the Guatemalan military was primarily responsible for the war's death toll. Two days later, Bishop Gerardi was bludgeoned to death in his garage.

In *The Art of Political Murder: Who Killed the Bishop?* published in 2007, which documented the killing of Bishop Gerardi and the subsequent investigation, Francisco Goldman alleged that Pérez Molina was a mastermind of the murder. Pérez Molina has denied the accusation. Today, many Guatemalans are primarily concerned with the violent mix of drug trafficking, criminal gangs, extortion and corruption that fuels roughly 6,000 murders a year. The country is among the most violent in the world.



Crime is a major national problem in Guatemala. Two brothers hold a family photo showing their father, one of 27 farmers murdered in Petén Department last May.

Churchgoers Show More Optimism

Past studies have shown that those who attend religious services at least weekly tend to live longer and healthier lives. Now, new research indicates that frequent churchgoers also face those additional years with more optimism and greater social support than other people. A study involving more than 92,000 postmenopausal women showed that those who reported weekly attendance at religious services were 56 percent more likely to be above the median in terms of their optimism level. They also were significantly less likely to be depressed or characterized by cynical hostility. The study was published in the *Journal of Religion and Health* on Nov. 11; the research was conducted by a team led by Eliezer Schnall, a clinical associate professor of psychology at Yeshiva University in New York. Schnall said his research team postulated that “maybe there could be some social strains having to do with religious identification or networks or associations,” but the research did not support this hypothesis.

Humanitarian Laws Essential, Vatican Says

To protect innocent civilians from the harmful effects of weapons of war, “international humanitarian law remains an essential safety measure not to be weakened,” a Vatican official said. Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Vatican’s representative to U.N. agencies in Geneva, focused on the responsibility to protect civilian populations from harmful weapons in an address on Nov. 14 to a conference reviewing the international Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. “The responsibility of the C.C.W. to protect civilian populations rests on its ability to comply

NEWS BRIEFS

The high incidence of rape in Congo is not destroying only women; it is destroying the nation’s society, said the general secretary of the church’s national justice and peace commission, **Marie-Bernard Alima**, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Kalemie, during a visit in October to Washington. • The French consul in the Gaza Strip, Majdi Jameel Yaseen Shaqqoura, 44, his wife and two children were wounded by glass and shrapnel in an **Israeli attack in northern Gaza** on Nov. 14 on the Palestinian Navy site there. The consul’s wife suffered a hemorrhage that led to a miscarriage. • The story of the life and the assassination in 2005 of **Dorothy Stang**, of the Sisters of Notre Dame, is being told in a new American opera, “The Angel of the Amazon,” composed by Evan Mack. • **Columban missionaries** have joined the Catholic solidarity movement in South Korea opposing the construction of a military base on Jeju, the “Island of Peace.” • On Nov. 15 **Palestinian activists inspired by the freedom rides** of the U.S. Civil Rights movement in the American South boarded segregated Israeli public transportation in the West Bank to travel to occupied East Jerusalem.



Marie-Bernard Alima

with the provisions of international humanitarian law and even in strengthening them,” he said. “The C.C.W. has an important place and role in the international system that seeks to reduce the impact of indiscriminate weapons on civilian populations, on the development and implementation of the conditions that allow an exit from war situations,” he said. Archbishop Tomasi specifically expressed concern over the lack of consensus on protocols addressing certain types of mines and cluster munitions, which are being used in several conflicts.

Austria: Laypeople May Not Celebrate Mass

Austria’s Catholic bishops have rejected a call by dissident church members for laypeople to begin celebrating Mass in parishes with no priests. The bishops

said they had discussed “heavy demands for change” at their plenary meeting from Nov. 7 to Nov. 10. However, they said, “the summons to disobedience has not only left many Catholics shaking their heads, but has also triggered alarm and sadness.” The bishops were responding to a statement issued on Nov. 5 by the Austrian branch of the We Are Church movement, which said laypeople should start making up for clergy shortages by consecrating and distributing Holy Communion, as well as preaching and presiding at Mass. The bishops said that some demands connected to “this call for disobedience at the initiative of priests and laity are simply unsustainable” and breach “the central truth of our Catholic faith.”

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Occupation Therapy

Since September, the people occupying the park near Wall Street have spoken out boldly, albeit somewhat cryptically, about economic justice. The protests spread around the country. My home state of Massachusetts alone now sports 10 Occupy sites, from Dewey Square in Boston's financial district to encampments on town commons throughout the Commonwealth. Not even an unusually early and heavy New England snowfall deterred the motley crews of protestors.

The Occupy Wall Street movement has attracted fervent admirers as well as fierce detractors. The sparse and fuzzy collection of grievances advanced by the protesters has been subject to criticism, ridicule and demands for clarification: What precisely do you mean to say about the abuses perpetrated by the privileged 1 percent? Why don't you stop wallowing in the supposed indignities of being trapped in the 99 percent and do some serious bootstrap-pulling? Some of the public commentary has been quite substantive, while much of it has shed more heat than light.

Before the coverage of the Occupy movement devolves into mere name-calling or comes to be dominated by speculation about the likelihood of violent confrontations with short-tempered police forces, I would like to express one sentiment that has seldom been directed at the protestors.

Thank you!

The object of my gratitude is certainly not the aesthetics of the move-

ment. My few trips to observe (and to support, at least in a pastoral way) the protests downtown confronted me with quite an eyesore. Cheap, ramshackle tents are never pretty, not even the funky red "spirituality space" tent where I conducted a liturgy recently on a soggy and threadbare carpet. Nor am I particularly grateful for the specific content of the messages I spotted. As an academic, I have a constitutional bias against sound-bite analysis, much less any slogans that would fit on placards. This distaste has kept bumper stickers off any car I have ever driven.

My gratitude to the Occupy movement grows directly out of my identification with Catholic social teaching and its mission to scrutinize and publicize serious social justice concerns. Anybody committed to righting injustices and addressing inequities has plenty of reason to welcome these vigorous protests in our too often apathetic nation.

Admittedly, not all the claims of the protestors are accurate or could serve as a promising basis for public policy. But many of the things they say and the ideals they stand up for are just what we need to hear in these difficult economic times. In these years of high unemployment, blocked opportunity, crushing debt, anxieties about future economic security and deep doubts about recent economic policy, the United States desperately requires greater attention to the relationship between private gain and public benefits, and to principles like the common good and social responsibility.

Anybody who thinks our nation can sustain much longer such vast disparities of income, sharp concentrations of wealth and cozy relationships between money and political power is simply not paying sufficiently close attention.

It would of course be unwise to exaggerate the congruence between Occupy Wall Street and Catholic teachings on economic justice. Catholic social thought displays a

I am grateful to the protestors for spurring our conscience.

predilection for the harmonious and the irenic, qualities in short supply in the rhetoric heard at Occupy sites. But it is intriguing to note the overlap between the messages of the protestors and of church documents, particularly the U.S. bishops' pastoral letter

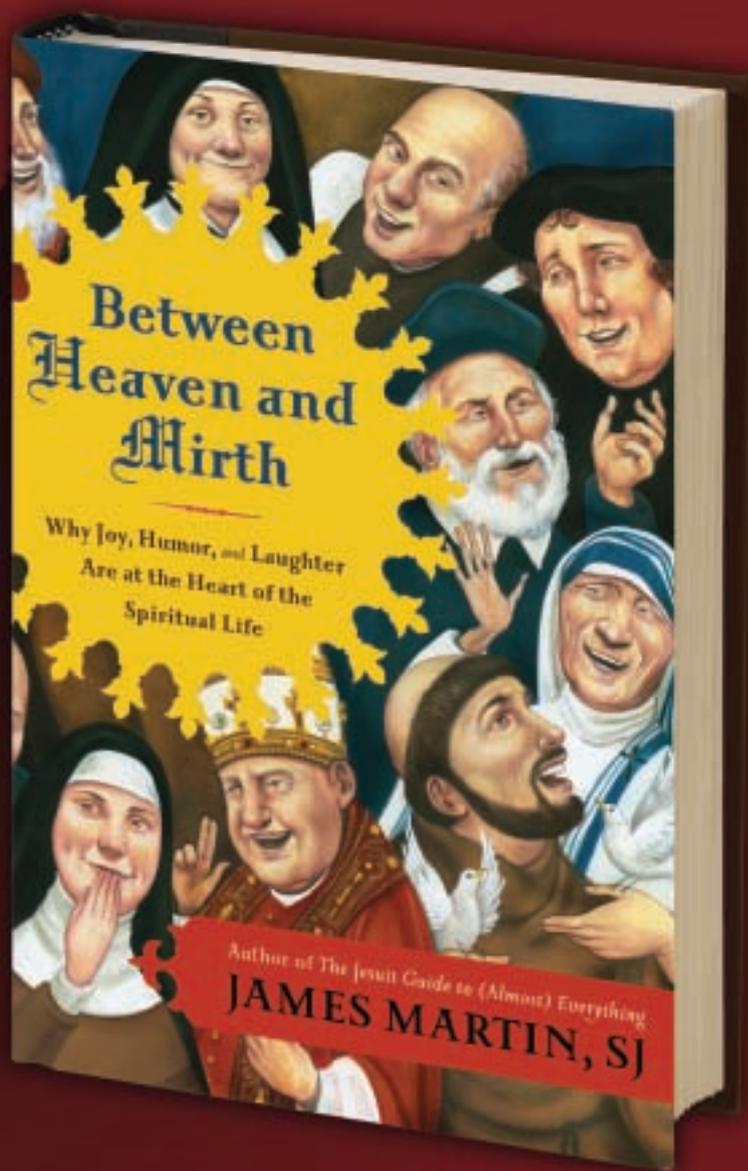
"Economic Justice for All" (now marking its 25th anniversary) and the Vatican document on international financial reform, released on Oct. 24. Multi-chapter documents will always be more satisfying, but Occupiers display an eloquence of their own.

Say what you will about the protestors—as resentment-driven agitators or impractical dreamers—I for one am grateful to them for spurring our consciences, sparking a sense of urgency and offering a vision of alternative economic practices that promote the countercultural principle of "people over profits." It might just be that Occupy Wall Street has made more headway as a catalyst for change in the United States in the last 10 weeks than Catholic social teaching has accomplished in the last 12 decades.

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

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—The Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan, Archbishop of New York



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CHINESE CATHOLICS
SEEK A HOME IN ITALY

Mending a Global Church

BY JEAN M. LIM

Ruffles. I stood in Prato, Italy, watching lively Chinese immigrants stitch ruffles onto blouses during a 14-hour factory shift and recalled a ruffled blouse I had just purchased. An e-mail alert had prompted me to order it online, with a “special 50-percent discount to be used only today from noon to 1 p.m.” I imagined 300 other women also logging in at lunchtime, causing a rush order to the manufacturer. When a batch of unfinished shirts rolled into Prato at 2 a.m., a subcontractor called these Chinese workers in to add the ruffles. The noise and lights disturbed the sleep of the Italian neighbors in this unzoned area, however, so the Prato police arrived to investigate. Had the ruffle on my blouse caused tension, I wondered. The real world is marked by globalization and migration, not just frolic and fun.

I turned to the priest standing next to me in that Prato factory under the pictures of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and Pope Benedict XVI. The Rev. Francesco Wang had courageously stepped into a microcosm of globalization, a force that Pope Benedict XVI warned “could cause unprecedented damage and create new divisions within the human family” (“Charity in Truth,” No. 33). A native of Jilin, China, Father Wang had been sent in 2003 from the Diocese of Qiqihar in Heilongjiang Province to study at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome for three years, after which he returned to China. In 2009, the 36-year-old priest was asked to return to Italy to minister to the Chinese community in the Parrocchia Dell’Ascensione in Prato. The parish Chinese community was having “some problems,” the priest was told, a vague statement he now recalls with a chuckle.

JEAN M. LIM teaches theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her interest in globalization is nurtured by the travels of her multicultural family and the insights of the Catholic Church.

Textiles and Tensions

Just 15 miles from Florence, Prato had reigned since the Middle Ages as the textile capital of Europe. The town's celebrated hero of the mid-13th century, Francesco Datini, seemed to be an early model for the global entrepreneur. According to Prato's Textile Museum, Datini's lucrative company did not provide innovations to the textile industry but implemented new ideas about obtaining raw materials from "abroad," which then meant Spain, England, Provence and Eastern Europe. From the 1850s to 1980s, Prato was a world center providing fabric to the fashion industry.

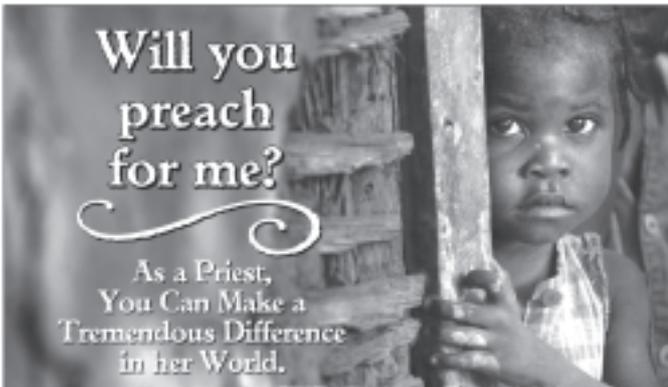
When the flourishing Prato textile industry needed cheap labor in the 1980s, Italians knew where to turn, because they had established relationships in outsourcing to Wenzhou, in the Zhejiang region of China. Many immigrants from Wenzhou were granted visas; they learned the industry as they worked long hours in Prato. Then, when centuries-old factories held by Prato families fell into bankruptcy from an inability to compete with multinational companies, frugal Chinese immigrants acquired them, applied innovations and made them profitable again. Since this transition, new immigrants are no longer officially welcome. Yet the Chinese continue to flock to Prato. Among Prato's population of 186,000, there are 11,500 legal Chinese immigrants and an additional 25,000 illegal immigrants.

As the lone Chinese Catholic priest working with these

immigrants, Father Wang has seen the effects of what the pope refers to as the "phenomenon of migration," striking "because of the sheer numbers of people involved, the social, political, cultural and religious problems it raises and the dramatic challenges it poses to nations and the international community" ("Charity in Truth," No. 62). Unscrupulous "snakeheads" charge up to \$23,000 to bring a worker to Prato, where he or she will earn about \$700 a month, \$8,400 a year.

In 2009 Prato elected Roberto Cenni as mayor on his campaign promise to prevent the "Chinese invasion." While Mayor Cenni is the former president and a current shareholder of a Prato holding business whose companies have moved much of their production to China in the last decade, his municipal security director proudly states that raids under Cenni's administration have quadrupled the number of factory shutdowns in Prato. Father Wang has never met Mayor Cenni, but he has seen city helicopters swoop down on Prato workers fleeing through back exits as factories are raided.

"Xenophobic" was the term Msgr. Santino Brunetti, the parochial vicar of immigration, used to describe Prato's administration in a public interview with a local journal in October 2010. When Monsignor Brunetti received threats in response to his statement, Bishop Gastone Simoni of Prato quickly defended the church's duty to remind all persons of their common humanity, no matter how controversial the situation.



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In a papal address to Italian political leaders on March 12, 2011, Pope Benedict reminded local administrators like the Prato mayor of their “special dedication...to being promoters of collaboration, of solidarity and humanity.” The pope also referred to the need for ecclesial organizations to support “humanization and socialization, especially dedicated to marginalized and needy groups” and said their activities should be “always properly appreciated and supported even in financial terms.”

View from the Parish

Father Wang rarely receives requests for material assistance from the characteristically independent Chinese, but there are frequent requests for translation services. At the Sunday liturgy in Chinese that I attended, an Italian religious sister made a post-Communion appeal for parishioners to join her evangelization efforts by going door to door in the Chinese community on the following Saturday. Father Wang translated for the 50 Chinese in attendance. The parish also offers Italian lessons during the European factory slowdown months of July and August.

With quiet determination, Father Wang muses, “I think it would be shortsighted to ignore the tremendous returns that could result from the church’s further investment in evangelization efforts in Prato.” There are only about 120

Chinese Catholics in the parish, but there are tens of thousands of Chinese in Prato. As the children attend Italian schools and grow up in a country that is nominally 90 percent Catholic, Father Wang has been successful in capturing their religious imaginations. “I see the need to give these young leaders a vision of the global church beyond Prato,” he says. Unfortunately, his efforts to obtain diocesan funds to send five young adults to World Youth Day in Madrid were unfulfilled.

The Sunday liturgy at the Chinese parish exudes a vibrant community feeling. As I walked to the church, a parishioner kindly confirmed my route and told me that the 3:30 p.m. Mass was meant to accommodate night-shift workers. Father Wang admits, “The parish was rather ‘tribal’ at first because of immigrants coming from different provinces of China, but I tackled that problem by insisting that only Mandarin and not Chinese dialects be spoken in church.”

When the diocese ignored Father Wang’s appeal that the Italian catechumenate period of two years be shortened for the migrant workers, he decided to make the not-yet-baptized feel welcome in his own way. On a typical Sunday, everyone at Mass lines up at Communion time side by side to receive either the Eucharist or a blessing.

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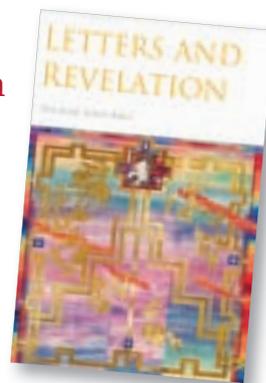
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Every weekend another Chinese priest, Father Huang, takes a four-hour train ride from Rome to help with hospital and prison ministry. Father Huang told me that on Saturday he had visited about 40 Chinese immigrants imprisoned for illegal entry. He also introduced me to an Italian lawyer who had come to the church to set up a town hall meeting, where Father Huang would be part of a dialogue addressing community tension.

Neighboring Catholic parishes give mixed reviews of the church's support of the Chinese immigrants. At the Parrocchia S. Maria dell'Umiltà a Chiesanuova, the Rev. Romeo Serafino says, "There are many unemployed persons who understandably have difficulty with the presence of the Chinese workers in these hard economic times." Father Serafino relates that Bishop Simoni has said all business owners need to respect Prato law, but Father Serafino smiles broadly when mentioning a reputation that some locals have for tax evasion. He knows some Italians claim that the Chinese are loud but adds, "My own parents lived in Germany for the first 10 years of my life and worked long hours to save money. The Germans claimed the Italians were too noisy."

When Father Serafino was faced with entering the Italian military to fulfill his national duty, he opted instead for service with Caritas. He began working with Chinese immigrants alongside Margaret Sin, a Canossiane sister. A

few years ago, the textile manufacturer who employed Father Serafino's sister went bankrupt. That factory was bought by some Chinese residents of Prato, and today she still does fabric stamping there and receives the generous benefits required by Italian law. Father Serafino is proud that his diocese is meeting the challenges of 21st century migration by holding Masses in Polish, Romanian, Albanian, Ukrainian, Sri Lankan, Spanish, Pakistani, Nigerian, Filipino and, of course, Mandarin Chinese.

Evangelization in a Global Economy

With immigrants come remittances sent home. Audits show that as much as \$1.5 million per day is being wired to China from Prato. City administrators claim that the Chinese are sapping the local economy, but Father Wang and Chinese business owners assert that the risky innovation of the Chinese saved the Prato textile industry and that the Chinese contribute daily to the Italian economy by making local purchases. No Italian economists have estimated the Chinese immigrants' contribution to the local economy. As Pope Benedict wrote, "foreign workers, despite any difficulties concerning integration, make a significant contribution to the economic development of the host country through their labor, besides that which they make to their country of origin through the money they send home" ("Charity in Truth," No. 62).

Still, cultural hostility was in evidence last year at an important religious and secular event in Prato. Five times each year, the cathedral attracts pilgrims who come to view the "sacred belt" of Mary, kept under lock and key in a gilded bronze reliquary. Legend dating back to the sixth century holds that Mary gave the belt to Thomas at the time of her assumption. Subsequently, the belt found its way to Prato in the 12th century through Michele Dagomari, a Prato resident and Holy Land pilgrim. On Sept. 8, 2010, the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the city of Prato refused to allow the Chinese flag to be part of the religious procession leading to the cathedral's display of the sacred belt, breaking a tradition that has included the national flags of all of Prato's sister cities.

What would the Virgin Mary think of such tensions, occasioned by a piece of her clothing, I wondered. Then I thought of my ruffled blouse and the negative impact my own consumer lifestyle contributes to the demand for low-priced goods that drives the global economy. How can globalization be made a positive force in the lives of people in cities like Prato? What can we Catholics do to further economic justice and Christian community in such places? Pope Benedict offers this counsel in "Charity in Truth" (No. 78): "As we contemplate the vast amount of work to be done, we are sustained by our faith that God is present alongside those who...work for justice." **A**

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Where Credit Is Due

An Arizona program proves a lifeline for Catholic education.

BY ROBERT J. BIRDSELL AND MARY CLAIRE RYAN

Last spring, the Supreme Court handed down a decision allowing the use of tax credits to fund religious schools in Arizona. This decision should be a tipping point in the resurgent “school choice” movement. The court effectively mapped a route for choice-inclined state legislatures that skirts the First Amendment bar to government “establishment of religion.” Most reactions have defaulted to polarized arguments that pit allies of public education against supposed enemies. Instead, we see the decision as an opportunity to address what President Obama calls “the civil rights issue of our generation”—the unyielding achievement gap between poor students and wealthier students.

Could new funding strategies make a difference? Yes.

Consider the history of Catholic schools in America. In an incisive article published in the spring 2011 issue of *National Affairs*, Andy Smarick surveys the rise and decline of urban Catholic schools, tracing parallel trends in our society’s ability to educate working-class and immigrant children. Millions educated in parochial schools through the 1960s grew up to make vital contributions to U.S. productivity and culture. Since then demographic shifts, growing Catholic assimilation into the American mainstream and rising costs—along

with failures in leadership—have led to the closing of thousands of Catholic schools, especially in inner cities. In the 1960s one in four children in New York City, for example, attended a Catholic school; today, fewer than one in 10 does. The remaining traditional Catholic schools often



PHOTO: CNS/RAFAEL CRISOSTOMO, CATHOLIC STANDARD

ROBERT J. BIRDSELL is the president and chief executive officer of the *Cristo Rey Network*; **MARY CLAIRE RYAN** is the executive director of the *NativityMiguel Network of Schools*.

charge tuition that low-income families cannot afford. A choice in schooling that served society well has all but vanished.

Meanwhile, society’s collective failure in recent decades to educate the very children who most need good schools has been well documented. A black male today is more likely to land in prison than in college; a young Latina enrolled as a freshman in college has about a one in 10 chance of earning a degree.

Cristo Rey and NativityMiguel Networks

Passionate reformers in both the public and the private realms have taken up the challenge to educate children “left behind.” The Cristo Rey and NativityMiguel networks, which we lead, are two examples of innovative, independent, faith-based schools—mostly Catholic in heritage, open to all, founded to serve the urban poor and receiving little support from the church. Both have been cited as models for rejuvenating the vital tradition of urban Catholic education. More than one observer has noted the similarity between well-publicized, pioneering public charter schools and Catholic school models.

Like the best charter school organizations, our schools take responsibility for results. Our schools champion quality, transparency and accountability for student performance—a fair exchange for public trust. Both the NativityMiguel and Cristo Rey networks set high standards and monitor curriculum, professional development, graduate support and academic progress. A partnership with the National Student Clearinghouse, for example, will provide a reliable source of data on students’ educational paths and success after high school graduation.

Why should all of this matter to citizens and taxpayers? Because schools like ours have an outstanding record of success in teaching low-income, minority students. Our gradu-

ates master skills, complete high school and pursue higher education at rates far exceeding peer averages.

In the face of enormous need, however, our networks are relatively small. The question of economic viability, which has so far depended on the generosity of private donors and corporate partners, clouds every strategic plan, every vision of transforming more lives by scaling programs to meet the strong demand for them.

We are eager and able to grow faster. And we are not the only ones. At a recent conference organized by the American Center for School Choice, a wide range of faith-based schools found common ground. The expansion of state tax credit programs for education would be one of the most efficient ways to support the growth of strong schools—enabling families to decide which school is best for their children and avoiding some of the most contentious issues by channeling funding through nonprofit organizations rather than through the state or federal government.

Current research on the effects of school choice, in fact, reveals benefits for both students and nearby public schools, according to a study published by the Foundation for Educational Choice (Greg Forster, Ph.D., *A Win-Win Solution: The Empirical Evidence on School Vouchers*, 2011). And a nonpartisan report prepared for the Florida Legislature’s Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability concluded that taxpayers saved \$1.49 in state education funding for every dollar lost in corporate income tax revenue due to tax credits for scholarship contributions (Report No. 08-68, December 2008).

Why shouldn’t bold measures be used to tackle one of the costliest, most pernicious ills of modern American society? The human impact of better education for all is not hard to imagine. The economic consequence of bringing all U.S. students up to a baseline level of proficiency for developed countries, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, could add \$72 trillion to the gross domestic product. Good schools of many kinds—traditional public, public charter, secular and faith-based schools—can hasten progress. We challenge education advocates of all political stripes and lawmakers in all 50 states to seize this moment of opportunity to enact school choice. **A**

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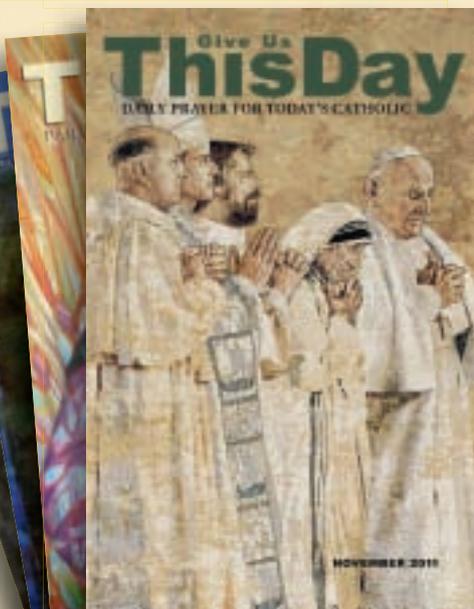
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FILM | ROBERT E. LAUDER

FAITH BEFORE FATHERLAND

Ludi Boeken's 'Saviors in the Night'

Another Holocaust movie. Haven't filmmakers exhausted this topic? The question reveals a trivialization of two profound mysteries: the mystery of evil and the mystery of artistic creativity.

To think that the evil made manifest in the horrors of the Holocaust could be depicted in some ultimate way so that future depictions would be superfluous is to minimize the mystery of evil, which is like an

unfathomable abyss. It is also to forget that when gifted artists use their skills to create, even when they focus on something dealt with previously by others, new meanings and insights may result.

The French film director Jean-Luc Godard once said that every camera angle involves a moral decision. Many moral and artistic choices are made in filmmaking; anyone working on a film—producers, writers, directors,

cinematographers, actors—can enhance or weaken the work. I cannot report one misstep in the marvelous film **Saviors in the Night**, which has just been released in the United States.

A true story, this film is based on the memoirs of Marga Spiegel, which tell how she, her husband, Menne, and their daughter, Karin, were saved from extermination in the death camps. Courageous farmers in the

Veronica Ferres as Marga Spiegel and Martin Horn as Heinrich Aschoff in "Saviors in the Night"



PHOTO: MARTIN MENKE

region of Munsterland hid them for 30 months.

Some of these farmers were members of the Nazi party; and at least one couple, Heinrich and Maria Aschoff, had a daughter, Anni, in the Hitler Youth movement and a son, Klemens, fighting in Hitler's war. The "saviors" had been subject to the propaganda concerning Jews that Hitler and his

cohorts promoted, but through a miracle of grace their consciences fought the lies and bigotry. Early in the film Anni, having been indoctrinated through the Hitler Youth movement, is angry when she first learns that her parents are hiding Jews. One of her parents delivers a line that sums up much of the film: "We are Germans, but we are also Catholics." "Saviors in

the Night" dramatizes the conversion experience of some Catholics, who come to understand more profoundly and live with greater commitment their own faith.

Marga and Karin did not fit the stereotypical image of Jews, so they were able to "pass" as Germans who had come to the Aschoff farm to avoid the bombing in the cities. Menne, who looked less German, had to hide for two and a half years in a meat-smoking locker.

In the first moments of the film, the gross injustice toward the Jews is emphasized. The film opens in 1918, toward the end of the First World War, and Menne is awarded the Iron Cross for heroism in fighting for his country. A quick cut and 25 years later, Menne's Iron Cross has been replaced by a yellow star. He has gone from hero to fugitive. The rest of the film dramatizes how the Aschoffs, their relatives and friends save the Spiegels from extermination.

Part of the film's brilliance is the way it captures the terror of the Holocaust without ever taking us to the concentration camps. We see, or rather experience, the evil of the camps through the family's constant fear that they will be discovered. But the Jews are not the only ones who are afraid.

The "saviors" know that if they are caught concealing Jews, they will be killed immediately. While reflecting on the constant danger these farmers freely accepted, I have often asked myself: What would I do in that situation? That the question keeps recurring suggests the power of the film.

"Saviors in the Night" eschews physical violence and focuses instead on the human drama involved in choosing good or evil, the drama of sin and salvation. On one level the film is an adventure story about the hunted and the hunter; on another it is about adventures in grace. The film director Ingmar Bergman thought a camera

The Immaculate Conception

(after a painting by Bartoleme Esteban Murillo)

Like a recurring dream,
you imagine the woman
clothed in white, wrapped in deep blue.
This woman balances on the crescent moon,
on the backs of cherubs and their clouds.
Her eyes are not interested in you,
not concerned with the growing mystery
you assign her: the irony of God
growing in a virgin. For now,
she needs the open space of heaven
and your intermittent vision
that will make her materialize again
and again until you get it right:
her flowing hair, her folded hands,
that hint of gold behind her back,
enveloping her like mist from God's mouth.
Enveloping you as completely as dogma,
the genuflected knee, the thin voice
that repeats the same prayer
and gives it solid blue breath.

L I N D A N E M E C F O S T E R

Linda Nemeč Foster is coordinator of the Contemporary Writers Series at Aquinas College, Grand Rapids, Mich. She is author of nine collections of poetry.

could film a soul. "Saviors in the Night" films consciences.

In a lovely scene Maria, taking a bath in a large round wooden tub, invites Marga to join her. The two women giggle like young girls while they share the tub.

As Maria scrubbed Marga's shoulders and arms, I sensed that not only was the bathing physically refreshing but that something else was happening—Maria was washing away the past wrongs inflicted on Marga because of her Jewishness.

Ludi Boeken, the director, keeps us in the center of the drama by using close-ups and camera shots that confine us within the same area as the Jews and farmers. His cinematic techniques never distract but rather keep us physically, emotionally, morally and spiritually tied to the characters. Boeken explained, "I have tried to por-

tray the people, the events, the tensions and the moments of relief in all simplicity, without over-dramatization—as if we happened to be there and witnessed some of what occurred...."

That is precisely what he has done. By not over-dramatizing he leads us deeply into the drama and, in a mys-

terious way that is part of the magic of film, places us at its center. Part of Boeken's successful handling of the story may be due to his own history. How could he, a Jew, make a film in which Germans, some of them Nazis, were heroes during the Holocaust? The reason is that his own parents had been saved in Holland by people like the German farmers in "Saviors."

Indirectly, the film suggests that many more Jews could have been saved had there been more people of

courage. The Talmud says, "He who saves a single life saves the world entire." Whenever conscience is challenged, the material for drama is present.

That "Saviors in the Night" is a true story adds to its power. Marga Spiegel, now 97, for years gave talks telling her story. In an addendum at the end of the film, Marga and Anni, now the closest of friends, are shown on the set with some of the actors and crew. A postscript, a device that does not always work in films, underlines the realism of this movie: the events depicted actually happened, and the actors portray real people who resisted the evil that engulfed many.

Another Holocaust film? Yes, and a great one.

REV. ROBERT E. LAUDER is professor of philosophy at St. John's University in New York. His most recent book is *Love and Hope: Pope Benedict's Spirituality of Communion* (Resurrection Press).

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BOOKS FOR LITTLE STOCKINGS

Christmas is the heart of a child's calendar. Besides the obvious presents and sweets, there is the deeper attraction: the Nativity story. In Jesus' birth, children hear themes tremendously empowering for the under-4-foot crowd: the supreme importance of a poor child, that kings and rulers both worshipped and feared a child, and that a young child could change the world. In Christmas, the theological imagination meets the child's imagination, both suggesting a world in which children matter, and make a difference.

A number of new children's books pick up this theme of the power that even the very young can exert. A trio of children's Christmas picture books show children transforming their families through the simple power of their good deeds. You may have thought the rich Rockefeller family purchased the first Christmas tree to illuminate New York City's landmark Rockefeller Center. They did not. Instead grateful workers who built Rockefeller Center raised the first tree there in 1931, in the midst of the Great Depression, to show their thankfulness for having jobs when a quarter of all U.S. workers were unemployed. **The Carpenter's Gift**, by David Rubel (Random House, ages 4-8) imagines that true story from the fictional point of view of Henry, a poor boy helping his struggling family by selling Christmas trees, who gave the construction workers the first Rockefeller Center tree. The workers returned Henry's kindness, helping his family build a home. Today Rockefeller Center's owners donate the wood from the tree to Habitat for Humanity International to help needy families build their homes, and the epilogue of the book discusses the work of Habitat for Humanity. Illustrated with pencil and pastels by

Jim LaMarche that match the simple tale, this story of need and helping hands resonates in our difficult economic times.

In **A Christmas Tree for Pyn**, by Olivier Dunrea (Philomel/Penguin Putnam, ages 4-8), Pyn's gruff father tells her they cannot have a Christmas tree, but she is not discouraged. She wears down his resistance to having a tree, and to being called "Papa" after the death of Pyn's mother. Like many artist-written books, the text is not as engaging as the lovely art.

Similarly, **Home for Christmas** offers all the intricate Scandinavian winter scenes for which artist Jan Brett is known and loved (Putnam, ages 4-8). Rollo, the wild "Prodigal son" troll, returns home with a more selfless heart. The story doesn't sing, but the art will have you reaching for a cup of hot chocolate.

Jane Goodall discerned her future as a young child, when she was given a stuffed chimpanzee toy. By age 10, Jane declared that she would go to Africa, live with animals and observe them. She was told her dream was impossible, both because she was a girl and because her family had little money. She was not dissuaded, her mother encouraged her, and she became a leading scientist, a United Nations "Messenger of Peace" and an environmental educator, founding the Roots and Shoots organization for children and the Jane Goodall Institute to encourage environmental education, conservation and action. **Me...Jane**, by Patrick McDonnell (Little Brown, ages 4-8) whimsically combines cartoonish artwork with photos and quotes from the real Jane, to encourage young readers to reach for their

dreams. As Goodall notes, "The life of each one of us makes a difference...and we have a choice as to what sort of difference we make. The life of each one of us matters."

Jessie and Evan Treski take that theme to heart and try to stand up for themselves against a popular crook. What are kids to do when the richest boy in the neighborhood steals their hard-earned lemonade-stand money, buys the latest 3D video game system, and instead of becoming a pariah for his crime, becomes the most popular kid in the class as everyone wants to try out the newest tech toy? In Jacqueline Davies's **The Lemonade Crime** (Houghton Mifflin, ages 8-12), the aggrieved siblings take the law into their own hands and set up a trial by a jury of their fourth-grade peers. By turns funny and insightful, the brother and sister learn that courts do not always produce justice, but forgiveness and reconciliation, even among "frenemies," is always within reach.

Anyone who has ever observed a child's glee in pushing an elevator button will understand the appeal of Herve Tullet's ingenious **Press Here** (Chronicle, ages 4-8). Instead of telling children not to touch, Tullet tells them to go ahead, press the button, shake the book, etc. Without a single pop-

up, lift-the-flap or computer chip, the old-school *Press Here* is fully interactive. Young readers delight when the

turn of the page reveals that each of their actions "created" a correlating visual reaction in the illustrated dots. Our children call this "the magical book." Be prepared for multiple readings.

E-books take another approach to interactivity and agency. They can empower children with technology. Some provide a helpful aid for early literacy. But in the case of children's picture books, this also means many

ON THE WEB

Additional reviews of electronic books for children. americamagazine.org



titles that cannot decide if they are books or video games. Do the electronic add-ons enhance or detract?

For chapter books and older readers, the choice of e-books or print books is simply one of price, convenience and personal preference for how you want your text served up. Do you want the cheaper and harder print book, which can be dropped, brought to the sandy beach or wet pool, left in a hot car or accidentally slept on? Or is the price of pampering the fussier, expensive e-reader worthwhile, so you can easily carry an entire library with you wherever you go? The devices are addictive, and lifesavers for people for whom access to bookstores and libraries is difficult.

Many e-readers, like Barnes &

Noble's Nooks, are fully functional touch-screen tablet computers at a fraction of the iPad's cost. This presents both opportunities and challenges. It opens up educational Web sites to children without tying up the family computer, but it also means parental surveillance of children's Web use on the e-reader. E-books are good news for publishers trying to compete for eyeballs and wallets with screens and the Internet.

But is what is good for publishers good for your children? E-readers are hailed as interactive, child-centric learning devices that can help younger children develop early reading readiness skills, experience the joy of independent reading through the "Read to you" setting and interest older children

in reading, particularly reluctant readers and boys, because these groups may view electronic devices as "cooler" than books.

Do children's e-books live up to the hype? They can, but for picture books the buyer must truly beware. Only a fraction of children's books are available in e-book form, so choices are narrow; blockbuster series and celebrity authors get more attention. Most of the print books reviewed in the beginning of this article are not available as e-books. Children's picture books are both works of literature and works of art. Shrinking a 20-inch spread to a tiny 6-inch screen can produce sometimes illegible results. Zooming in to see the text better, you chop off the picture. It is a zero-sum conundrum.

The genre is new and evolving, so there are few standards.

As fans of audio books know, the narrator may be a delightful addition to the book. Actor Andre Braugher's narration of President Obama's children's book, *Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters*, is a wonderful counterpoint to Loren Long's optimistic artwork and the inspirational stories of Americans from George Washington to Helen Keller, César Chávez and Sitting Bull. Ray Charles's narration of the rhythmic alphabet book *Chica Chica Boom Boom*, by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault, with bright illustrations by Lois Ehlert, sets a toes-tapping beat to help children learn the alphabet. But you may also be dismayed by narrators whose voices sound like fingers on a blackboard. You may enjoy the Australian comedian Barry Humphries's character Dame Edna on late night television but find him gratifying as the narrator of the popular e-

book series about the pig Olivia.

Dr. Seuss, pioneer of children's books, is ironically also a pioneer of e-books, despite his death 20 years ago. The first books to be made into e-books were Dr. Seuss books, used in library and school computers before Nooks and Kindles existed. Oceanhouse Media is a quality e-book and book app producer. They start with a focal point in the art so you can see something well before panning out to show as much of the whole artwork as possible on the small screen space. The words light up as the narrator reads them. When children touch the words in the story, the word is re-read to them. When children touch pictures on the screen, the corresponding word appears.

Dr. Seuss's new book, **The Bippolo Seed and Other Lost Stories** (Random House, ages 6 and up) is a collection of seven stories released in magazines in the early 1950s, and now published for the first time in book

form. In the title story, a duck finds a magic bippolo seed and is planning to wish for some needed food, when a tall cat (a precursor to the Cat in the Hat) tempts him to excess and loss. It is a parable about greed often repeated in Dr. Seuss's later works, and a message that resonates in our consumer culture and Occupy Wall Street days. As Dr. Seuss once quipped, "I'm subversive as hell." There are fewer pictures and less graceful rhymes than in his later works, but even Dr. Seuss's early work holds its own in both print and e-book format.

When done well, children's books and e-books can empower young readers by seeding the power of reading, and reminding even the most pint-sized readers of their worth and strength.

MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE, a professor of international relations at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., is the author of several children's books, most recently *You Are My Wish* (Philomel Books).

Dean

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LETTERS

Tear It Down

Re Bill Williams's review of Julian Guthrie's *The Grace of Everyday Saints* (11/7) about the fight to save St. Brigid's church: I was married in St. Brigid's 56 years ago, and I can state that it was *not* a thriving parish. Two friends of mine were among the very few lay ministers doing lecturing, marriage preparation and the adult Christian initiation program. The Academy of Art, a private real estate conglomerate, bought the church for \$3 million a few years ago. It remains empty because of its landmark status and earthquake damage.

Every big city has churches like St. Brigid's, built for immigrants in the early 1900s, that are being torn down because of demographic changes. I have been stridently opposed to church closings, but this is one that should have been closed.

ED GLEASON
San Francisco, Calif.

Subsidiarity Forever

In response to "Vatican Document Calls for 'Supranational' Reform" (Signs of the Times, 11/7): The document is a hard read, but you captured its main points. I think it makes a mistake calling for the gradual creation of a world authority, because this sets off alarms among extreme nationalists and scares others of us who favor subsidiarity and good citizenship over the councils of the well-intentioned.

We do need more and better regulation of national and international financial markets. The Vatican would do well to point out this need and give priority to the common good and international justice and leave the details to concerned citizens.

R. J. ASSELIN
Washington, D.C.

As Father Colbert Says

Having read "Blessed Are the Rich," by John Kavanaugh, S.J. (11/14), I con-

tinue to be caught by Stephen Colbert's take on this from last year: "Because if this is gonna be a Christian nation that doesn't help the poor, either we've got to pretend that Jesus was just as selfish as we are, or we've got to acknowledge that he commanded us to love the poor and serve the needy without condition—and then admit that we just don't want to do it." This year this will be part of the penitential rite for our feast of Christ the King.

(REV.) JOHN FARLEY
Grand Junction, Colo.

Tea Party Boos

I thank John J. Kavanaugh, S.J., (11/14) for exposing the hypocrisy of the likes of George Weigel. They pound the table calling for adherence to the magisterium. But they are selective in what they add to their Catholic cafeteria tray. Weigel is the Catholic mouthpiece for the Tea Party wing of the Republican party. Whenever I preach in homilies on social justice themes that come right from the readings, I get angry attacks from those brainwashed by the right wing media.

Whenever an idea is proposed that comes right from the church's teaching on immigrants or labor, they reply that these teachings have no official standing and can be ignored. They add that these teachings are not infallible. They pass over the fact that apart from the definition of the Assumption, there have been no infallible church statements.

(DEACON) BOB KILLOREN
Gashanna, Ohio

Some Theology Must Be Undone

Toward the end of "Remembering Justice," (11/14) Peter Henriot, S.J., says of the synod document "Justice in the World," "Good theology, keen social analysis and relevant practical recommendations make it one of the most influential documents of the Catholic social tradition." He points out that this belongs to the wisdom of see, judge, act. Why not go a bit further by changing the order to: keen social analysis, good theology and commitment to obvious conclusions? This would include the hermeneutic of suspicion. As Juan Luis Segundo,

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one of the outstanding theologians of liberation, put it, ideology often needs to be undone in order to do the good theology that flows into Gospel action.

One example of this is the need to undo the ideology that Europe is the church and the need to resist the ideology that the church serves itself first and only then the Gospel and its mission.

NOEL McMASTER
Halls Creek, Australia

Never Too Late to Learn

“A Lesson for Today?” by John O’Malley, S.J. (10/31), should be required reading for bishops and theologians. Instead of today’s confrontations and recriminations, Trent provides a model for bishops and theologians to interact in charity and dialogue while at the same time respecting each other’s charism. Since most

U.S. bishops do not have advanced degrees in theology, they would be wise to listen to the professionals discussing theological opinions on a variety of topics. On their part, theologians should recognize that the bishops have the “last word” as chief teachers of the faith in their dioceses.

The recent confrontation between the U.S. bishops’ Committee on Doctrine and the theologian Elizabeth Johnson, C.S.J., is but one example that clearly shows the current model is not working. I believe that Trent provides an important lesson to ease the tension between bishops and theologians. The question remains, however: are they willing to learn?

PATRICK T. DARCY
Columbia, Mo.

Drone Lynchings

I read your editorial “Conscience in the Mud” (10/31) while standing trial

with the “Hancock 38” for occupying the entrance drive to Hancock Air National Guard Field, outside Syracuse, N.Y., from which the Reaper drone is operated.

Some readers of *America’s* editorial may be true believers in the would-be redemptive violence of weaponized drones. The fact that Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta is increasing expenditures for them at a time when he is obliged to reduce the Pentagon’s overall budget should tip us off that we will be dealing for a long time with the ethical challenges presented by these instruments of international lynchings.

(REV.) BERNARD SURVIL
Greensburg, Pa.

Three Theories on Francis

I thank Jon M. Sweeney for his commentary on the marvelous painting of St. Francis of Assisi by Giovanni Bellini, “St. Francis in the Desert” (11/7). Readers may like to know of the ongoing discussion about what is happening in the painting. Millard Meiss writes, in his book *Giovanni Bellini’s St. Francis in the Frick Collection*, that it is a portrayal of Francis receiving the stigmata. John V. Fleming, in *From Bonaventure to Bellini*, says that having received the stigmata, Francis is ready to take flight as the angel of the sixth seal in Revelation. I contend that Bellini was portraying Francis as the new Moses who would lead the Catholic Church where it should go. As Moses came down the mountain with the 10 Commandments in stone, Francis had the law of love of Jesus Christ inscribed in his flesh.

STEPHEN PASTICK, S.F.O.
Janesville, Minn.

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CARTOON BY HARLEY SCHWADRON

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Out of Darkness

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B), DEC. 5, 2011

Is 40:1-5, 9-11; Ps 85:9-14; 2 Pt 3:8-14; Mk 1:1-8

Here comes with power the Lord God (Is 40:10)

Dante opens the *Divine Comedy* by telling us that his odyssey began as he traveled in the darkness of middle age: “Midway in our life’s journey, I went astray/ From the straight road and woke to find myself/ Alone in a dark wood.” A few lines later he assures us, “But since it came to good, I will recount/ all that I found revealed by God’s grace” (John Ciardi trans.).

Carl Jung wisely taught that unless we enter this destabilizing darkness of midlife, we will likely end up as “hypochondriacs...doctrinaires, applauders of the past, or eternal adolescents.” But if we enter in faith, it can come to good, as Dante said, with God’s grace revealing much.

Israel had its midlife crisis, its own darkness. God had promised David that his kingdom would remain forever (2 Sm 7). And when that dynasty was destroyed, it appeared that God had reneged. The catastrophic impact of the Babylonian conquest on Israel’s consciousness cannot be overplayed. Now lost in the darkness of exile, Israel had to face its sinfulness and rethink its relationship with God and even its identity. Many of the psalms of lament come from this time. Consider: “By the rivers of Babylon we sat mourning and weeping when we remembered Zion” (Ps 137).

For this community in darkness,

PETER FELDMIEIER is the Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo.

God commands the prophet: “Comfort, give comfort to my people.... Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.” A (heavenly?) voice then cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,” creating a gentle road home where valleys are filled and hills made low. Like a shepherd, God promises to guide and feed Israel, and to carry the people like sheep in his very bosom.

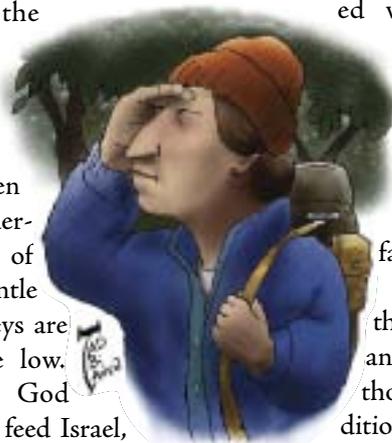
The Gospel reading, from the beginning of Mark, introduces John the Baptist by quoting our first reading to identify him as that voice crying out. But there is a twist. John’s baptism is one of repentance, and he announces the arrival of “one mightier,” who will “baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” John looks wild, clothed in camel hair and girded with a belt. The reference is to Elijah, who was to return and usher in the time of the messiah (2 Kgs 1:8; Mal 4:5). This makes John a bit of a disturbing presence.

On the one hand, John anticipates an even greater salvation than the one announced by Isaiah. On the other hand, what he imagines is probably much more apocalyptic, the context darker and more violent. So while the news is good, it is also very disquieting.

These two readings, taken together, might lead us to the often-repeated dictum: God wants to comfort the

afflicted and afflict the comfortable. There is indeed a truth here. What the exiles needed, and what God’s providence intended, was a way home. Our reading is God’s first announcement of these plans. What broken people need is healing, not challenge. In contrast, given the imperative of the Gospel, what John the Baptist’s listeners needed was repentance and readiness for the kingdom of God to envelop them. The different situation called for a very different message, now far more challenging.

I have never liked this dictum about God and affliction. It is as though our normal condition is to be in pain. If we



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Is there something in darkness you must face?
- Seek the freedom to look at it gently and honestly.
- Ask God to bring his light to guide you through.

ART: TAD DUNNE

are not there already, God will put us there. Or it is as if the only time we experience the gentleness of God is when we are suffering. Perhaps a better way to frame our relationship with God follows those insights of Dante. When we enter the darkness, God is there to help us face what must be faced and uncover what must be discovered. And God’s light guides us out to a new experience of salvation. In both cases God leads us where we must go, not to afflict us but to draw us ever closer to our truest self in him.

We Share His Light

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B), DEC. 11, 2011

Is 61:1-11; Ps Lk 1:46-54; Thes 5:16-24; Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

He was not the light, but came to testify to the light (Jn 1:8)

The beginning of John's Gospel introduces John the Baptist as one who came to testify to the light. Much of what John says in these early chapters highlights his insistence that he is merely one who points to the true light. He is not the Messiah, not the Prophet, not Elijah; just a voice crying out in the desert (1:20-23), a best man who rejoices at decreasing so that Christ the groom may increase (3:29-30).

This sounds like a good posture for ministry. We point to Jesus, and our witness is never about us; it is about God's love and about experiencing his saving grace. A diocesan personnel director told me that it is troubling to see a parish that finds its pastor indispensable. It means the pastor's staff and community are not empowered enough. It also means that it is not sufficiently clear to the people that only God is indispensable. The pastor is not the light; Christ is our light. It is not about us. It is about him.

Here is an interesting irony: When people try to make it all about themselves, they make loss inevitable. That is, they undermine the very possibility of getting what they need. Few people—and none of the smart ones—

gravitate to those who wear figurative versions of a neon sign that says "Love Me" or "Respect Me." Narcissists who make it all about themselves remain bottomless pits of hopeless begging. In contrast, those who are most lovable and whom we most respect live lives that are fundamentally focused on others. We love those who love us for us and not to meet their neediness. And we respect those who speak and live the truth itself and not what they think others might want to hear.

There is a Hindu story of a holy woman who entered a square and sat down with a bowl. She put in dirt and then added water and stirred. Periodically she put her hand in and took out a gold nugget. After a while, she was accosted by a merchant who wanted to buy her "magic" bowl. She assured him there was no magic and gave it to him. Daily he stirred dirt and water but found only mud. One day he discovered her walking again through the square. "There is a trick that you withheld," he challenged. "No trick," she assured. "But you only get the gold when you renounce all greed."

We are full of light only when we are illuminating Christ the light. So it

is not our light that is important, but our witness to the light has everything to do with being infused by that light. Perhaps this is why Jesus will even report that John was "a burning and shining lamp." Or as John Scotus Erigena once wrote, "He was the lamp burning in the night from the brilliant light that filled the whole world."

Today is Gaudete Sunday, or Rejoice Sunday. It is the first of three types of joy celebrated in our liturgical seasons. This is the joy of anticipation. There is also Laetare Sunday as an oasis in Lent and Jubilate Sunday as a highlight in the Easter season. *Gaudete* is the same imperative Paul uses in our second reading (in Greek, *chairete*).

Paul commands the Thessalonians to "rejoice always." The only other time Paul commands this is in Phil 4:4. What is fascinating is that the

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Think about the times you were closest to God.
- Consider this: Was your ego inflated or humbled?
- Who are the two people you respect the most? Why?

Thessalonians experienced a good deal of suffering for their faith (see 2 Thes 1:4). And when Paul writes to the Philippians he was imprisoned and deathly sick. Clearly, rejoicing is not some vapid command to repress suffering and just think happy thoughts. Instead, it has to do with carrying the lamp lit by the light that fills the world, confirmed by God in the night while awaiting the blazing dawn. For it is all about his light. And the more we know this, the more we are illumined.

PETER FELDMIEIER

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