America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

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A Dream Deferred?

How to Fix Immigration

DONALD KERWIN AND JAMES ZIGLAR

Diary of a Labor Activist

'Godspell' Updated

OF MANY THINGS

JOE: ON MORAL COURAGE

Characters: Michele, television news director; Pierluigi, a magistrate; Angelo, professor of ancient philosophy; Carlo, a barista.
Scene: the Socrates Coffee Bar, Siracusa, Sicily, adjacent to a ruined Greek amphitheater. A television set displays CNN International; an anchor is recapping the Penn State sexual abuse scandal.

Michele. Dio mio! What an awful story, this Penn State business. I bet in a few weeks we'll learn it is even worse than it seems. But I have to hand it to the American media. They know how to dramatize these things. Depraved sex isn't enough. Immediately it is a cover-up, and the coach has to go. A big crime demands a big fall.

Pierluigi. I agree. Child abuse is an awful crime. But I wonder whether the news has to follow the plot of a tragic drama. The king must die! The grand jury had no finding against Paterno. He reported to superiors as the law required and took action to bar the offender, though it may seem too little now; in 1998 he had assisted the police in their inquiry.

Michele. But, Piero, legality is not the point. He should have done more. People looked up to him. If anyone could have pursued the case, it was the coach. He had enormous personal authority.

Angelo. But is it fair for the media, which lazily reruns its old tapes about institutional coverup, to trash a good man's reputation? After all, as far as we know, no one else did more. Moral dramas are more subtle than news directors' story lines.

Micbele. Angelo, come on. Drop the subtlety stuff. Stereotypes reflect the facts. Look at the church. We don't know the half of it. The Irish courts are still releasing sickening reports about cover-ups by the bishops there. And, by the way, you can give up that media-bashing too.

Angelo. Look, Michele, I don't deny there may have been a larger conspiracy. Pierluigi and I only object that the opprobrium fell on a man whom the grand jury, after a long investigation, chose not to charge.

Pierluigi. There's something else, Angelo, we have to bear in mind. While we're watching TV, it is easy to say, "I would have done more than Joe." But, in fact, like the drivers and pedestrians who saw the infant run over in China, in a crisis too few of us rush from our routines to do the right thing. In moral emergencies, we are far likelier to be bystanders than moral heroes.

Angelo. Would I have done more? We like to think well of ourselves, but very few of us are ready to press a moral issue. When we do, we know we will be treated as annoying S.O.B.'s; and when we persist, we will be dismissed as "crazy."

Pierluigi. "To do more" takes practice; and before we learn to meet a serious moral challenge, we may fail—repeatedly.

Let me confess something about a personal moral test I set myself. (Pause) I try to respond to beggars in the street—with some spare change, a little conversation, maybe a shared prayer. But, if I come upon a panhandler unexpectedly, if he is aggressive or her behavior is a bit bizarre, I go into avoidance mode. For most of us it takes practice "to do more."

Soldiers and athletes all understand that for the times when things get tough, they have to train to do the right thing. Why do we think practice is unnecessary in the moral life? Couldn't it be the coach, like most of poor humanity, was unprepared to do more?

Michele. Carlo, you have been listening to us. What do you think?

Carlo. I say, being a football hero doesn't make you a moral hero.

DREW CHRISTIANSEN, S.J.

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Cover: Students react after watching from the Senate gallery as opponents blocked passage of the "Dream Act" at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, on Dec. 18, 2010. The measure would have provided a pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants who came to the United States as children. Reuters/Jonathan Ernst

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Will the Majority Rule?

Although Representative Al Green, Democrat of Texas, introduced the Living American Wage Law in the House last January, it is still stuck in committee. The federal minimum wage remains $7.25 an hour, just $15,000 a year for a full-time worker. The bill calls for a cost-of-living adjustment every four years to keep the minimum wage for two full-time workers at least 15 percent higher than the poverty level for a family of two adults and one child. "The best way out of poverty is to work at a living wage," wrote Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, in a letter to the U.S. hierarchy. Catholic social teaching has supported a living wage for decades. President Obama also supports it; in fact, he campaigned on a promise to raise the minimum wage to $9.50 in 2011.

As the living-wage bill languishes, some states have set higher minimums and linked automatic increases to the inflation rate. In October, for example, eight states automatically raised their minimum wage. The public also supports an increase. Two-thirds of Americans favor increasing the minimum wage to $10 an hour, according to the Public Religion Research Institute.

Among religious groups, support for the wage increase is highest among black Protestants (87 percent), followed by Catholics (73 percent), the religiously unaffiliated (68 percent) and white mainline and evangelical Protestants (61 percent). Political supporters of the raise include Democrats (82 percent), independents (66 percent) and Republicans (52 percent). The two exceptions are those who identify with the Tea Party (56 percent oppose) and those whose most trusted television media source is Fox News (54 percent oppose). In light of overwhelming bipartisan support, the bill should be passed into law. But that is not likely in an election year, unless voters in favor contact their representatives without delay.

Casualties of War

Pfc. John Needham, son and grandson of military men, joined the U.S. Army in 2006 with "the whole goal of giving your life for somebody else"—his comrades—and in Iraq he was awarded the Purple Heart. But he suffered depression and excruciating back pain, crippling post-traumatic stress disorder and addiction to various drugs and vodka. Before enlisting, he had never touched a drink. In 2008 he considered suicide; and in a fight with his drug-addicted former girlfriend, he battered her with his fists. She died in the hospital. He remembered nothing.

Private Needham had fallen apart, he said, because he had witnessed "war crimes"; and when he reported them, his comrades mocked him. According to his letter in 2007 to Army officials, members of his company shot Iraqis without provocation. A sergeant killed one, removed the man's brain, strapped the corpse to the humvee hood and paraded it through town blaring warnings in Arabic. An investigation found no crimes.

In February 2010, John Needham died of a drug overdose after three operations on his back. Salon.com and CBS's "48 Hour Mystery" have told his story. His father, a Vietnam veteran, will tell it again this month when he reads the text of his son's "war crimes" letter at a Human Rights Day observance in Los Angeles. The father says the Army failed his son. He is right. John and his girlfriend are both casualties of these wars. Hundreds of unknown John Needhams are coming home. This nation owes them a more supportive welcome.

Not So Super

It is perhaps no surprise that the Congressional "super committee" on deficit reduction turned out to be a super failure. The composition of the panel, stacked with Republican no-tax promise keepers, predetermined its ultimate fate. This latest demonstration of Congressional dysfunction went out not with a bang but a muttering of accusatory whimpers.

Blame for this foreseeable failure cannot be shared equally by the two parties. Democratic negotiators offered deep spending cuts in entitlement programs, while Republican counterparts remained smugly hamstrung by an apparently unbreakable pledge not to raise taxes, perpetuating Grover Norquist's uncrowned reign of error.

But the end of this latest farce may be positive for two reasons. First, automatic triggers are set to kick in next year that will cut federal spending across the board. Second, they will also end the inequity of the Bush-era tax cuts. This failure of the committee may also set the stage for more serious negotiation over the coming year.

Perhaps then Congress will finally end the pretense that the nation's fiscal imbalance can be resolved by deeper cuts in the nation's barely adequate social safety net. Rational rethinking of entitlement programs is welcome, as are suggestions for squeezing greater efficiencies out of existing social programs; but restoring federal revenues through increased taxes and an end to the fiscal immunity granted the Pentagon budget must be part of any responsible fiscal package.

A Spirit-Led Future

Few events signaled the rapid expansion of the church in the United States in the 20th century like a groundbreaking. Church archives are strewn with pictures of prelates standing in open fields, wielding a shovel or pronouncing a blessing over new construction. The church was growing and with it the buildings and institutions that served the Catholic population.

Today the church in much of the country is contracting. Schools have closed, hospitals merged, novitiates shuttered—moments rarely captured on film. With priestly and religious vocations and Mass attendance in decline, the church can no longer do all it once did. This may seem obvious, but its corollary still provokes resistance and controversy: Still more institutions will have to close—not just parishes and parochial schools, but colleges and hospitals, soup kitchens and retreat centers. The coming decades will see growth, too, in the suburbs and in Latino communities. Churches and schools will continue to be built. Yet the growth of some ministries will come in conjunction with the closing of others. Church leaders must act from a position of humility, always seeking to discern what they can accomplish with limited resources.

In the future, collaboration among Catholic institutions will be essential. There are promising signs: universities have already made homes for schools of theology and think tanks like the Woodstock Theological Center. In New York three dioceses plan to send candidates for the priesthood to a common seminary. Yet too many Catholic organizations remain locked in a survivalist mindset. It may no longer be possible for each religious order to maintain its own retreat houses or schools. If creative ways to work together are not energetically explored, then institutions will continue to close in abrupt and haphazard ways.

Yet collaboration will not save every institution. Some ministries have fulfilled their role and will have to bring their service to an end. This will be a painful process. Catholics have strong connections to the places that nurtured their faith. When a parish or hospital closes its doors, a rich piece of Catholic history is lost. But the church is called to be a wise steward of its resources. Keeping an institution alive for the sake of tradition prevents the growth of more urgently needed ministries.

On this difficult journey, church leaders can look to two examples to guide them. Communities of women religious have spent years contemplating their uncertain future. With diminished vocations and an aging population, they have by necessity engaged in an extensive process of discernment. In the case of the Sisters of Mercy, for instance, this process led to the merger of regional communities. Other orders have chosen to close their motherhouses. These changes are acknowledged for what they are: a moment for grieving that calls for prayer and liturgical commemoration. They have also been opportunities to look back in joy at all the good work these women accomplished.

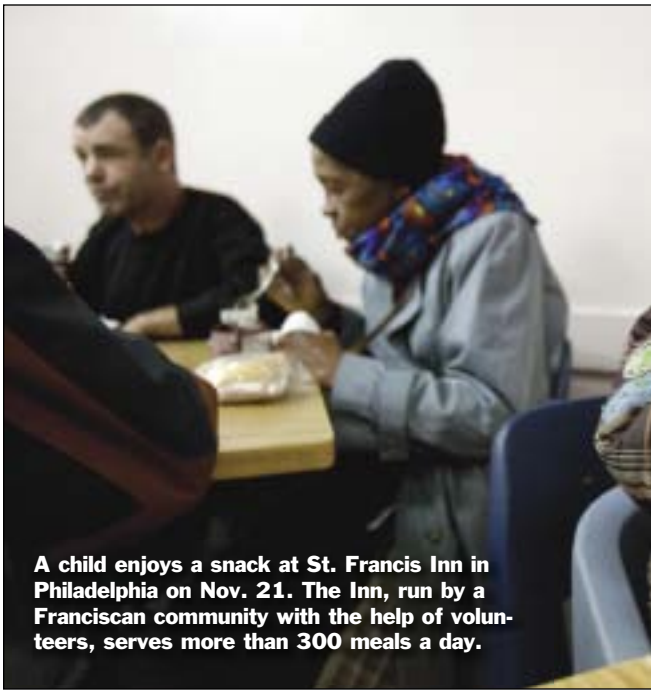
Missionaries can also serve as a source of inspiration. The Maryknoll Sisters, for example, understand mission as the foundation of their charism. Before making key decisions, they study their own experience to discern whether their work overseas is truly shaped by this founding spirit. So too must church leaders in this country be focused on their mission and on how best to achieve it. Sometimes a community may no longer need a Catholic school, but it continues to need a rigorous program of religious education. In other cases, the church may not be the most efficient provider of direct services; other religious groups, or even secular agencies, may better meet the need.

All Catholic institutions, including enterprises like America Press, are called to a period of sustained listening and discernment. In recent years much energy has been spent on fundraising. This remains a necessary endeavor. At a time when Catholic donors lag behind their Protestant and Jewish counterparts, a culture of philanthropy must be further nurtured among Catholics. Success should be measured by current accomplishments rather than past performance. Leaders of Catholic institutions must be willing to see clearly where they have succeeded and where they have failed—and to work to understand why.

Anyone who witnessed the fight over the closing of St. Brigid's in San Francisco or the tumultuous last days of St. Vincent's Hospital in New York knows how difficult the next few decades could be. The Catholic Church in the United States will always be home to faith-filled institutions. Yet the success of future ministries depends largely on the actions of Catholic leaders today. The church in the United States has been blessed with a vast network of Catholic ministries. To move on to a future the Spirit has prepared, it must trust its charisms will unfold in new ways.

U.S. ECONOMY

Catholic Charities 'Snapshot' Pictures Growing Poverty



A child enjoys a snack at St. Francis Inn in Philadelphia on Nov. 21. The Inn, run by a Franciscan community with the help of volunteers, serves more than 300 meals a day.

The impact of increasing poverty and the diminished economic resources of the U.S. middle class became evident in late November. The U.S. Census Bureau reported that poverty among school-age children showed "a statistically significant increase" in one in five counties across the nation, and an analysis by The New York Times of Department of Agriculture data concluded that the number of students receiving subsidized school lunches rose to 21 million in the 2009-10 school year from 18 million in 2006-7, a 17 percent increase. According to the analysis, 11 states had four-year increases of 25 percent or more, "huge shifts in a vast program long characterized by incremental growth."

Reports from Catholic Charities USA agencies across the nation were just as discouraging. According to the organization's 2011 Third Quarter Snapshot Survey, 66 percent of Catholic Charities agencies saw an increase in requests for assistance from families with children and 59 percent reported increases in aid requests from middle-class families. Eighty percent report increased requests for assistance from the working poor.

Perhaps most alarming were the snapshot's findings related to the toll the rising demand was having on C.C.U.S.A. capacity. More than 88 percent of local agencies reported that they maintained a waiting list or had to turn people away for at least one of their programs or services in the last

VATICAN

Climate Change on Papal Agenda

Pope Benedict XVI urged international leaders to reach a credible agreement on climate change following the Angelus blessing at the Vatican on Nov. 27. Officials from 194 countries began meeting the following day in Durban, South Africa, to discuss the next steps in reducing greenhouse gases and stopping global temperatures from rising.

"I hope that all members of the international community can agree on a responsible, credible and supportive response to this worrisome and complex phenomenon, keeping in mind the needs of the poorest populations and of future generations," the pope said.

Such a conclusion could not come at a more crucial time. The world is getting warmer, and increasing temperatures are expected to amplify floods, droughts and other extreme weather patterns around the planet. That is the conclusion of a U.N. report released on Nov. 29 to accompany the Durban Conference. According to the U.N. World Meteorological Organization, the warmest 13 years, based on average global temperatures, have all occurred in the 15 years since 1997.

"I think we are seeing the effects of a change in climate," said Tim Aldred, head of policy and communication at Progressio, a U.K.-based Catholic development agency. He added, "I think, certainly for the poorest communities around the world, that there is a lot of clarity that the climate is changing, [that] it's changing for the worse and that action is required and that it's a matter of justice." Aldred said that he was encouraged to see Pope Benedict regularly speaking about climate change.

Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga of Honduras, president of Caritas Internationalis, led a 20-person delegation from Caritas to the Durban talks to press for an agreement on behalf of poor countries that have suffered the most from weather-related crises. "Our climate is changing," he said. "Caritas organizations are responding to increasing unpredictability and extreme weather condi-

quarter, and 64 percent reported that they could not meet the need they faced for emergency financial assistance. Fifty-six percent of Catholic Charities agencies were unable to respond to some requests for utility assistance.

Commenting on the report, the Rev. Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA, said that while the need for food and utility assistance has been consistent, never in his experience had so many agencies been forced to turn clients away or place families on waiting lists. "Many never had to do this in the past," he said. "This is really very difficult emotionally for our staff, to have to do that."

With Christmas fast approaching, Catholic Charities USA is anticipating a struggle to keep enough food stocked in its pantries and to respond to requests for help paying heating bills as the winter cold sets in. Father Snyder urged Catholics to respond individually to the increasing need as creatively as they could in their own communities but added that the deteriorating conditions suggest that advocacy on behalf of the poor remains critical. "Washington keeps playing around with how we are going to become more fiscally responsible," he said, "but that can't begin with the poor.

"That is a commitment that we have made in the past that should remain sacred, that is a commitment given to us by God through Scripture," said Father Snyder. The notion that the nation should begin restoring fiscal balance by reducing or eliminating nutritional, housing and other services for the poor "betrays our beliefs, our faith and the vision that we have for this country."

"These are difficult times," Father Snyder said, "but we cannot begin there." Middle- and upper-class Americans may have to sacrifice more, he said, to prevent the "already disadvantaged from experiencing more hardship."

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tions experienced around the world. This year we saw floods in Central America, South and Southeast Asia and drought across East Africa," said Cardinal Rodríguez in a statement released by Caritas.

"Urgent action is necessary," the cardinal said, calling on negotiators in Durban to cease delaying "international legislation to curb the threat of climate change and set the world on a path to a more just and sustainable future."

The Durban meeting, which runs until Dec. 9, is the latest climate conference considering follow-up action to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The Durban encounter is considered crucial in forging additional international commitments on reducing carbon emissions. The goal of the Durban talks, organized by the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, is to cut greenhouse gases by 50 percent by 2050 and prevent temperatures from rising more than 2 degrees Celsius. The expiring Kyoto accords, Cardinal Rodríguez said, "must not die here in South Africa."

In 2011 East Africa suffered the worst drought in half a century. According to Caritas, drought conditions are not new in East Africa, but changes in weather patterns combined with lack of investment and competition for land and water have eroded the capacity of local people to cope with extreme conditions.

"The whole world is vulnerable to climate change, but poor countries are affected more," Cardinal Rodríguez said. "Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to the impacts of climate change. Africans are taking a stand in Durban; it is time for the world to stand with Africa."

Local residents demonstrate in Durban, South Africa, before the international climate talks on Nov. 26.

Bevilacqua Deposed In Philadelphia

Prosecutors in Philadelphia deposed the 88-year-old Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua in case his declining health prevents his appearance at the March trial of three Philadelphia priests, a former teacher and a church administrator. The three priests and the former teacher are charged with raping boys. The church administrator, Msgr. William Lynn, Bevilacqua's longtime secretary for clergy, is charged with felony child endangerment and conspiracy. Church lawyers fought to block the cardinal's testimony—he suffers from cancer and dementia—but Judge M. Teresa Sarmina deemed him competent on Nov. 28. Defense lawyers argue that Lynn was following orders from Bevilacqua, who led the archdiocese from 1988 to 2003.

New Roman Committee To Critique Churches

Vatican sources are reporting the establishment of a Liturgical Art and Sacred Music Commission by the Congregation for Divine Worship. Its task will be to collaborate with commissions in charge of evaluating church construction projects. The team will also be responsible for the further study of liturgical music and singing. Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, and Pope Benedict XVI consider this work "very urgent." Critics charge that in recent decades churches have been replaced by buildings that resemble multipurpose halls or boldly shaped structures that risk denaturing modern places for Catholic worship. Too often, critics complain, architects do not use the Catholic liturgy as a starting point and end up producing avant-garde constructions that look like anything but a church. Tabernacles are obscured and sacred images are almost nonexistent. The new commission will be devising regulations on church design that will give precise instructions to dioceses.

Vatican Approves Ordination in China

A day after Chinese authorities reiterated that they sincerely intend to improve relations with the Holy See, the Vatican and Beijing agreed on the ordination as bishop of the Rev. Peter Luo Xuegang in Yibin Diocese in southwest China on Nov. 30. That cooperation marks a break with a cluster of recent ordinations made without Vatican consent. The Rev. Paul Lei Shiyin of Leshan, wearing bishop's garb despite his excommunication earlier this year, when he was ordained without papal approval, was among four consecrating bishops at the ordination. At the Vatican, Federico Lombardi, S.J., the papal spokesperson, called the ordination "positive," but he said Father Lei's presence at the ceremony and the "repeated nature of his disobedience to the norms of the church unfortunately aggravates his canonical position." Lombardi added: "In ordinary situations, the presence of the Bishop Lei Shiyin should have been absolutely excluded and would bring canonical consequences for the other participating bishops.... In the current circumstances, it is probable that [the participating bishops] were not able to prevent him without serious difficulties."

From CNS and other sources.

NEWS BRIEFS

John Kitzhaber

Opponents of capital punishment praised the decision by Oregon's Gov. John Kitzhaber on Nov. 22 to maintain a **moratorium on the death penalty** for the rest of his term. ✦ The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved $1.35 million in **grants to aid pastoral work** in 14 countries across Africa. ✦ Indonesian police were able to head off an attempt by **Islamic extremists** in Bekasi, a suburb of Jakarta, to raze six Christian churches in the area. ✦ Hundreds marched in Arakan Valley in Mindanao, Philippines, to demand an **end to human rights abuses** and call for justice for the Rev. Fausto Tentorio, whose murder in October may have been related to a struggle against powerful mining interests. ✦ The New Jersey Catholic Conference plans four **anti-poverty task forces** that will "identify pragmatic recommendations to help strengthen families, improve schools, reduce unemployment, assure living wages and increase affordable housing." ✦ Church leaders in Kerala State, India, have expressed shock and outrage over the **killing of Sister Valsa John** of the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, a campaigner for tribal rights in eastern India who was hacked to death in her home.

MARGARET SILF

Broken, But Still Beating

As the apocalyptic warnings at the end of the year give way to the Advent promises of new beginnings, I find myself wondering how these readings sound to the people around me in downtown Christchurch, New Zealand. Christchurch has been shaken to its core during the past fifteen months as a series of major earthquakes and aftershocks have destroyed most of the inner city, including the iconic Anglican cathedral, and left many other buildings, in the local parlance, *munted*, which means that they may look fine from the outside, but their internal structures have become twisted and unsound.

When the earth has literally crumbled beneath your feet, how does it feel to hear Jesus' words: "All these things you are staring at, the time will come when not a single stone will be left on another"?

I received an answer to my unspoken question from a group of people who had come to make a retreat in the heart of the shattered city. As we gathered, I invited them to share what they were looking for from this time. One after another they spoke of a desire to "go deeper into God," to find a still center amid all the upheaval, to replenish the heart from a well that no earthquake can undermine.

I recalled what others had told me of their experience of the devastation. "When the earth breaks up beneath your feet," they told me, "the first thing you do is reach out, literally, to the person standing right next to you." Strangers in supermarkets grasp you by the hand. People you have never known open their homes to you when your power, water and sewage systems have collapsed. Neighbors you barely recognize greet you with a hug. When apocalypse strikes, it seems, like the beams of the cross we reach out, because we need one another, and we reach down, because we need God.

At the end of our time together, the retreatants gave me a special gift—a pendant of New Zealand greenstone, or *pounamu* (nephrite jade). Pounamu is found only in New Zealand's South Island, where it occurs as a direct result of the clash of tectonic plates, which forces seams of rare and delicate beauty to the earth's surface. It is birthed from the convulsions of destruction, but it is offered as a blessing, and like a blessing it may only be given, never purchased for oneself. Before offering me this gift, each person present held it for a while in a silent prayer, and as they placed it around my neck they sang a Maori blessing: *Te aroha, te whakapono, me te rangimarie, tatou tatou e*, which translates to, "May love, faith and peace be amongst us all."

> I was not prepared for the scenes of devastation I encountered in Christchurch.

The hands that blessed this gift had also searched for lost loved ones amid the rubble, for broken dreams that might never be rebuilt, for a future that seemed to have closed its doors on them. The voices that sang to me in Maori had also called out in the night in their search for friends and family, had lulled terrified children back to sleep, had spoken words of comfort to grieving neighbors.

When I hold my pounamu and reconnect to the blessing-gift of these friends, it is not hard to make the transition from apocalypse to Advent. It becomes possible to see that our worst upheavals can yield a treasure we could never have imagined. The dream that strangers can become friends, that the human heart can beat in harmony with God's heart and that fresh buds can sprout from apparently barren trees becomes a promise we can trust because we have seen glimpses of its radiance in the love of our neighbors.

I have to say that I was not prepared for the scenes of devastation I encountered in Christchurch. The retreat house we had intended to use had been destroyed. From its garden I could see across the bay to the city's once elegant skyline. Now that skyline resembles a row of broken teeth. As we drove back, skirting the cordons surrounding the inner city, something seized my attention. Alongside a half-demolished church stood a large signboard: "Broken, but still beating! We are the heart of Christchurch."

Not just Christchurch but our universal church, too, is broken and munted in serious ways. Advent might be a good time to remind ourselves that we are her heart, and we are still beating!

Most of us will not be celebrating Advent against such a grim backdrop. But few of us will understand the power of its promise as deeply as these people who know how to go beyond the breaking to discover the beating heart of the matter.

MARGARET SILF *lives in Scotland. Her latest books are* Companions of Christ, The Gift of Prayer *and* Compass Points.

REUTERS/TIM GAYNOR

A U.S. Border Patrol agent, Galen Huffman, gathers information from a group of illegal immigrants from Mexico arrested in the Altar Valley, Ariz., in 2008.

START BY MAKING LEGAL MIGRATION BENEFIT EVERYONE.

Fixing Immigration

BY DONALD KERWIN AND JAMES ZIGLAR

"Our hearts were broken," a young woman wrote after the Dream Act did not muster enough votes to defeat a Senate filibuster in the lame duck session of the 111th Congress. The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act would have provided legal status to young people brought into the United States as children by their parents. She was one of thousands of "dreamers" across the country who had advocated what is still a dream deferred. "We are decent and hard-working human beings," she said, "who have done nothing more than study and work for our families and communities."

It has been a dispiriting five-year period for immigrants and their children. In addition to the Dream Act setback last May, other legislation to reform the outdated U.S. immigration system and to allow certain unauthorized immigrants to earn the right to remain has failed in successive sessions of Congress.

While legislators still decry uncontrolled borders, illegal crossings have actually fallen to numbers not seen since the early 1970s. By virtually all measurements, immigration enforcement has reached historic levels, including total deportations (400,000 a year) and prosecutions for immigration-related offenses (roughly 90,000 a year). State and local governments have enacted laws that make it more difficult for unauthorized persons and their families to rent apartments, to work and to call the police. Many states are considering legislation that seeks to deny not only citizenship to the U.S.-born children of unauthorized parents but public education; some would make it a crime for unauthorized immigrants to hold a paid job and to be "out of status." Federal and state budget short-

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falls threaten programs that help to integrate the nation's immigrants and their children.

The volume and the coarseness of the immigration debate have also intensified. For supporters of immigration reform, these trends increase the importance of laying the groundwork today for just and coherent policies. The first step toward that goal is to identify the facts and core principles that should guide policies toward immigrants and their children.

Fix Legal Immigration First

The United States must reform its immigration system, and the most critical priority should be to fix the system of legal immigration. The current system fails to meet the nation's economic and labor market needs; it also fails to reunify families in a timely manner. This system forces immigrants to make wrenching choices—to risk their lives to cross the border illegally to take available jobs or to remain at home, unable to support their families. Others must decide whether to remain in the United States while waiting for a family-based visa to become available or to leave the country and face long-term separation from their families.

Many of these problems can be traced to the nation's last large-scale "legalization" bill, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. That legislation reduced the U.S. unauthorized population to between 1.8 million and 3 million persons. The number of unauthorized immigrants rose dramatically, however, through the 1990s and through most of the 2000s, peaking at more than 12 million in 2007. While this growth is often attributed to the failure to enforce the 1986 reform's employer verification provisions, the re-emergence of a large unauthorized population resulted primarily from the act's failure to address adequately family reunification needs and to reflect the supply and demand characteristics of the nation's labor market.

The reform package of 1986 laid the groundwork for a large unauthorized population by failing to provide legal status to family members of the Control Act's beneficiaries, who had to wait to become lawful permanent residents before they could petition for visas for their close family members. The surge of petitions, combined with the numerical limits on family-based visa categories and per-country quotas, led to multiyear visa backlogs. The U.S. Department of State estimates that 3.4 million people whose family-based visa petitions have been approved are currently waiting in line to receive their visas. While the unauthorized are often characterized as scofflaws who seek to "jump" the visa queue, in fact many have followed the law and have waited for their visas for years.

The increase of unauthorized immigrants also reflected the supply-and-demand characteristics of the nation's labor market. As the Council on Foreign Relations' Task Force on U.S. Immigration Policy argued in 2009, the fact that "for much of this decade roughly 800,000 migrants could come to the United States illegally each year and find jobs is a clear indicator that the legal migration system has not remotely reflected market demand." During the peak years of illegal migration, migrants risked their lives to come (more than one died per day), then found work (92 percent of unauthorized men worked in 2007). Yet the United States reserves only 5,000 permanent visas each year for "unskilled" workers, and no country, including Mexico, can receive more than 7 percent of the worldwide quota of visas. This should be changed.

Despite the rapid changes in the world economy, the United States has not meaningfully altered its legal immigration system for more than 20 years and has not overhauled it since 1965. In 2006 a taskforce of the Migration Policy Institute recommended the creation of a standing commission on immigration and labor markets to provide Congress and the president with the information needed to set immigration levels in response to market forces, in boom times and in bust. Congress has neglected to act on this idea.

Since its founding, the United States has been a refuge for the world's persecuted and dispossessed. It has resettled nearly 3 million refugees from abroad since 1975 and should remain a beacon of hope to refugees. Despite refugee admissions delays caused by overlapping security checks, the United States still resettles more refugees (75,000 to 80,000 in recent years) than all other developed nations combined.

The beacon is flickering. Other U.S. protection programs have eroded, particularly since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11. The U.S. system of political asylum, for example, rests on the ability of persons fleeing persecution and violence to reach U.S. territory, a feat that has become increasingly difficult. Post-9/11 immigration-related security measures, combined with U.S. interdiction policies, prevent unknown numbers of would-be asylum-seekers from reaching the United States each year. The expansion of security-related grounds for inadmissibility has led to the exclusion of thousands of refugees and to delays and denials in hundreds of asylum cases. The U.S. refugee system needs to ensure that security-related concerns do not prevent legitimate applicants from gaining asylum.

Confronting the New Nativism

Some Americans believe that citizenship should depend on characteristics that persons cannot change or should not have to change, like national origin, race, ethnicity or religion. Others hold that membership should depend on a shared commitment to political institutions and to civic ideals like freedom, equality, human rights, liberty, justice and

opportunity. In this latter view, the nation's response to immigrants who embrace and embody these values should be generous. President George W. Bush spoke from this tradition in his first inaugural speech, claiming that something deeper than citizenship connects Americans. "America has never been united by blood or birth or soil," he said, but it has been "bound by ideals that move us beyond our background and lift us above our interests." These ideals are that "everyone belongs," "everyone deserves a chance" and "no insignificant person was ever born."

Yet these ideals are threatened by proposals that would punish innocent children for the actions of their parents and that would treat the 14th Amendment (1868) as an immigration loophole. The 14th Amendment reversed the infamous Dred Scott decision, which held that the descendants of slaves could never be citizens of the United States. The amendment provides that "all persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof" are citizens of the United States and of the states in which they reside. As its plain language, its legislative history and subsequent Supreme Court decisions have made clear, the 14th Amendment applies to all children born in the United States, with a few narrow exceptions. It is unclear how resurrecting Dred Scott—applying it to a vulnerable group of children and creating a permanently "illegal" class of persons—advances the national interest or serves an ethic of life.

ON THE WEB

The editors reflect on their favorite Advent and Christmas carols.
americamagazine.org/video

Integration Plan

There are 73 million immigrants and children of immigrants in the United States. Immigration policy governs who can come, who can stay and who has to leave. But the United States lacks a well-coordinated integration policy. Legal status is critical to integration, but it is only one step in the journey, not the destination. Language skills, education and workforce training are key elements in any integration program.

The Migration Policy Institute has proposed a federal effort to expand, coordinate and support federal, state and local integration efforts and to bring the lessons of these programs to bear on the development of U.S. immigration policy. Such an initiative would benefit immigrants, the communities in which they settle and our nation as a whole. Of course, the government alone will not be able to facilitate immigrant integration. People of faith and civil society have a moral responsibility to reach out to newcomers, both to ensure that they can participate fully in our society as a matter of social justice and to welcome them as persons (Lv. 19:33-34).

In Tucson, Ariz., there is a faith community that places water in the desert so that migrants do not perish; the members call themselves "Good Samaritans." A protestor outside their church has worn a sign that reads "Good Samaritan, Bad American." Extreme and hateful rhetoric—and public receptivity to it—has haunted the immigration debate in recent years.

Myths persist about the facts and the people behind the immigration debate. In such times, the Christian faith can remind us of important truths and highlight the virtues of hospitality and justice as well as the imperative to treat migrants as our brothers and sisters. Faith can alert us to the human tendency to scapegoat others without recognizing our own faults and shortcomings. It can even show us how a misguided sense of patriotism conflicts with Christianity's deepest values. Faith reminds us that through God's grace we are the recipients of the greatest of all amnesties.

Christian faith can also caution us against punishing young people for the transgressions and sacrifices of their parents.

"We are tired of being told to hide and wait," wrote the young dreamer. "We believe with all our hearts that a change is possible and urgently needed. And that is what we are fighting for, fighting without fear and without apologies." A

Union Made

A labor strategist's tools include faith, Scripture and social teaching.

BY CLAYTON SINYAI

Although my parents never expressed it in so many words, they gave me a pretty clear idea about how they esteemed different callings. Practicing a trade to support a family was good, public service still better and a call to the religious life the most excellent. After all, "If you wish to be perfect…" (Mt 19:21).

As a child I saw my father ply a wide variety of blue-collar jobs. He might be a factory mechanic one year and a truck driver the next, or perhaps run a car wash or a coin laundry. Though we were never poor, neither were we especially prosperous. With significant sacrifices by my parents (and a bit of charity from the "men in black"), I enjoyed a Jesuit preparatory education.

Preparing for what, though? I never suffered the loss of faith or estrangement from the church common in young adults but neither did I feel a religious calling. I will not be *perfect*. I guess I will be just good enough. For years I drifted through a series of not entirely satisfying engagements as a factory worker, railroad employee and mailman.

It was in these experiences that I began to discern my future vocation. In the factory, I saw the health and safety of my co-workers routinely placed in jeopardy by exposure to dangerous chemicals. At the railroad, I saw the families of co-workers thrown into crisis as a corporate buyout led to mass layoffs. At the post office, I saw how an abusive management corps could turn an otherwise fulfilling job into a source of daily misery for the (generally!) dutiful men and women employed there. Modest crosses, admittedly, but consequential and important elements in my life and those of my companions. Increasingly I was drawn into the labor movement, first as a volunteer and later as my occupation.

I draw a great deal of strength and direction from the study of Scripture and the social encyclicals of the popes. Reading Scripture teaches me humility. Every time I pick up the Bible I find myself baffled by something or other about our mysterious God. Scripture reminds me how little I understand of the highest things, how high God's thoughts are above my thoughts.

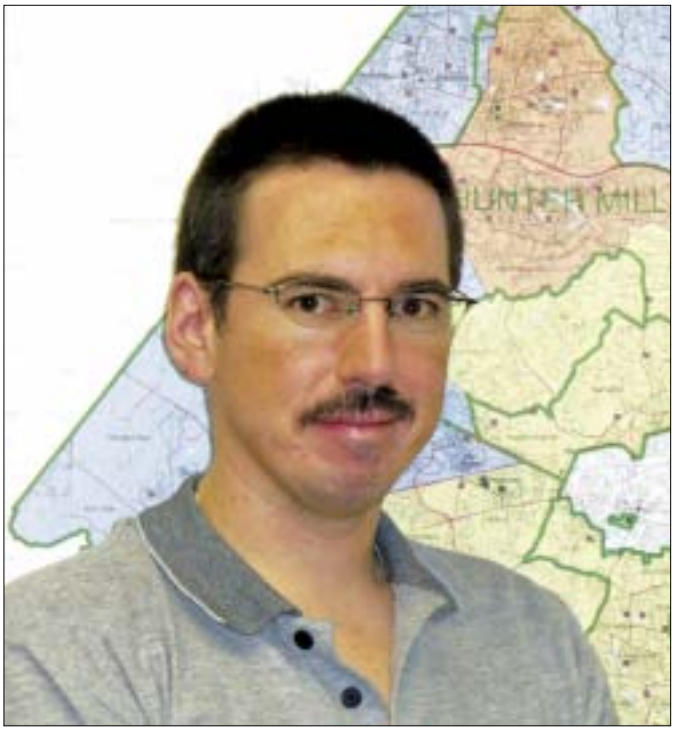


PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

ON THE WEB
Clayton Sinyai blogs on labor issues.
americamagazine.org/things

The social encyclicals complement my study of the words of Scripture almost perfectly, offering desperately needed counsel in great clarity. Think of it: Who among the laity enjoys so much guidance in their vocation as I? I searched in vain for passages in the papal letters that might tell one how to be a worthwhile machine operator or railroad clerk or letter carrier. But Leo, Pius, John Paul and Benedict are full of advice on how to be a good trade unionist.

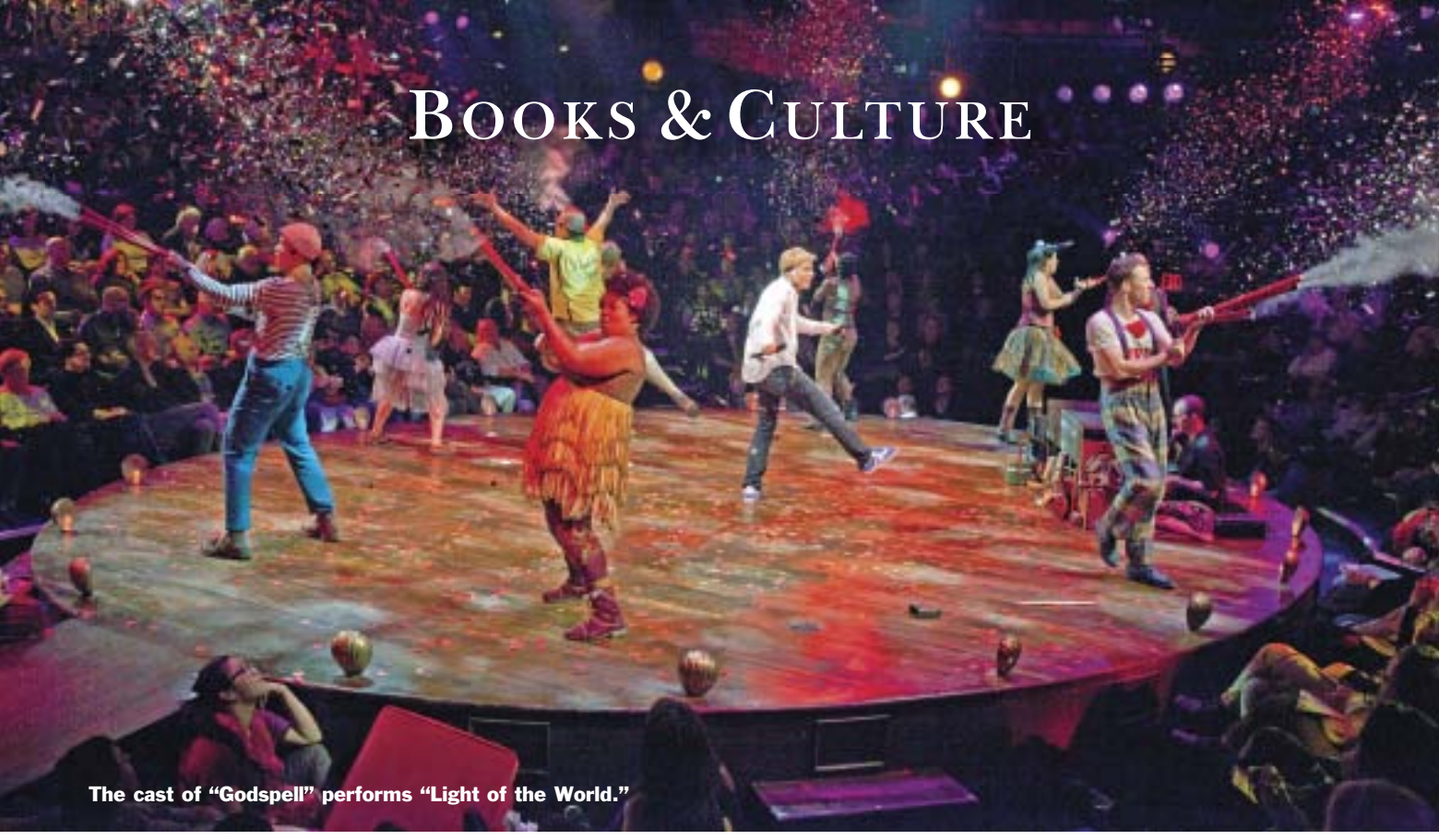
All this definitely makes me a different sort of union representative than many of my colleagues. I hesitate to say better. I lack the passionate partisanship of many of my peers, the certitude that no demand from labor is ever unreason-

CLAYTON SINYAI *is director of strategic campaigns for the Amalgamated Transit Union and a member of the Catholic Labor Network.*

able and that no concession from an employer is ever enough. Catholic social teaching ignites in me a desire to fight for justice on behalf of the working people I represent, but it also offers a vision in which workingpeople's associations and employers can come together for the common good. That perspective can be something of a handicap in a world that seems to thrive on conflict.

It is hard to ask workers to sacrifice their particular interests for the common good of the enterprise, but most workers retain a basic sense of fairness that makes the idea comprehensible.

For the management figures I encounter, on the other hand, the notion that a firm might sometimes need to sacrifice profits in the interests of justice for their workers is often wholly foreign. Managers are schooled to believe that their obligations begin with the chief executive officer and end with the shareholders. They consider a firm to be ethical if it merely obeys the law and fulfills its contracts. Pope Leo XIII writes of "a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man" that regulates labor relations ("Rerum Novarum," No. 45). Even the Catholic business leaders I encounter, however, tend to find this notion alien and offer a thousand reasons why it is impractical or absurd. Perhaps it is, but is not the foolishness of God wiser than the "wisdom" of men? A



The cast of "Godspell" performs "Light of the World."

PHOTO: JEREMY DANIEL

THEATER | ROB WEINERT-KENDT

A BROADWAY REVIVAL

'Godspell' gets updated

A musical is supposed to send us out humming the tunes, but audiences at the new Broadway revival of **Godspell** seem to be going *in* humming the tunes. "I'm just warning you, you've got some singers behind you," one woman said, gesturing to her three teenage daughters, as my companion and I took our seats at the Circle in the Square. The theater's in-the-round configuration amplifies the campfire-singalong vibe, as audience members can look across the stage and see each other mouth, clap and/or head-bop along with Stephen Schwartz's catchy score.

It is not a knock to say that this brightly colored, brashly interactive revival has been engineered for audiences like this—gatherings of the faithful. By faithful I don't necessarily mean adherents of the Christian faith, though they are certainly among the throng, but believers in this unusual 1971 pop/rock confection.

Whether this revival can win new converts and become a born-again Broadway hit is not easy to predict. That is because, even for a show of its era, "Godspell" is an odd duck. Its closest counterparts are "Hair," the 1968 blissed-out hippie revue that was successfully revived on Broadway two years ago, and "Jesus Christ Superstar," the 1971 rock-operatic Gospel narrative, which is slated for another Broadway run next spring.

The peculiarity of "Godspell" begins with the score, which employs Schwartz's considerable show-pop songcraft not to dramatize characters or narrative but to create a series of straight-up praise songs, with lyrics derived from Matthew's Gospel ("Prepare Ye," "Light of the World," "Alas for You") and from the Episcopal Hymnal of 1940 ("Day by Day," "Bless the Lord," "All Good Gifts," "We Beseech Thee"). The show's best song, though, has original lyrics: "Beautiful City," written by Schwartz for the 1973 film version, with further revisions in the 1990s, evokes a latter-day American take on William Blake's poem "Jerusalem," with its vision of "not a city of angels" but "a city of man."

While they lack the basic elements of drama, Schwartz's songs at least have heft and buoyancy. But John-Michael Tebelak's patchwork script does not make up for the music's dramatic shortcomings. A crazy quilt of parables and teachings from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, "Godspell" is less a traditional musical than a combination praise service and theater-games exercise.

Yet if you couple the atmosphere of communal expectation this 40-year-old show stirs in its fans with the fact that the show itself is designed as little more than a receptacle for those good vibes (you might even call it a kind of communion), it is easy to understand

the strategy of the new revival, directed by Daniel Goldstein. It wants to tickle us where we live by liberally adding topical references (Steve Jobs, Lindsay Lohan, Heidi Klum) and audience interaction, as well as by amping up the musical arrangements to embrace disco, prog-rock, metal, hip-hop and "Glee"-style vocalizing. The approach smacks of an over-eager youth pastor straining to be hip for an audience of skeptical, ADD-addled kids. The uncharitable term for this would be "pandering," though St. Paul might endorse it as a case of being all things to all people.

The good news is that this "Godspell" succeeds, at least on one level. It connects with willing audiences—from its endearing, vocally superpowered cast supporting Hunter Parrish's blond heartthrob Jesus to director Goldstein's try-anything ethos, which embraces Pictionary, confetti cannons and trampolines in turn.

The bad news is that this eagerness to amuse and distract sometimes edges perilously close to desperation; often it undermines or ignores the moral force of the teachings it seeks to illustrate.

When my theatergoing companion, a secular Jew, asked me to give him a rundown of some parables before the show, I found myself unable to retell the parable of the prodigal son without getting choked up with emotion. By contrast, this "Godspell" packs so many pop-culture references into its telling of the tale—including an Oscar-film highlight reel performed by the versatile Telly Leung—that its message of joyful mercy giggles past without effect. The parable's conclusion is particularly telling: The loyal son keeps on steaming over his brother's homecoming party until Parrish's smiling swim-coach Jesus swoops in to close the deal and make him hug dear old Dad.

In fact, this kind of tidy turnaround happens repeatedly with Jesus' harder teachings: Game ensemble members clownishly demonstrate some conflict or contention, and then their benevolent master gently shames them into forgiveness and comity. This is not Jesus as prophet and healer; this is Jesus the pre-school teacher giving his class a time out.

The Gospels' strains of apocalyptic, wheat-from-the-chaff judgment get similarly dumbed-down treatments. In the play, the parable of Lazarus and the rich man becomes a standoff between a birth certificate-doubting Donald Trump and a Borat-like Abraham, while the parable of the sower enacts the deaths of the first two seeds by way of slow-motion instant replay.

After all the Romper-Room frolicking, the sudden transition in the second act to serious episodes from Jesus' life is deeply unsettling. The Pharisees' interrogation of Jesus about the greatest commandment gives us the only foreshadowing of the Passion we get before we are off to the Last Supper, Gethsemane and an express-train ride through the Stations of the Cross. Historically, there is a serious line of theological questioning that asks, "Why did Jesus have to die?" Here the question is less theological than commonsensical: What did that sweet guy do to get hung up there?

Whether or not this "Godspell" turns out to be a hit, it has been cited by some observers as the latest example of a purported trend: Broadway getting religion. From "Book of Mormon" to "Sister Act," goes the argument, God is back in the business of show. As much fun as all these shows may be, however, it is hardly snobbery to note that none contains theological insight or even content. The same is true of "Godspell."

For the most affecting play on religious themes playing in New York at the moment (or in recent memory), you have to venture a little Off Broadway, to the Laura Pels Theater, where Stephen Karam's "Sons of the Prophet" is playing. Karam's delicately

Lectio Divina

In sapphire light they gather
And are gathered by God
An assembly of cowls

Men hidden inside their souls
So the world cannot peer in
Eyes bright as pearls

They read about Him
In the tiny, curved places
Where God's ear is closest

His voice clearest
In the serifs, parentheses,
Apostrophes, the calligraphy

Of creation and apocalypse both,
Light and wounds
The one in the other when

The Word enters in silence.
They have become adjectives
Seeking the only noun that counts.

PHILIP C. KOLIN

PHILIP C. KOLIN, *author of four books of poems, has edited scholarly journals and is founding editor of Vineyards: A Journal of Christian Poetry.*

uproarious comedy about a Maronite Catholic family in Pennsylvania wracked by catastrophes large and small, is subtle, soulful, and sneakily profound. There's even talk that it may move up to Broadway, just as the scrappy Off-Broadway hit "Godspell" did back in the mid-1970s. If "Sons" did make the move, it would join an encouraging crop of American plays with large thematic ambitions, if not always successful executions: Katori Hall's "The Mountaintop," a somewhat silly fantasia about Martin Luther King Jr.'s last night on earth; Jon Robin Baitz's "Other Desert Cities," about a Palm Springs Republican clan's toxic secrets; David Henry Hwang's "Chinglish," about miscommunications both comical and serious among the world's two great powers; and David Ives' "Venus in Fur," a sizzling power play about gender roles.

Even in this mostly august company, though, "Sons of the Prophet" would likely stand out, bearing witness as it does to truths that aren't often the subject of drama: that forces we can't explain with psychology or science, let alone tidy dramaturgy, drive our lives to a sobering extent, and that inexplicable suffering can be a window into transcendent insight and binding empathy. Now, if someone could just set that to music, we might have a winner.

ON THE WEB
Kamaria B. Porter reviews "The Muppets."
americamagazine.org/culture

ROB WEINERT-KENDT, *an arts journalist and associate editor of American Theater magazine, has written for The New York Times and Time Out New York. He writes a blog called The Wicked Stage.*

BOOKS | RYAN W. KEATING

BATTLE ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

A WORLD ON FIRE
Britain's Crucial Role In the American Civil War

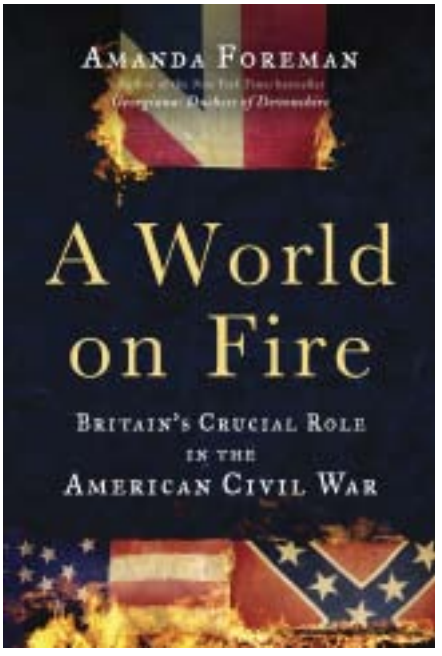
By Amanda Foreman
Random House. 1008p $35

A century and a half has passed since Confederate forces under General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard opened fire on federal forces commanded by Major Robert Anderson at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, S. C. Since that time, the Civil War has captured the attention and imagination of a nation. Over 50,000 books have been written about the war, a testament to the fact that there is no one easy way to explain a war that took the lives of over 600,000 men and permanently crippled hundreds of thousands more. Despite the prominence of the Civil War in historical memory, Amanda Foreman proves in her new book *A World on Fire* that lingering questions and interesting subplots remain uncovered.

One lingering "what if" that follows any discussion of the Civil War revolves around the relationship between Great Britain and the South. During the antebellum period, the cotton trade between the southern states and England proved highly profitable for both nations as American cotton fed the bourgeoning textile mills across the Atlantic. With the outbreak of war in 1861 and the federal implementation of the Anaconda Plan—which called for a blockade of southern ports—it was widely believed throughout the Confederacy that England would eventually be forced to

enter the conflict on the side of the rebelling states in order to secure Southern cotton and avert financial disaster at home.

In the summer of 1862, as Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia secured stunning victories against overwhelming odds, many believed that England was teetering on the verge of official recognition of the Southern Confederacy. The Union victory at Antietam in the fall of 1862, however, allowed Abraham Lincoln to issue a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. In shifting the Union's war aims toward the abolition of slavery, Lincoln was able to avert English recognition of the slaveholding states. Though many Southerners held on to the belief that England would eventually rescue the Confederacy, the South eventually succumbed to a combination of Northern military might and internal economic turmoil as Britain waited patiently on the sidelines.



The relationship between England and the United States, a fascinating subplot to the larger conflict, is traditionally analyzed from an Americo-centric perspective. Foreman's work breaks new ground, however, as she sets out on the ambitious task of tracing the Anglo-American relationship in the Civil War from perspectives on both sides of the Atlantic to better contextualize the political, social and economic realities behind the often-discussed missed opportunity of English intervention on the side of the Confederacy. Her book exceeds all expectations.

Foreman masterfully intertwines larger issues of 19th-century foreign policy within micronarratives of the diplomats and politicians who were responsible for both carrying out national policy and serving as the embodiment of their nation abroad. Politics during this period relied heavily on interpersonal relationships, and her analysis of the personalities of men like Charles Francis Adams, William Howard Russell and William Yancy illustrates how diplomats and politicians understood and carried out their states' policies. At the same time, this methodology provides a substantial and interesting narrative to support what could have easily become a very bland discussion of American and English foreign policy. Rightly so, Foreman underpins this history with insight into the opinions of Britain's citizens on the war in America and especially the looming question of English intervention. Such an approach allows for a better comparative analysis, and thus a clearer picture, of American perceptions and hopes in contrast to the reality of English policy during the Civil War.

This book is not a simple political history of the Anglo-American relationship between 1860 and 1865. Foreman's larger narrative examines these political maneuverings within the context of the war itself, illustrating how public opinion, in both the United States and England, shifted with news of victory and defeat. Although much attention is placed on the larger movements of armies, the author purposely interjects narratives of immigrant volunteers on both sides of the conflict, which, like her work with the political figures mentioned above, provide excellent counterbalance to the sweeping narrative of the war. It is clear, though, that the focus of this book is not on the military engagements but rather on the broader reactions, on both sides of the Atlantic, to battles such as Antietam, Fredericksburg and Gettysburg. As a result, analysis of these incredibly complex battles is relegated to a few pages. Foreman's choice to focus instead upon the experiences of individual soldiers creates a captivating narrative that could, perhaps, be a book in its own right.

At over 800 pages, *A World on Fire* may appear a daunting read, especially for those not greatly interested in 19th-century foreign relations. But Amanda Foreman has certainly done her subject justice. She uses detailed historical research to create a series of interwoven narratives that makes the

history of the often-complex wartime relationship between the United States, the Confederacy and Great Britain both accessible and deeply interesting. It is a compelling book that illuminates an often overlooked, yet vitally important aspect of the American Civil War.

RYAN W. KEATING *is a doctoral candidate in American history at Fordham University in New York.*

KEVIN SPINALE

PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP

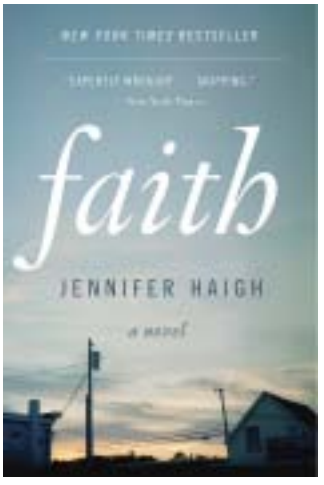
FAITH
A Novel

By Jennifer Haigh
HarperCollins. 336p $25.99

Two images permeate Jennifer Haigh's novel *Faith*: deep water and light. Both images have enriched human expression since human beings first began telling stories. Both images abound in biblical and classical literature: *duc in altum*; *ex umbra in solem*. The deep provokes fear and uncertainty in the human heart, while light implies revelation, understanding and truth. Haigh, a New York Times bestselling novelist, ingeniously employs the image of the deep to describe the nature of mature human relationships between men and women and the risks inherent in such relationships. The novel ultimately turns on deep water and the surge of fear that prevents many men and women from diving into either the swirl of the ocean surf or the unknown of a meaningful relationship. Those who are disturbed by the deep stay in the shallows or choose solitude over the vulnerability inherent in giving oneself in love to another person.

The form of Haigh's novel is driven by the second image. The book represents a set of portraits emerging from Sheila McGann's family history. Sheila's account centers around her half-brother Arthur, a priest of the archdiocese of Boston, who is accused of sexually abusing a child during the height of the sexual abuse scandal in the spring of 2002. In her narration, Sheila brings her family secrets from the shadows of the past to the light of the present, in much the same way the Roman Catholic Church was forced to examine its own past and bring what lay hidden there into the light. In the course of presenting her brother Art's story, Sheila learns a great deal about her mother, Mary, her brother Michael and her father, Ted. The portraits are modified as the story becomes more

and more complicated. In the end, Haigh's book is not about sexual abuse or the life of a priest.



The book is the story of a modern family deeply affected by the past and the cultural context—Irish-Catholic Boston—in which it existed. It is about sexual desire, sexual maturity, fidelity, human relationships, vulnerability, hurt and faith—that is, faith in other people: in one's spouse, siblings, friends and priests. It is an examination of faith and also of doubt, the storms of alcoholism, resentment, aging, failed relationships and the consequences of self-delusion and dishonesty. It is a juxtaposition of a peculiar man—a man transformed into a priest before he actually became a man—and his younger brother who exudes manhood—an athletic former cop turned successful real estate agent and father of three. The two men represent two strands of the McGann family. Arthur, the priest, carries the surname of his father, who disappeared when Arthur was an infant. Michael, the all-American father, radiates the masculinity and the volatility of his father. In the end, both the peculiar man and the ordinary man prove themselves quite similar to each other.

Two further pairs of juxtapositions arise from the portraits of characters in the novel. There is a parallel between Kath Conlon, a single mother hooked on various prescription and illegal drugs, and Mary McGann, who before her second marriage was a single mother dependent on others as she struggled to sustain herself and her son, Arthur. Finally, there is a comparison between the narrator of the book and her brother Art, the priest. The comparison revolves around solitude and what Sheila refers to in the novel as "tenderness, longing, and regret." Her own loneliness is set alongside the loneliness she envisions in her brother's priestly life. Her own fear of commitment and meaningful relationship is juxtaposed with the anxiety, naïveté and lack of intimacy she identifies in her brother. Both Arthur and Sheila fear the water; both fear the deep unknown of human relationships; both fear and distance themselves from what pierces them with discomfort and dread: intimacy, emotion, vulnerability.

Though the book offers intricate character studies, it does not bore. In fact, the reader is driven to race through the text just to find out the resolution of the story. One is not motivated by nagging doubt but by simple, open-ended curiosity and emotion. The book excites and saddens. The story is creative, and the characters, with the exception of the narrator, are all quite vivid and authentic.

Nonetheless, there are bumps along the way. The presentation of the cultural context that encompasses the McGann family is shot through with clichés that grate on the ear of a Bostonian. Everyone is always watching the Red Sox; most everyone works for Raytheon; the blizzard of '78 is invoked; all of Jamaica Plain is saying the rosary with Cardinal Cushing on the radio; there are shamrock tattoos and claddagh rings. Then there are jimmies and sherbet, three-deckers (which should be triple-deckers), and the Banshee and OFD (originally from Dorchester). But these bumps are smoothed under the roll of the plot.

Faith is a surprising book. As it brings to light the secrets of a family, it sweeps us up like swimmers caught in a breaking wave and deposited somewhere they did not expect. *Faith* forces one to contemplate one's relationships and consider one's fears. The book is an exceptional combination of entertainment and depth.

KEVIN SPINALE, S.J., *teaches at Boston College High School in Boston, Mass.*

"Alex, I'd like 'Winter Pastimes' for $800."

CARTOON BY BOB ECKSTEIN

LETTERS

Losing to Islam and New Age

"The Changing Face of Theology" (10/24), by T. Howland Sanks, S.J., gives us cause to reread an earlier article in **America** by Roger Haight, S.J. (3/17/08). Theology is not static or dead, as we were taught in the Baltimore Catechism—and left with only the memorized basics without the needed follow-up in our teen years and after. Fortunately, since I went to a Jesuit college, I was able to "get it" and accept the Second Vatican Council. Catholic theology is more important than ever today, because of the need to integrate theology with advances in other areas, especially science. The article offers hope, but unfortunately I do not see these ideas being taught to our best college students today. Without a new apologetics we are losing youth to the simpler theologies! In my specialty, dialogue, I see it losing to Islam. But here in California, many are lost to New Age.

DON JONES
San Jose, Calif.

Maybe PBS Mysteries?

Reading "Why Sitcoms Matter," by Jake Martin, S.J. (11/14), I wondered what St. Ignatius' favorite sitcoms would be if he were alive today. I could see him watching reruns of grittier shows like "Combat" or "The Rifleman," so maybe military-themed sitcoms like "McHale's Navy" or "Hogan's Heroes" might give him a chuckle or two after a wearisome day trying to defend the teachings of the church. But his biography says he was always really busy working on that. So, who knows?

JEFF PARKER
Dallas, Tex.

The Buried Talent

I am concerned that Barbara Reid, O.P., in the Word column on Nov. 7, completely rewrote the meaning of the parable concerning the master and the three servants who were given five, two and one talent respectively. Her take on this was that the servant who buried his one talent was the honorable one, because he did not go along with the greed of the master.

This interpretation, which I found thoughtful and stimulating, is not what the church teaches. Rather, this servant was culpable for not investing the talent that was given him. So we are called to use the gifts that God has entrusted to us. Otherwise, we risk being left out of God's kingdom.

I am not here to denigrate Sister Reid as a Scripture scholar. I have enjoyed her column and gained many new insights into the Scriptures over the last three years. But I would ask that this column be edited when someone departs so significantly from the meaning that the church teaches.

JOSEPH M. FORMICA
Atlantic City, N.J.

The Author Replies

I am grateful to Joseph M. Formica and to other readers of **America** for their queries about the interpretation I offered to the Parable of the Talents in The Word (11/7). One of the features of Gospel parables is that they are not stories that confirm the status quo; rather, they are destabilizing and puzzling, often turning accepted notions upside down. For this reason, even Jesus' first disciples found them difficult to understand (Mk 4:10).

The church wisely does not teach as authoritative any particular interpretation of this or any other Gospel parable, allowing Jesus' words to challenge us to think differently and to envision the reign of God in ways that bring justice and peace for all. Sometimes that means blowing the whistle on greedy persons in power.

BARBARA REID, O.P.
Chicago, Ill.

Caged Church

Your editorial on China, "Failure to Communicate" (11/21), misses the point that this situation is not about communication problems. It is about a repressive Communist regime trying to control the church. It is surprising that Cardinal Zen, the retired archbishop of Hong Kong and titular head of the church in China, who knows about the situation in China and should have been listened to throughout by the Holy See, is not mentioned in the editorial. Asked whether the Communist government would ever allow religious freedom, Cardinal Zen replied: "I think we can hope that the cage will become bigger and bigger, and we hope at the end they'll let the birds fly."

FRANK C. TANTILLO
Freehold, N.J.

'Public' Excommunication

In the editorial "Failure to Communicate" (11/21), the expression "Pope Benedict has ramped up the church's response to the provocations by excommunicating the illicitly ordained bishops and threatening the same to others who willingly cooperate with the ordi-

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nations" leads to misunderstanding.

In current church law, a priest receiving ordination as a bishop without a mandate from the pope, or a bishop ordaining such a priest, is by that very act committing a serious sin, thereby incurring excommunication. The pope's action is to declare publicly that such an act has occurred. In the past, on several occasions when these ordinations have occurred, the pope or others undoubtedly privately made the concerned priests aware of their transgression and its penalty of excommunication. (Of course, as in all immoral acts, personal guilt depends on whether fully informed and deliberate consent was given.) It would be more accurate to say "the pope publicly made known that they had, by church law, incurred excommunication."

ROBERT DEITERS, S.J.
Tokyo, Japan.

The 'Kill the Gays' Bill

Your "Ending a Reign of Fear" (Current Comment, 11/14) approves the U.S. military intervention in Uganda against the rebel Lord's Resistance Army in support of President Museveni. I do not support the L.R.A. in any way. But the comment should have mentioned that President Museveni supports the bill being considered in the legislature referred to as the "Kill the Gays" bill. It would make homosexuality punishable by death and would criminalize those who do not turn in gay people and people who "promote" homosexuality. The Ugandan government our military supports is no better than the L.R.A.

JOHN O'DONNELL
Roseville, Minn.

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The Lord Is With Us

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT (B), DEC. 18, 2011

2 Sm 7:1-16; Ps 89:2-29; Rom 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-38

"The power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Lk 1:35)

In the last two Sundays of Advent the Scriptures introduced the ministry of John the Baptist. Today's readings draw us to the annunciation, when John is still in the womb. While this may be out of order chronologically, it makes great sense theologically. John consummates Old Testament anticipations. He is an Isaiah figure announcing God's saving plans, an Elijah figure ushering in the Day of the Lord, that great and terrible day. John reflects God's promises, while Jesus is their fulfillment.

Promise is what the first reading is all about. King David has settled into Jerusalem and now wants to build a temple for Yahweh. Nathan, his court prophet, considers this a good idea until the Lord presents a different plan. Instead of David building a house for God, God will build a house for David. It is a great play on the word for house (*bayit*). David uses it to mean temple, but God means dynasty. God promises the extraordinary: "Your house and your kingdom are firm forever before me; your throne shall be firmly established forever."

God's promise to David was so embedded in Israel's consciousness that it was regarded as a bona fide covenant (Sir 45:25). This makes the destruction of David's kingdom and the exile so catastrophic. God promised! Does he renege on his covenants? Could their sinfulness be so great that God would abandon them? Paul will later offer assurance: "If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tm 2:13). But it certainly looks as if God failed to remain faithful here.

The Gospel reading, Gabriel's annunciation to Mary, represents God's answer to this question: No, God does not forget his covenants. The first part of Gabriel's message fits right in: "The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." The second part of the message is beyond all imagining: Mary is told that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her and the child will be the son of God.

The flow from promise or anticipation to fulfillment is often expressed in the New Testament by the use of typology. The New Testament writer looks back at key figures or events in the Old Testament and sees them as prefiguring later realities. Adam prefigures Jesus (Rom 5:14); Elijah is a type of John the Baptist (Lk 1:17); and Israel foreshadows the church (1 Pt 2:9).We would do well to consider Mary in the same manner. She fulfils the type of Israel. Virgin or Virgin Daughter is a favored title for Israel; and Gabriel's greeting to her, *chaire* in Greek, "Hail" or "Rejoice," draws us to two Old Testament proclamations, both announcing the arrival of God's saving power and both beginning with "Rejoice O Daughter of Zion" (Zec 9:9; Zep 3:14-17). In another image, Mary is told, "The power of the Most High will overshadow you." This is the very term the Septuagint used to describe what God's glory did over the tent that housed the Ark of the Covenant, with God's glory overwhelmingly radiant therein (Ex 40:35).

Mary is like Israel, and her faithfulness parallels its faithfulness. She is a temple overshadowed by and filled with God's glory. I also think of Mary as a mirror, in which we can see our own identity both as a community and as individual believers. We are the beautiful, chaste daughter Israel. We are the temple of the most high. We might also add "God-bearer."

Perhaps in a patriarchal church it is particularly valuable to recognize such imagery, which we are all invited to embrace, men as well as women. Is it unnerving to think of ourselves this way? Mary was "greatly troubled" by such a prospect, but she embraced her new identity. And we can too.

PETER FELDMEIER

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

- Consider: What image or persona would you give your spiritual life?
- Where is the divine dwelling in you most clearly?
- Spend this Advent week secretly waiting with Mary.

ART: TAD DUNNE

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

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