

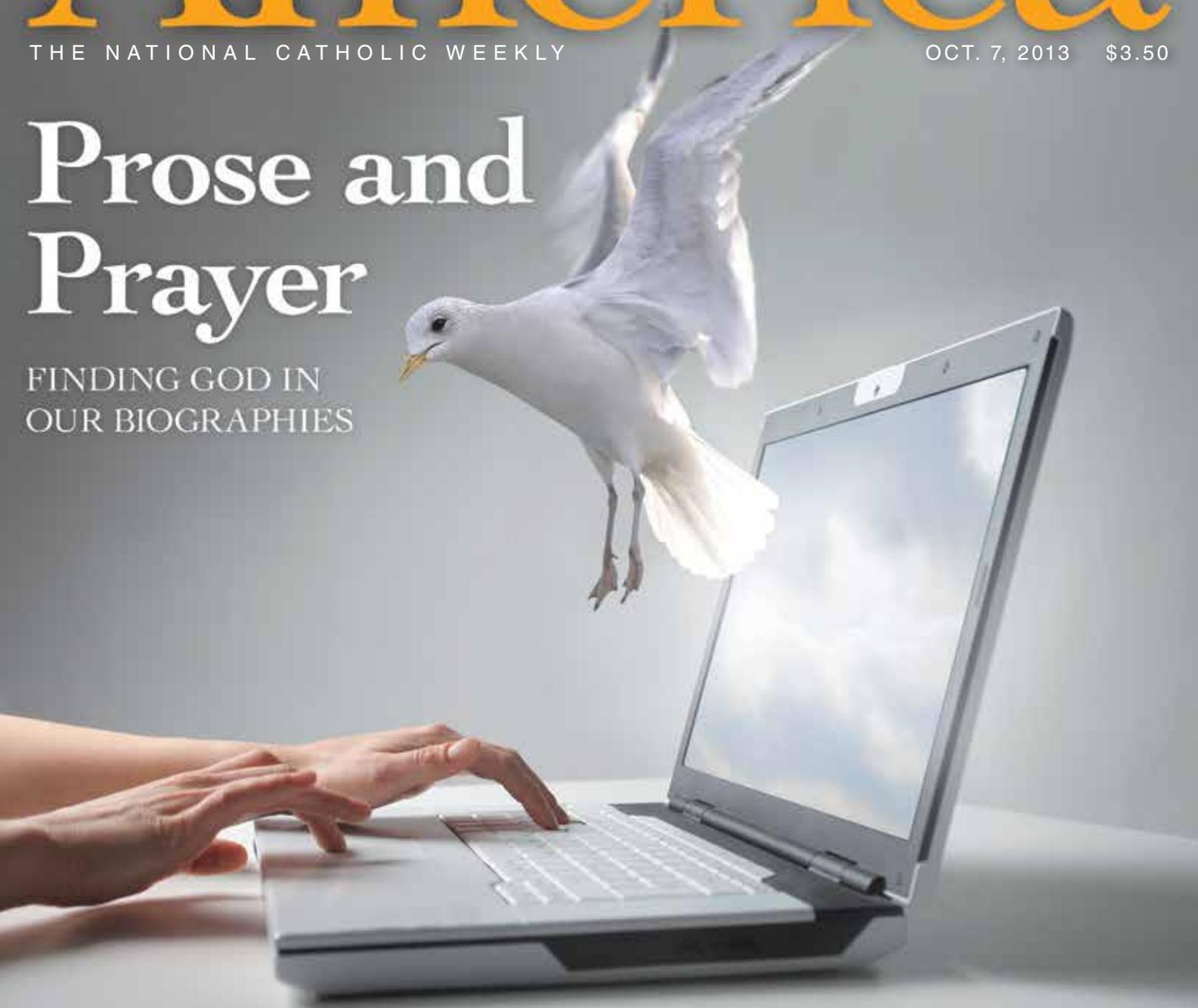
America

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC WEEKLY

OCT. 7, 2013 \$3.50

Prose and Prayer

FINDING GOD IN
OUR BIOGRAPHIES



James T. Keane
Returns to Gettysburg

OF MANY THINGS

Some say it all started with Bill Clinton's feel-your-pain politics, others with Oprah's daily pseudo-psychology. Still others say it began with MTV's "The Real World," the first in that ingeniously banal and now omnipresent genre called reality television.

Whenever it started, there can be no doubt that the previously impregnable wall between our public and private selves is now little more than an archeological site for sociologists. The public confession, in all its indecorous glory, is now a permanent fixture in the popular culture.

Don't get me wrong; the news isn't entirely bad. Behind the distasteful and dangerous there is also a deep desire for a true good, authenticity, even intimacy.

Public confessions aren't anything new either. Before the invention of the "confessional box" in the Middle Ages, Christians admitted their sinfulness before their congregations. In this way, the public nature of sin was revealed and sinners were thereby reconciled, not only with their Lord but, as the catechism says, "with the church they had wounded by their sins."

In other words, as much as we might admire Pope Francis for publicly declaring last week, "I am a sinner," St. Augustine said it 1,600 years ago; and not a few said it before Augustine. The saints are renowned for their spiritual autobiographies, great works of passion and despair, beauty and devastation; they are among the most dramatic accounts of human living ever recorded.

The difference, of course, is that in the church a public confession is an act of repentance and reconciliation, a proclamation of one's faith; in the world of reality television, a public confession is more often a narcissistic celebration of one's sins. Nonetheless, the church continues to uphold and celebrate the nobler, truer form of the art. We were pleased to publish Pope's Francis' public confession last week. The pope spoke

there in moving and intimate terms of his own spiritual journey: "The best summary, the one that comes more from the inside and I feel most true is this: I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon." And he repeats: "I am one who is looked upon by the Lord."

We are also very proud to have James Martin, S.J., here at **America**. Father Martin is widely and rightly acclaimed as a master of the confessional style; his spiritual autobiography has been a source of consolation for thousands of people.

It is particularly appropriate then that this issue of **America** takes another look at the art of public confession, what we now are more likely to call spiritual (auto)biography. Kaya Oakes tells us that the response to the bulletin announcement about her parish class on spiritual biography was overwhelming. That basic human desire for authenticity, for intimacy, is still very much at work: "When we write about the faith that keeps us going, it may not always be spectacular," Ms. Oakes writes. "And yet every Mass, every confession, every Easter and even every moment of doubt and crisis has meaning. Each story we bring to the page has the potential to connect with a reader who has lived those same moments." Elsewhere in this issue, Thomas P. Sweetser, S.J., talks about the practical ways in which our personal narratives form a vital part of the new evangelization, especially in our parishes, while Austin Rose talks about the emotional connection with others that can come through music.

We rightly recoil from the self-indulgence and solipsism we see nightly on cable TV. But we must not forget that public confession, in a spirit of humility and grace, is a noble and still-needed tradition. After all, God's revelation is itself a story, indeed the greatest story ever told: the tale of the creator's eternal and infinite love affair with his creation.

MATT MALONE, S.J.

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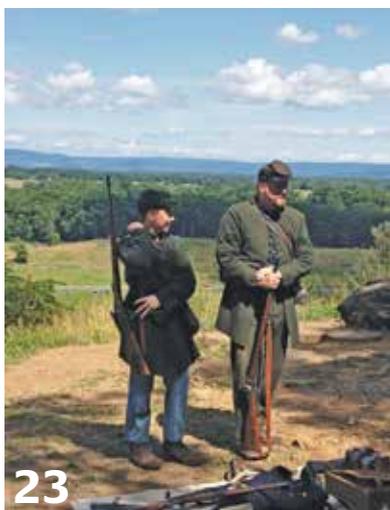
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ON THE WEB

Brother Joseph Hoover, S.J., right, talks about his new role as **America's poetry editor**. Plus, Kevin Spinale, S.J., introduces the new **Catholic Book Club** selection, and from the archives, "**Gettysburg's Catholic Memories**." All at americamagazine.org.



Nukes, No More?

For only the second time since the world's worst nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi after a devastating earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011, Japan has gone completely nuclear energy free. On Sept. 16 the nation's last operating reactor was shut down for an inspection. Public hostility to the return of nuclear power could mean that the reactor at the Oi nuclear facility in the western prefecture of Fukui, like 49 other reactors around the country, may never be restarted.

Just days before, thousands protested in Tokyo at an antinuclear energy rally organized by Kenzaburo Oe, a Nobel laureate in literature. "We want to keep telling what is happening at Fukushima even though everybody is talking about the Olympics," which Tokyo will host in 2020, Mr. Oe told the crowd. "Let's hand down an environment in which children can live without fear."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, a supporter of a return to the widespread use of nuclear energy, has assured the Japanese public that the situation is "under control."

They are correct to be suspicious. The scale of the meltdown at Fukushima and the ongoing threat are without precedent. Tokyo Power's improvised response suggests there is no credible, comprehensive plan of action, even as more radioactive water leaches into the soil and migrates into the surf around the stricken facility. The runoff will poison the surrounding land and ocean for uncountable generations. It has been propelling a radioactive plume across the Pacific to American shores that likewise poses an incalculable threat. Those who propose a renaissance of nuclear power in the United States, or anywhere else, should look upon Fukushima and shudder.

Alliances Wanted

It has been a difficult few years for organized labor. In 2012 two states passed "right to work" laws, which allow individual workers who are represented by a union to opt out of paying dues. One of those states was Michigan, home to the "big three" automobile manufacturers and a traditionally strong union state. There are now "right to work" laws in 24 states, raising questions about the strength and viability of organized labor.

The future of labor was debated vigorously at the recent meeting of the A.F.L.-C.I.O. in Los Angeles. The convention delegates considered an initiative that would have allowed progressive, nonlabor groups like the Sierra Club and the National Organization for Women to affiliate with the A.F.L.-C.I.O. This partnership could help to

strengthen labor and prove to be an influential force in the Democratic Party. Yet the delegates ultimately voted to limit partnerships like this, in part because they prefer the A.F.L.-C.I.O. to remain singularly focused on their needs.

Labor needs allies, but the A.F.L.-C.I.O. was wise to look beyond traditional progressive organizations. As Clayton Sinyai noted on *America's* blog *In All Things* on Sept. 12, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is "a critical ally in defense of the right to organize," and an alliance between the A.F.L.-C.I.O. and NOW, for example, would have put the bishops in a difficult position. In the end, the delegates endorsed a proposal that recognizes that labor needs to reach out to both parties. The resolution calls on the A.F.L.-C.I.O. to "take practical steps...to cultivate and nurture relationships with members of all parties who are willing to put partisan politics aside and work to advance the interests of our members." For the sake of working families, let us hope that this statement of good will is met in kind.

Winning Isn't Enough

With damaged brains, rape trials and the Oklahoma State University scandal over payments to players as high as \$20,000, the latter featured in *Sports Illustrated* (9/15), college football's image has suffered. But now *Time* magazine (9/16) suggests that football "stars" are suffering unjustly under N.C.A.A. rules intended to keep college sports honest. To the critics these rules, which bar student-athletes from getting paid or marketing their reputations, are considered inconsistent with capitalism. One former Oklahoma State player said, "The better the job you do, the more money you make."

But why do colleges sponsor sports? Ideally, to enrich the academic experience. Student-athletes can benefit from the exercise, teamwork and competition. True, football and basketball have taken on enlarged roles that, under control, can please alumni and boost the institution's reputation. But when a university compromises its intellectual mission to field winning teams, it has sacrificed its integrity.

In fact, while other students go into debt, some athletes in major conferences are compensated with an estimated \$50,000 to \$125,000 a year, writes Jeffrey Dorfman in *Forbes* (8/29), if one takes into account not just tuition and living expenses but also the coaching, fitness training, physical therapy and exercise equipment not available to paying students. Unfortunately, when athletes have been guided into the easiest majors and courses, their college education becomes a sham. To put athletes on salary would only further diminish what it means to be a *student-athlete*.

A New Gilded Age

It has been 75 years since President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Fair Labor Standards Act, a hard-fought legislative victory for the administration that set the nation's first enduring federal minimum wage at 25 cents an hour. The nation passed another milestone in 2013, though one that gives little cause for celebration: Sept. 15 marked the fifth anniversary of the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the first domino to fall in a financial crisis that would spiral into the severest recession since the Great Depression.

Looking back at these watershed moments prompts not only some stocktaking of the current economic recovery but also a question: how much progress has been made toward the laudable goal President Roosevelt described, of “insuring to all our able-bodied working men and women a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work”?

Four years into a sluggish recovery, housing prices are up, the unemployment rate continues to inch down and the stock market climbs to new heights. But these encouraging numbers belie another disturbing reality: the economic rebound has compounded a decades-long trend of greater income inequality. In 2012 the top 1 percent of earners captured their largest share of income since the Roaring ’20s and the top 10 percent took home a record 48.2 percent of total national earnings. While corporate profits have surged, thanks to increased efficiency (largely from cutting jobs and wages), median household income remains stuck below the pre-recession level, and one in seven Americans lives in poverty.

This new Gilded Age is no accident of history. While globalization and technological shifts contribute to the widening gap, so too do government policies. Less progressive tax rates, especially tax cuts on capital gains and dividend income, explain much of the increased disparity. And however necessary the bailout of Wall Street may have been to avoid an economic abyss, banks and their well-off investors undoubtedly profited from the intervention. Meanwhile, the real value of the minimum wage has steadily decreased since hitting its peak of \$10.77, in current dollars, in 1968.

Intensified advocacy for better wages in recent months is thus a welcome development. The Obama administration has called for increasing the minimum wage from \$7.25, the rate set in 2009, to \$9 an hour. Fast-food workers in cities across the country have held strikes demanding \$15 an hour—double what many workers earn now. In July the City Council of Washington, D.C., approved a measure that would have

required large retailers to pay a “living wage” of \$12.50, but failed to override Mayor Vincent Gray’s veto of the bill.

In response to these calls for better pay, opponents of increasing the minimum wage voice an argument recycled from the 1930s: wages set above the natural market rate will lead to higher unemployment and endanger the fragile economic recovery. Of course, it was in the midst of an even deeper economic crisis, the Great Depression, that the first minimum wage law was passed, not only to alleviate the suffering of workers, but because it made economic sense. “In periods of business recession,” President Roosevelt argued, paying poverty wages “has a serious effect on buying power.”

Putting money in the pockets of those who cannot afford to save can not only stimulate spending, but could temper the uneven distributional effects of the recovery to date. And despite countless studies on the employment effect of a minimum wage, economists have not consistently found a statistically significant correlation between an increase in the minimum wage and job loss. In fact, a study by the Economic Policy Institute found that a \$2.85 increase in the minimum wage would generate \$32 billion in economic activity and translate to roughly 140,000 new jobs.

Others make the argument that the minimum wage should be seen as a short-term “training” wage for low-skilled or young workers. But in today’s economy, too many workers can find reliable employment opportunities only in what has traditionally been a low-wage sector, retail and fast food, while manufacturing jobs, once a ticket to the middle class, continue to disappear.

But perhaps the strongest argument in support of increasing the minimum wage comes not from economics, which will always be disputed, but our Catholic tradition. Those who work full time should be able to provide for themselves and their families, a right supported by over 100 years of Catholic social teaching, starting with Pope Leo XIII’s “*Rerum Novarum*” (1891). The right to a just wage is rooted not in the freedom of the contract but the transcendent dignity of every human being.

Pope Francis has called upon nations to pursue economic policies that “serve humanity, beginning with the poorest and most vulnerable.” Though no panacea, moving the minimum wage closer to something like a just wage is a good place to start.



REPLY ALL

Eucharist at the Center

Re “Higher Learning,” by John R. Wilcox (9/9): We Catholics should insist that our educational institutions promote Catholic beliefs, starting with the belief that Jesus makes himself present to ordinary people in the celebration of Eucharist and that this is a good thing for all people to experience.

Arguably, Jesus in the Eucharist was at the heart of the life of all those founding congregations of religious men and women that Professor Wilcox’s mission communities will attempt to parallel. We need to look at this heart again and seriously consider the requirement that all students and faculty once again attend Sunday Eucharist so they constantly experience the distinguishing characteristic of a Catholic institution: Christ’s true presence.

Whether a student or faculty member is Catholic or Protestant, of

a non-Christian faith or no faith at all, the formation they receive from a Catholic institution of higher learning must find its origin and most substantive expression in a person’s participation in the celebration of Eucharist to the fullest degree possible. We can learn directly from the master teacher, Jesus. Jesus in the Eucharist is the foundation and capstone of Catholic education.

(REV.) CHRISTOPHER TRENTA
Akron, Ohio

Jesus, the Founder

Professor John Wilcox’s proposal that Catholic colleges and universities consider forming small “mission communities” seems like an effective way to carry forward their mission and vision. But two things are missing.

One is discerning self-criticism regarding the Catholic culture itself. The other is a clear connection to Jesus of Nazareth, who is the actual and fully

authentic founder of this mission and vision. The founding religious congregations are intermediaries of his endowment. In this sense, the vitality of a school’s Catholicity should be presented as rooted in its fidelity to his desires and example.

TAD DUNNE
Royal Oak, Mich.

Rite of Succession?

Thank you, Bishop Denis J. Madden, for “Becoming One” (9/9). I find that much within it resonates within my whole being. I too pray daily for the unity of the church, for the need for all the faithful to celebrate what Christ calls us to be: one in him. And yet there is still an “800-pound gorilla” in the room: apostolic succession.

I have been a Lutheran pastor for more than 35 years, and I can tell you that we celebrate the same Eucharist. Yet the Anglican priest or Lutheran pastor will never be accepted by Roman Catholicism because we don’t have the “proper ticket,” ordination in apostolic succession.

Is Christ so limited that he cannot be present in the Eucharist in the same liturgy elsewhere? After 2,000 years, must we still be separated by who can trace whose ordination back to Peter? Is there no other way Christ is truly present in the Eucharist? Does not the faith of presider and recipients come into play?

I will continue to pray that we may be one, but I am afraid that it will be unfulfilled decades from now, and that is cause for mourning.

CHRISTINE MILLER
Online comment

Build Reserves, Win Peace

“Unnatural Gas,” by Ken Homan, S.J. (8/26), is a statement of faith, but lacking in science and fact.

I am a longtime professional petroleum geologist and a convert to the Catholic Church, which I love as he does. In my state of Kansas there has never been, in 65 years of fracking, an action alleging pollution, this being the result of geology, good manage-



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ment and state regulation of my industry. I acknowledge it may not be so in other states. Nonetheless, natural gas is a premium fuel for the future, preferable to oil and coal environmentally, economically and in terms of efficiency. Alternate sources like wind, solar and biomass are not presently capable of filling the need in volume or economics.

My profession is charged with finding oil and gas. In the past decade our nation's reserves have dramatically increased, diminishing—possibly eventually eliminating—our need for imports from hostile sources in the Middle East. This could result in a degree of energy independence that will save lives because it avoids military actions to support those exporting nations.

ALFRED JAMES
Wichita, Kan.

He Did Prove It

I am totally in support of the excellent article on fracking, "Unnatural Gas." A few years ago I watched a documentary filmed by a young man in his 20s. He had traveled to fracking farms in Pennsylvania, Utah and the Dakotas. He spoke with the owners and filmed their flaming water. He listened to the frightening descriptions of their illnesses. The gas companies responded by saying, "Prove it," and the filmmaker found that the farmers are no longer able to give water to their livestock or even sell their farms.

In the last 10 years we have seen pesticides grow stronger and fracking endanger our lives and the water we drink. Please, God, help us to remember the sacredness of this beautiful earth before it is too late.

DARYL ANN NEUBECKER
New Canaan, Conn.

Rare Praise, Indeed

As one who not infrequently writes to complain about something or other, I am pleased to report that the Aug. 26 issue of **America** gave me more to think about than anything since Calvin and Hobbes ceased publication. That is

high praise, indeed. Congratulations, and no backsliding!

JOHN R. AGNEW, M.D.
Fort Myers, Fla.

Real World Concerns

I read "A Protected Rite?" by Helen Costigane, S.H.C.J. (8/12), with interest. I have always known about the protected nature of the sacrament and have respected it. But just as the author says the penitent may not be betrayed in any way, the sacrament and the people of God may not be betrayed either.

How do we protect the sacrament, and ourselves and our children, from abusers who want to "game" the system? It has been my experience that sociopaths are experts at lying, rationalization and manipulation—of people, systems and legal loopholes—and the seal of the confessional is a perfect loophole, particularly for abusive clergy.

Do we really want to live in a church where the system supports abusers? Reporting laws are vehicles for breaking the cycle of violence and making the decision to report something clear and unequivocal—and independent of any personal relationship that the reporter has with the abuser.

f STATUS UPDATE

Readers respond to "Murray's Mistake," by Michael Baxter (9/23):

I am a big fan of John Courtney Murray, S.J., thanks to Mark Massa, S.J. What a thoughtful article, especially the point that "the modern state must be resisted because it is corrosive to the practices and virtues necessary for genuine political community." But the questions posed by the modern political discourse are fundamental questions to the structure of society and how it must organize itself. What Mr. Baxter appears to be advocating is a retreat from statism, but that becomes increasingly difficult as the state becomes all-encompassing in our lives.

JAMES HAMILTON

It's time for us to address the real concerns of the real world and choose the safety of the innocent; anything else is merely philosophical and academic discussion.

SUSAN GALLO
Jacksonville, Fla.

Hail, Holy Grammar!

I know it's nutty to suggest it, but I'm going to do it anyway: Let's change the wording of the "Hail Mary."

Instead of "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus," wouldn't it be better to say "And blessed is Jesus, the fruit of thy womb"?

The traditional wording makes it sound as if the womb is named Jesus (because the appositive "Jesus" follows the noun "womb") or as if "Jesus" is being addressed ("Jesus" as nominative of address). Either way it's odd, and you can hear the oddness every time a 10-year-old says the words without a clue as to the sense of "fruit of thy womb, Jesus." The revised wording would be simpler to recite, more grammatical and generally more accessible and sensible.

There—I got it off my chest at last.

JACK SELZER
University Park, Pa.

Perhaps the dualistic identity of Catholics and humans in general, as members of temporal and religious communities, would prevent, in my opinion, a consistent unified group of Catholics in the political world. Different cultures, philosophies, ideologies, state politics, types of government and more influence our thinking processes.

I doubt the possibility of a pure and unified Catholic response anywhere. Currents of thought and beliefs don't work in a vacuum. This is the life we will have to learn to navigate. Seeking God and accepting his love is a continuum. Many roads lead to God.

CODY SERRA

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

NEW EVANGELIZATION

Pope Francis Leaves Media, Fellow Seekers, Marveling

In the days following the publication of an extensive, wide-ranging interview with Pope Francis in *America*, the media in the United States and around the world continued to marvel at a pope whose blunt talk sent what some called shock waves through the Catholic Church in the United States and around the world. “Shock can be good sometimes,” said Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, talking about the interview on “CBS This Morning” on Sept. 20, the day after its release.

“At times the mystical body of Christ, the church, gets listless; it gets moribund, and we need a good shock; and I think that’s what he’s given us,” said Cardinal Dolan. “He’s a good physician; he’s a good prophet; he’s a good teacher; he wants to shake us up.”

“We should not be surprised at this interview,” said the Georgetown historian and professor of theology John O’Malley, S.J., “because what the pope has put into words is what he has been telling us by his deeds and by his style ever since he was elected.”

Perhaps predictably, out of the 10,500-word interview, many of the mainstream media reports focused on what Pope Francis had to say about modifying, not dogma, but the manner of the church’s encounter with gay and lesbian people and in offering instruction on important issues like abortion and contraception. Many media outlets

jumped on the pope’s suggestion that the church had committed too much rhetorical space to these matters in a manner that could be detrimental to its overall moral message and its pref-

erential option for compassion, mercy and encounter.

Cardinal Dolan said: “What I think he’s saying is, those are important issues and we need to keep talking about



EMBRACEABLE YOU. A young girl greets Pope Francis as he arrives in St. Peter’s Square on Sept. 11.

CURIAL REFORM

Cardinal’s Report Comes Due

In New Orleans to celebrate Mass and preach at the Louisiana Priests’ Convention, Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley, O.F.M.Cap., of Boston, one of eight cardinals appointed by Pope Francis to serve as an advisory council on possible reforms of the Roman Curia, said he did not know what to expect from an upcoming gathering of the council with the pope in Rome. “Obviously, there’ve been many surprises in the last few months,” he said, “and I

think there’ll be more of the same.”

The eight cardinals are scheduled to issue their report on Curial reform and then discuss the issue with Pope Francis before accompanying the pontiff to Assisi on Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

Cardinal O’Malley said the group of eight cardinals planned to meet first among themselves at the end of September. He said he has received extensive feedback from cardinals and archbishops in the United States and

Canada in preparation for the meeting with the pope on Oct. 1–3.

Pope Francis established the so-called G-8 in April, giving it a mandate to advise him in the “government of the universal church” and his reform of the Roman Curia, the church’s central administration at the Vatican. Cardinal O’Malley said he was “very surprised and honored” when Pope Francis asked him and the other cardinals in April to offer their feedback on the Curia. “It’s something new in the church, and it is, I think, an opportunity for the Holy Father to have more input from the entire church.”



them, but we need to talk about them in a fresh, new way. If we keep kind of a negative, finger-wagging tone, it's counterproductive."

A former editor in chief of **America**,

Drew Christiansen, S.J., shared his reaction to the interview in a post on **America's** Web site. "For me the real news, potentially the most church-renewing news," he wrote, "is his revival of the understanding of the church as the 'people of God.'"

"There is no full identity without belonging to a people," Pope Francis said. "No one is saved alone, as an isolated individual, but God attracts us looking at the complex web of relationships that take place in the human community."

"This is Big Tent Catholicism," writes Father Christiansen, "with a church that welcomes all." He adds, "Astoundingly, Francis identifies infallibility as inhering in the whole church: 'a supernatural sense of the faith of all the people walking together'.... This is an entirely orthodox understanding of infallibility, but one sidelined in practice for too long in favor of a monarchical view. It is what Blessed John Henry Newman called 'a conspiracy of bishops and faithful.'"

Even as the pope's words were embraced with astonishment by many who had wearied of the church's roles in U.S.

and global culture wars, they raised concerns from other Catholics, who worried that they suggested a weakening of the church's resolve in confronting the moral challenges of contemporary times. As if intending to assuage such anxieties, on the day after his interview appeared Pope Francis issued his strongest public words to date on abortion before a gathering of the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations in Rome. On Sept. 20, Pope Francis affirmed the sacredness of unborn human life and linked its defense to the pursuit of social justice. "In all its phases and at every age, human life is always sacred and always of quality. And not as a matter of faith, but of reason and science," the pope said.

The pope grouped together unborn children, the aged and the poor as among the most vulnerable people whom Christians are called especially to love. "In the fragile human being each one of us is invited to recognize the face of the Lord, who in his human flesh experienced the indifference and solitude to which we often condemn the poorest, whether in developing countries or in wealthy societies," he said.

KEVIN CLARKE

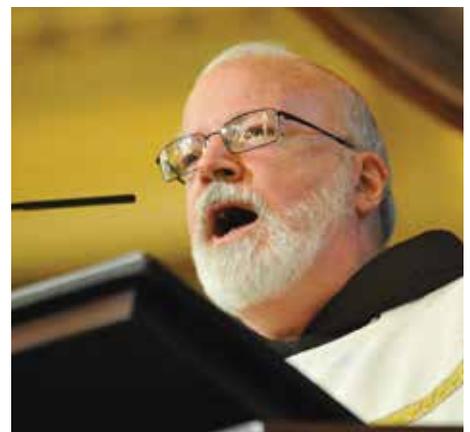
The Boston prelate said several of the cardinals on the panel had a preliminary meeting at World Youth Day in Brazil in July, and "we have been in correspondence with each other and with the Holy Father. Different cardinals have done different things to try and solicit ideas from a larger group."

Cardinal O'Malley said he has met personally with the U.S. cardinals and written letters to the archbishops of the United States and Canada, various groups of religious and other individuals asking for suggestions or feedback. He said he wrote to the archbishops because "usually archbishops have been

bishops in more than one diocese and have been bishops for a while."

Analyzing the feedback, Cardinal O'Malley said, "There were a lot of things that were similar. There was a certain pattern in the suggestions that came back. I think that will help to indicate the strength of interest in those areas."

"I think for some time people have wanted to have more communication between the Holy See and the church in different parts of the world, the bishops' conferences and the cardinals," he continued. "The Holy Father, I think, has picked up on that and is trying to underscore the catholicity of the church."



A CARDINAL'S COMMISSION. Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap., of Boston during Mass at the Louisiana Priests' Convention on Sept. 18.

Vietnam Catholics Seek Support

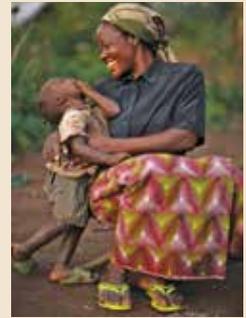
Bishop Paul Nguyen Thai Hop of Vinh Diocese on Vietnam's north-central coast, has appealed for "international support and solidarity" following violent attacks against Catholics in Nghe An Province on Sept. 4 that left at least 40 people seriously injured. Bishop Nguyen Thai Hop has described the situation for Christians there as "dangerous and worrying." According to sources inside the country, police and militia used tear gas, electric batons and police dogs to break up a peaceful protest against the arrest and detention of two Catholics from My Yen parish. The two men, Nguyen Van Hai, 43, and Ngo Van Khoi, 53, were arrested on May 22 as men believed to be plainclothes police officers stopped and searched Catholics visiting a shrine in Nghi Phuong Commune. Sources report hundreds of police, military and hired "thugs" beat and chased protesters, smashed religious statues and fired live ammunition into the air.

Flood Victims 'Still Have the Lord'

Mary Jurgensmeier, a member of St. Peter Catholic Church in Greeley, Colo., said she knows people in her community who have lost everything. "We still have the Lord," said Jurgensmeier. "We will never lose him." Jurgensmeier is one of thousands of Colorado residents who have been displaced from their homes by the flooding caused by several days of torrential rains that began on Sept. 11. The Rev. Matthew Hartley of St. Peter said the church is trying to help as many families in the area as they can. "The city of Greeley has rallied together as well," he said. "People have been extremely generous." Enita

NEWS BRIEFS

On Sept. 16, Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl celebrated a Mass for **consolation and healing**, praying for the victims of the rampage at the Washington Navy Yard and asking God to "heal the wounds in our society so that we can prevent tragedies such as we have just witnessed." • **Sister Angélique Namaika** was honored on Sept. 30 by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees for her work with **women displaced** by the ongoing strife in the Democratic Republic of Congo. • Alejandro Angulo Novoa, S.J., was recognized for his lifelong contribution to **human rights in Colombia** on Sept. 9 by the European Union and Diakonia, an international development agency. • Parishes became community support centers as **two massive storms struck Mexico** on opposite coasts at the same time on Sept. 14–15, disrupting the lives of 1.2 million Mexicans and killing at least 80 people. • At least 11 **political prisoners were released** in Iran on Sept. 17 and 18, including two Christian women, Mitra Rahmati and Maryam Jalili, who had been arrested along with 13 others as they celebrated Christmas Eve in a private home on the outskirts of Tehran in 2009.



Angélique Namaika

Kearns-Hout, regional director of Catholic Charities of Weld County, said Catholic Charities brought blankets to displaced families at the Greeley Recreation Center shelter. Kearns-Hout said the emergency "will not be resolved in a short time, and we will be here for the long run to provide support and show Christ's love and compassion to those who lost so much."

Quebec's 'Imposed Secularism'

Quebec's proposed Charter of Quebec Values imitates the "unjust" imposition of antireligious secularism in France, said the Canadian constitutional lawyer and religious freedom expert Iain Benson. "The recent proposals from Quebec mirror those from France, where both countries continue

to exert their antireligious fervor under the false flags of neutrality," said Benson. "Banning religious symbolism from the public sphere does not banish the relevance of religion," he said. "It just perpetuates the domination of secularism in these two jurisdictions." Imposed secularism will not work "because it is unjust," he said. Quebec's Parti Québécois government said it planned to introduce the charter this fall. It would prohibit anyone in the public sector from wearing obvious visible signs of religious adherence. Any large symbol of religious faith would be prohibited, as would Muslim head scarves or hijabs, Jewish kippahs or yarmulkes and Sikh turbans. Anyone working in health care, education, publicly funded day care and the justice system would be affected by the ban.

From CNS and other sources.



Where the Spirit Moves You

A few weeks ago I made my annual eight-day retreat. That's a misnomer, of course. You don't "make" a retreat. If anything, the retreat makes you. Along with a Jesuit friend, I spent the last week of August at the Linwood Spiritual Center in Rhinebeck, N.Y., on the banks of the Hudson River. I'll spare you the details of how beautiful the scenery was, which is hard to convey in prose. In short, it was gorgeous.

It was a great retreat with a great director in a great setting with, as an added retreat-house surprise, great food. And God, as many of my Jesuit friends like to say, showed up.

Midway through the week the retreatants were invited to an evening reconciliation service. As anyone who has been on retreat knows, one tends to go to almost anything sponsored in the evening, as a way of staving off any potential end-of-the-day boredom. Besides, I always need reconciliation.

It was not to be a traditional service, but would take a form familiar to people who make retreats, which I would call relaxed-contemplative.

Set in Linwood's cedar-paneled chapel, the service began with a reading from the Gospel of John: the story of the woman caught in adultery (8:2–11). Next, one of the retreat directors preached on the reading and quoted from a gorgeous poem by Irene Zimmerman, O.S.F. In an imaginative meditation on the Gospel passage, Sister Zimmerman has Jesus look upon the woman, with compassion flooding him "like a wadi after rain." The image stunned me. Even more

moving was the image of Jesus seeing the adulterous woman condemned by the crowd, and wondering if his mother, with her unusual pregnancy, had endured similar contempt. After this came an examination of conscience. What did we want to ask God to forgive?

Then something strange.

At the front of the chapel was a shallow box filled with sand. We were asked to approach the box and trace three words in the sand, symbolizing our sins. After they were written, another person from the congregation was to come up and wipe the words away. The image came from the Gospel passage, in which Jesus writes words in the sand. Following some quiet time, there would be a general prayer of forgiveness.

Immediately I thought: How cheesy! Instinctively I called to mind the people who would probably laugh at the sandbox. Then I remembered something that a spiritual director had told me: Never dismiss a possible avenue to God.

The first retreatant, an elderly woman, walked up the aisle, and silently wrote her words.

From another pew another woman walked up, and without reading what was written in the sandbox, wiped the words away. Then the two women embraced.

I found myself welling up with tears. How moving it was to see one stranger help another. I wondered if the people in the crowd felt the same when Jesus forgave the adulterous woman.

When it was my turn, I didn't have to think hard about what to write. "My sin is ever before me," as Psalm 51 says. I wrote three words and waited. Then, unexpectedly, my friend approached, wiped my words away and embraced me. How wonderful to have a friend help you in the spiritual life, I thought.

Some people reading this column may have started rolling their eyes long ago. The free-form service would not

be to their liking. But lately I've noticed that too many people (myself included) tend to judge and condemn, just like the crowd, spiritual practices that work for other people. This is true in every part of our church. Adoration is rejected as too traditional. The rosary is set aside as antiquated.

Too many people condemn spiritual practices that work for others.

On the other hand, the services I enjoyed that weekend are condemned as unorthodox.

These condemnations are as unjust as were the crowd's condemnations of the woman.

Here's what I say to people who sniff at one or another spiritual practice as too traditional or too progressive, as too rigid or too loosey-goosey: Try it. Twenty years ago in Nairobi, my Jesuit community had a practice of visiting the Blessed Sacrament after dinner. I eschewed that. But my superior encouraged me to try it as a way of worshiping with my brothers. The first night I did so I was flooded with consolation. I could hear God saying, "See? I really can be everywhere"—in a tabernacle or in a shallow box of sand.

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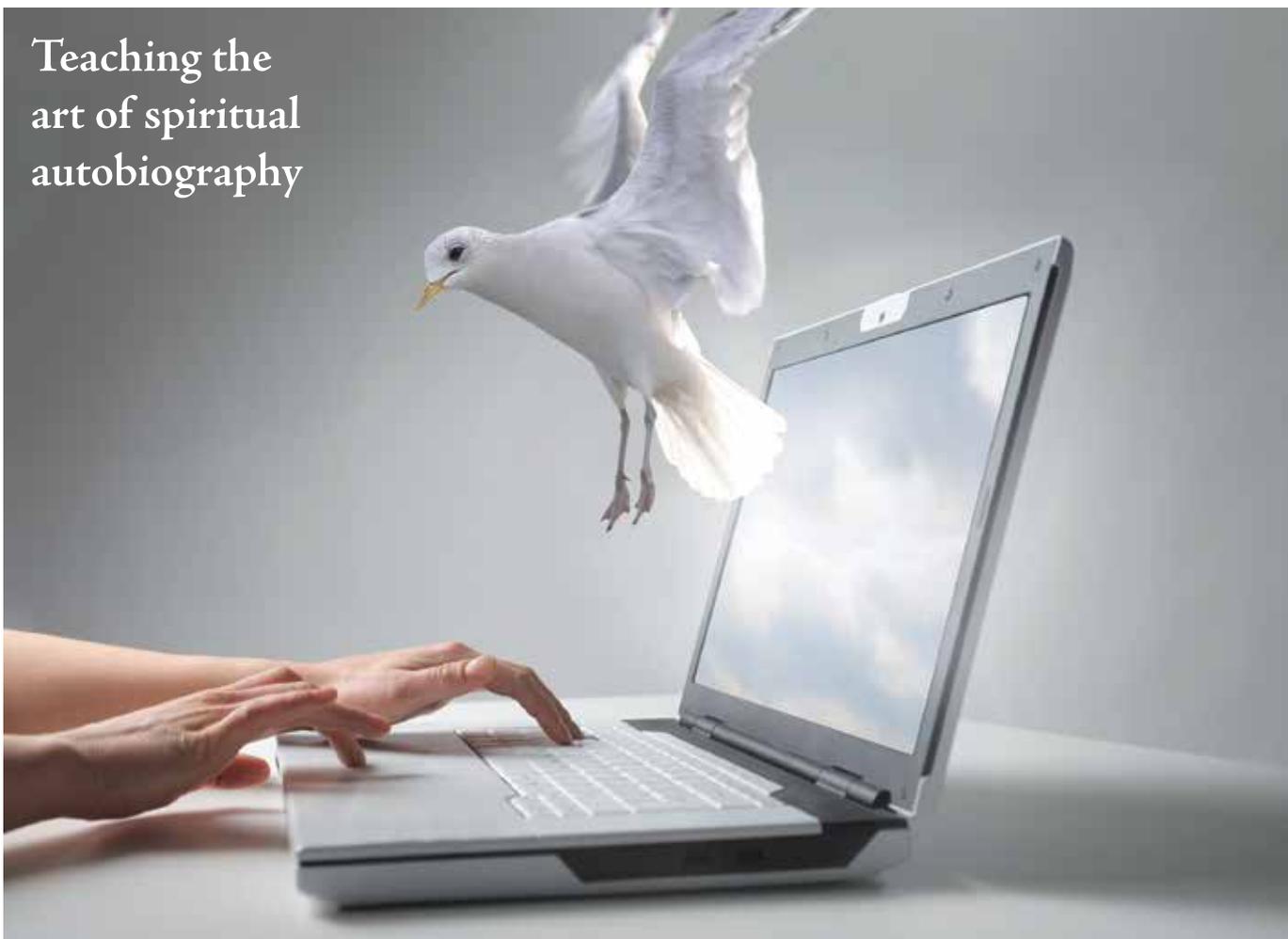
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Teaching the
art of spiritual
autobiography

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM/WOLLY



Prose and Prayer

BY KAYA OAKES

Very few of us can remember our infancy, but in his *Confessions*, St. Augustine makes an attempt, recalling a time when he knew only “to repose in what pleased, and cry at what offended my flesh; nothing more.” Consolation and desolation: the story of our lives. It was in those first pages of Augustine, those pages of bare need and barely any self-awareness, that our discussions of writing spiritual autobiography was to begin: I, the writer/academic attempting to steer the ship, and my students, adults ranging from their 20s to their 80s, all wanting to tell their stories of faith and often of its loss and rediscovery.

When I decided to teach a class on spiritual autobiographies at my parish, the church ran an advertisement in the bulletin. To my surprise, dozens of e-mail messages inquiring about the class began rolling in and kept coming in until the day of our first meeting. There were so many e-mails I began to worry about whether we would all fit into the appointed room.

KAYA OAKES, *the author of* *Radical Reinvention: An Unlikely Return to the Catholic Church (Counterpoint)*, *teaches writing at the University of California, Berkeley.*

We fit, but barely. On the first evening, nearly 40 people turned up. I had asked everyone to read a few sections of Augustine before we met, and I fanned out copies of the syllabus and a handout with some facts about Augustine's life. This included a quotation from James J. O'Donnell, an Augustine scholar at Georgetown University: "Prayer is private, but literature is unfailingly public; prayer is humble, but literature is always a form of self-assertion; prayer is intimate, but literature is voyeuristic."

"And this is what we'll be wrestling with this summer," I told the students. "Can we pray on paper, and make it interesting to read?"

Unlike my young writing students at the University of California, Berkeley, who are just discovering what they want to say about the world, my parishioner students came to class with everything to say about life and faith. Because my parish is near the Graduate Theological Union, the class drew in a few graduate students who knew theology backwards and forwards, but who rarely got the chance to examine their own spiritual growth. And since the church is down the hill from a senior housing complex, quite a few retirees also climbed the stairs to the room where we met. Some wanted to write their spiritual stories for children and grandchildren, others for themselves. Working adults, a few people between jobs, many practicing Catholics, a few lapsed ones and some spiritual seekers whose faith was undefined filled the chairs.

Each class meeting followed the same format: a short talk about the author we were reading, small group discussions followed by a whole-class colloquium, a writing exercise and time to share the writing students had done over the past week. Choosing the authors we read was not difficult; to start us off, I went to the classics. After Augustine we grappled with Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*. After Merton, we waded into Dorothy Day's *The Long Loneliness*. After Day we read a contemporary spiritual autobiography, Sara Miles's *Take This Bread*. In the five weeks we met, the only regular complaint was about the volume of reading. And yet the stories they did read were powerful: Some students had read Merton and Day decades in the past, and rediscovering what it felt like to encounter those huge personalities was like being reunited with past versions of themselves.

For most of my students, the writing was an even bigger challenge than the reading. Writing memoir is difficult for writers at any level. Parsing out segments of one's own life, deciding what to include and not to include, taking real people, including yourself, and turning them into characters, making decisions about chronology versus thematic organization and figuring out your focus cause even the most accomplished writers to scurry away from the form or to fictionalize everything instead. There is a reason why Edna O'Brien waited until she was 82 to publish her memoirs.

O'Brien's impossibly fascinating and often difficult life may

have seemed too daunting to whittle down until she was darn ready to do it. (How many writers have had Paul McCartney write songs about them?) But memoir is also the only form that comes close to the way most people pray: talking directly to God, only in this case with the reader as proxy for God.

When we pray St. Ignatius' Examen, we unspool our days and try to find the moments where we have moved closer to or further from God. That is what great spiritual autobiography does. It brings the reader into those moments along with the writer. It creates intimacy. This can be seen in the writers I have mentioned and in newer voices, like Christian Wiman and Mary Karr. And, slowly but steadily, I saw it unfold in the work of my students.

The first assignment was blatantly stolen from Ignatius and mashed up with an assignment I give my creative nonfiction students: create a verbal snapshot of a moment from your life. "Let's start by brainstorming a list of details that surrounded you at either a low moment of faith (like Augustine's pear tree incident) or a high moment of faith (like his 'take and read')," I told them. This exercise begins with a list: only sensory details, only things the reader can see, hear, taste, smell or touch. Then it expands from the most vivid details into a couple of sentences, which I asked the students to share with one another. After the class had paired off and erupted into loud chatter (I had to stand up and wave my arms around to quiet them down), I asked how it went. "It was hard to decide," a retired union organizer reflected, "but once I got started, things kept coming back."

Sense memory is a powerful thing: just think of Proust biting into that madeleine. But it is also a trigger for memories of faith. A cold chapel, a sour mouthful of Communion wine, the rough fabric of a habit worn during a brief stint in religious life. When we begin writing from details like these, the experience of memory thickens and connects us with readers. In recapturing sense memories, we write from the depths of our souls. And we get closer to the truth.

From there, they filled in the background of their stories, the who/what/when/where/why every journalist begins with. And as we read Merton and Day, I asked them to look at how those writers portrayed influential figures in their own faith lives: Robert Lax in Merton, who casually tells his friend to be a saint; Peter Maurin in Day, whose visionary nature pairs with Day's problem-solving pragmatism. Figuring out how to turn real people into characters requires the same shift in perception it takes to see ourselves as characters.

The writer Phillip Lopate gives us a simple instruction: start with your quirks. When writing about others, do the same. So my students found holy people with quirks. A priest who sang Kurt Weil songs in German. A burly family friend who sold a car to B. B. King and knelt at daily Mass. In those quirks there were more moments of closeness to God. Remembering those scenes and recreating them on the page requires acts of imag-

ination, yet another form of prayer straight out of St. Ignatius' playbook. When a writer puts herself back into a moment of grace, into an encounter with someone who pushed her faith to a new or unexpected place, it can be like walking her way through a meeting with Christ, who, after all, is present to each of us. And as they stitched those moments together, my students' stories began to emerge.

The real gift of teaching this class was the people who gathered week after week to read and talk and write and share their work. Two of my students had actually met and worked with Dorothy Day at the Catholic Worker in New York, and both of them wove her into their stories.

One evening, two other students sent me e-mails back to back. One let me know she would not be returning to class; the rare form of cancer she had been fighting through years of experimental treatments had made a return. Another needed a note

from me because she had been admitted to a homeless shelter. The shelter doors locked at 6 p.m. and we met at seven; without a note, they would not let her back in. Yet they kept writing even when making it to class was difficult or nearly impossible, kept getting down the words that explained something about this fragile, perishable thing we call faith.

Some students worried that in contrast to the books we read, with their dramatic moments of revelation, their own faith lives were not interesting enough. There are very few

books about the weekly trudge to Mass, the annual repetition of sacraments or the day-to-day life of your average believer in the pews. And yet those are the stories we most need to hear: we need the stories behind that trudge to understand why we keep making it.

When we write about the faith that keeps us going, it may not always be as spectacular as Merton rushing into his monastery, fleeing his sinner's life. And yet every Mass, every confession, every Easter and even every moment of doubt and crisis has meaning. Each story we bring to the page has the potential to connect with a reader who has lived those same moments. So, no, my students' stories were not always dramatic. But they were deep. Each brimmed with meaning and passion and grace.

I explained this work to a Jesuit friend, and watched as he got more and more excited. "Think about it," he said. "This is something other people could do. It's the laity in action. It's the laity speaking for themselves."

And it is true: anybody could offer a class like this. It brought people at my parish closer together, and the pastor had only to unlock the doors when we showed up and lock them when we left. You do not have to be an expert writer to teach writing or to write, you just have to arrive at the page with the desire to connect—with other writers, with the reader, with God—because writing your spiritual story is not just writing. It's prayer.

ON THE WEB
Kaya Oakes takes questions on spiritual autobiography.
twitter.com/kayaoakes



The advertisement for Grace Cuisine features a green background on the left and a white background on the right. The logo for Grace Cuisine is in the top left, with the word "grace" in a stylized font and "cuisine" below it. The main headline reads "The perfect partner for all your food service needs." Below this, there are three paragraphs of text describing the company's services and contact information. On the right side, there are three testimonials in italics, each preceded by a horizontal line. The Grace Cuisine logo is repeated in the bottom right corner.

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Setting Hearts on Fire

A pilot project for evangelization

BY THOMAS P. SWEETSER

Evangelization needs to be practical, if it is to succeed in inviting people to embrace Christ and live the Gospel more wholeheartedly. A working definition might be: Evangelization is a radical call to do things differently, in very concrete and practical ways, in order to set people's hearts on fire. In order to best reach out to people, it can be helpful to view individuals as belonging to one of four groups of Catholics, each in need of a different approach. Effective outreach depends on adapting the style of evangelization to fit the needs of each group.

The first group are those who are active, interested and attending. They come to church regularly and are involved. But they may have gotten stuck in a ministry (lector, usher, choir) or are leading an organization (Women's Club, St. Vincent de Paul, Funeral Luncheons) and have remained there for years. Practical evangelization means giving them a new purpose, a new energy, a new way of being engaged, a radical call to expand their horizons. Lectors, choir members, greeters might be asked to train new people to take their place as a way of freeing them for a new task or ministry. These veteran ministers might then be trained as listeners for those not coming to church in order to hear their story, or inviters for those attending Mass but not involved elsewhere in the parish, or motivators for those like themselves who are engaged but have been stuck in one ministry for a long time or who are set in one way of doing things.

The second group includes those who attend Mass more or less regularly but are not active in any parish ministry or activity. They need to be named by those who are involved as having a gift or an ability that could be used "for others." One practical way to encourage their involvement is to ask those who are engaged whether they know of others who would make good ministers, committee members or project workers. These "named individuals" are then personally invited to an information night. Those attending are divided into areas of interest, including liturgy, community-building, formation, service/pastoral care and administration. They learn about available openings for involvement and are asked to take the risk of joining a ministry or performing a task. It is up to the inviters to help them become engaged in some parish function besides attending Mass.

THOMAS P. SWEETSER, S.J., is the founder and director of the Parish Evaluation Project, which offers resources for assessment and renewal to Catholic parishes and dioceses across the country.

The third group includes registered parishioners who come to church only on rare occasions, like Christmas, Easter, funerals or weddings. This third group includes a large number of young adults in their 20s and 30s. Evangelizing this group might begin with a listing of names obtained from the parish membership files. Once identified, they are contacted by trained listeners. Begin with 10 listeners who each have five people to contact. Once contacted, they arrange a time to listen to the story of why the person pulled back from going to church. The one contacted is usually surprised that there is no request for financial contributions, no effort to pull them back to church, no proselytizing of any sort; just a time to share their life story if they so wish. If there is a desire to learn more about the Catholic Church or the parish, this information is offered, but only after a request is made. The listener is trained not to push the person toward regular church attendance but only to hear what the individual is willing to share and to answer any questions.

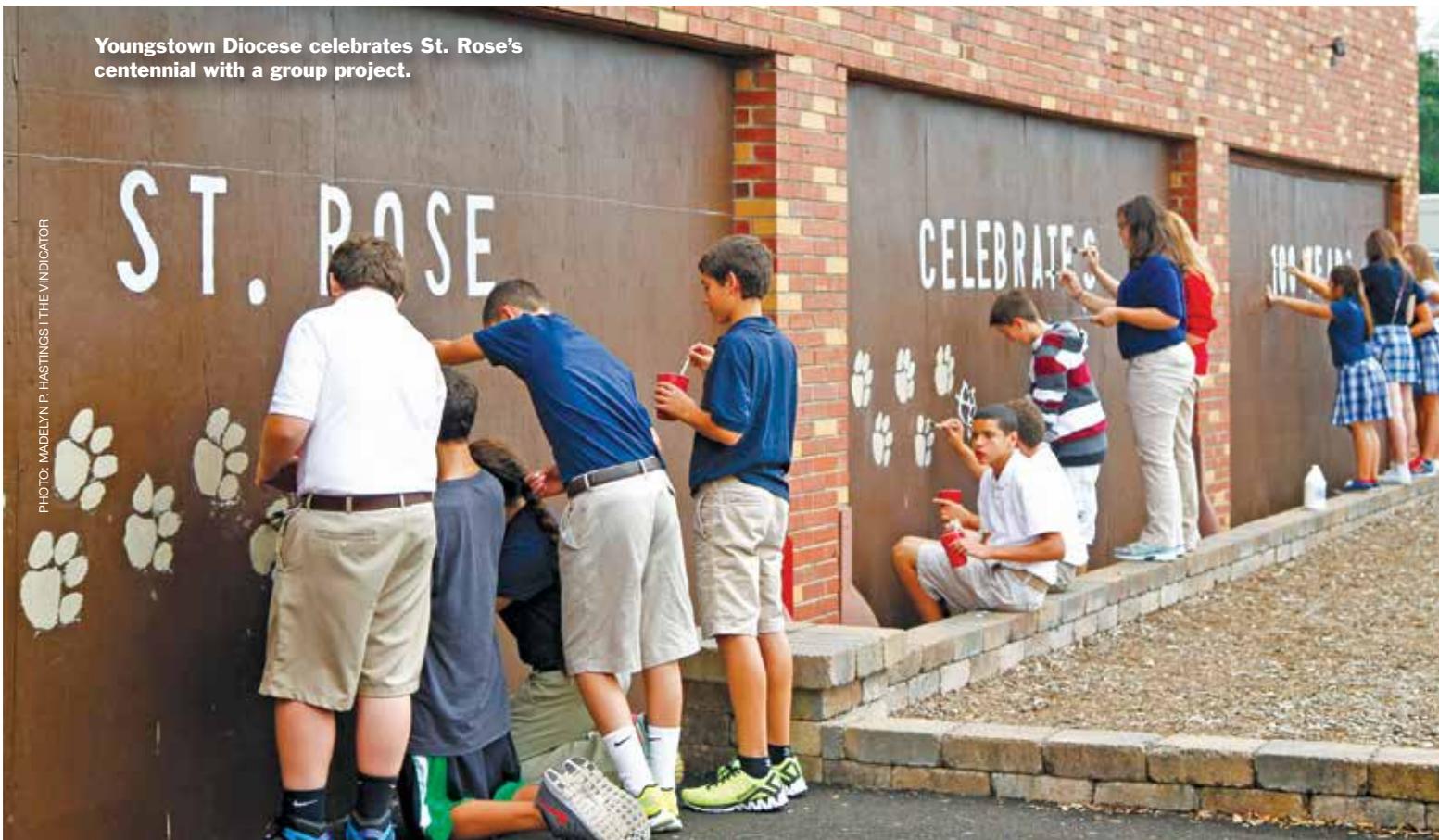
The fourth group is made up of baptized Catholics who are not registered in any parish. Because there is no way of discovering these people's names from parish rosters, the emphasis must be on reaching out to them through other means, including advertisements, social media and Web sites. The intent is to show them that they are valued and loved by God and are always welcome to join the parish community to the extent they might feel comfortable, whether for liturgy, a prayer experience, reconciliation or counseling, a parish social, a group for spiritual growth involving bible study, a book club or discussion group, or a service project to help people in need.

The Youngstown Project

As a means for putting evangelization into practice, nine parishes and the chancery offices of the Diocese of Youngstown, Ohio, are now involved in a six-month pilot process that runs from April through November 2013. Each parish, as well as the departments of the chancery, was asked to choose one target group from the four listed above and to try out something different that might "set people's hearts on fire." Starting with a two-week period in April, I joined the Rev. Nick Shori, head of the Office of Evangelization in the diocese, in visiting each of the 10 groups to help them plan creative ways for spreading the good news and getting people's attention.

Youngstown Diocese celebrates St. Rose's centennial with a group project.

PHOTO: MADELYN P. HASTINGS | THE VINDICATOR



As they made their plans, one common theme emerged in six of the nine parishes. Rather than begin by trying to draw people back to the Eucharist, they decided on an activity that included some aspect of service to others. This approach, they felt, had more chance of enticing inactive and unengaged parishioners to take part in the project. Each parish, in its own way, planned a one-time event that they hoped would be nonthreatening, of short duration, include people of all ages, both families and singles, and would offer time for fellowship, reflection, sharing and refreshments.

One example is St. Anthony/All Saints Parish in Canton, Ohio, that planned a Service-Mass-Social Day on the first Saturday of September. The process began with a personal, one-on-one contact with young adults, inviting them to participate in an afternoon service project, like helping the elderly, cleaning up litter or feeding people at a soup kitchen. Afterward, everyone gathered for an outdoor Mass in a city park followed by a social, complete with food and music.

A few parishes decided to target students in Catholic schools and religious education programs, especially those who have just received first Communion or Confirmation. Usually there is a drop in attendance the year following these high-interest, high-participation events. To offset this trend, Blessed Sacrament Parish in Warren, Ohio, will be holding a Reunion Service Day in October targeting those

who received first sacraments in April and May. Entire families, parents and children together, will assemble at the parish hall for a send-off that includes prayer, music and directions. Groups of two or three families will head out into the neighborhood on a three-hour service project, returning to the parish for refreshments and a chance to reflect on their experience. The only requirement is that they must share their stories with those who went on a different service project than their own.

Christ Our Savior Parish in Struthers, Ohio, and Holy Spirit in Uniontown, Ohio, are planning a similar approach, while St. Patrick's, located in central Youngstown, is expanding the target group to include parents who have had a child baptized within the last six months and couples who have gone through marriage preparation. Often, after the wedding takes place, they are rarely seen again at their church. To counteract this tendency, the parish is sponsoring a Service to the City experience for a few hours on a Saturday, pairing people up with local residents to help beautify the central city. This is followed by time for everyone to give witness to what they experienced and to share refreshments, music and conversation.

Using the draw of a service project, St. Joseph's in Mantua, Ohio, decided to target young adults between the ages of 20 and 45. To reach this somewhat elusive group, they set up a

booth at their parish festival just for this age range. Visitors to the booth were given information about a Saturday event during which small groups will fan out to various service areas. When the young adults inquired at the festival booth, they were asked what projects would interest them and the names of other people their age to contact—in other words, what service projects might fire up these young adults and make it a rewarding experience?

Answering Questions

A few other parishes decided to use the “curious Catholics” approach developed by Dr. Kate DeVries and the Rev. John Cusick at the Young Adult Ministry Office of the Chicago Archdiocese. St. Edward’s Parish in Youngstown, for example, hosted an evening gathering for all comers but targeted especially the inactive and unaffiliated Catholics. The process was to share questions people might have about the church or Catholic faith. Each person had the opportunity to write down a question or concern on an index card and give it to those running the one-hour session. A man and a woman led the event, both well-trained, resourceful, entertaining individuals. What followed was a lively discussion about issues related to the church, ranging from the new pope to church morality, from new Mass responses to the saints in the church windows.

Expanding on this approach, St. Joseph’s in Austintown,

Ohio, decided to sponsor a four-hour open house on Saturday. The parish is blessed with a large parking lot and ample grounds, so they decided to host a festival-type gathering filled with booths and fenced-in enclaves that offered a variety of information and resources. Called Discovering Francis and Freedom, one spot featured pictures and videos of the new pope; another had a priest available for confession; a third had counselors for personal issues and problems. One booth was a Q-and-A station, while other volunteers provided tours of the church. There were activities for young children and a band that provided live music. An outdoor Café Bistro with a French atmosphere supplied lunch. The planners hoped that those attending experienced a sense of freedom and new insight as they discovered various aspects of the Catholic faith.

Renewal of Spirit and Joy

One ambitious parish, Our Lady of the Lakes in North Jackson, Ohio, planned a full week of events, including a Saturday evening liturgy, cookout and bonfire to kick off the week, the dedication on Tuesday of a new meditation walk through the woods behind the church, an Answer Night on Wednesday based on questions collected the previous weekend at Masses, a Blessing of the Animals and wiener roast on Saturday after the Feast of St. Francis, and a coffee house for informal conversation at various times throughout the week. The celebrations culminated with a combined liturgy from the two Sunday morning Masses, followed by an appreciation brunch and a special talent show put on by the children.

The chancery, in an effort to improve and renew the way it is perceived and used in the diocese, planned a two-pronged strategy. Part One was a brief survey going out to all the pastors and a sampling of staff and leaders in each parish, asking about attitudes toward the various departments of the chancery and how the relationship between the chancery and parishes might be improved. Part Two, based on the survey results, was a dialogue session with a sampling of pastors, parish representatives and chancery staff to discuss the findings and plan ways in which the departments of the chancery might be more effective in offering resources to the parishes and Catholics of the diocese as a whole.

On a Saturday in November, representatives from the nine parishes and the chancery will gather to share the outcome of their efforts, celebrate what was accomplished, learn from one another’s successes and shortfalls, plan new ways to continue their efforts at evangelization, and most important, mentor another set of parishes to implement the same process during the coming year. In this way, the effort to do things differently in concrete and practical ways to set people’s hearts on fire for Christ and the people of God will make its way around the entire Diocese of Youngstown and, it is hoped, beyond. 



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Loving Memories

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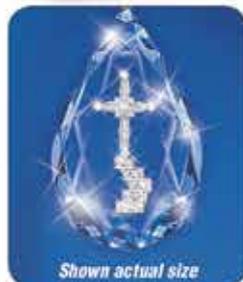
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Feed My Sheep

A Catholic reflection on the Food Assistance Convention

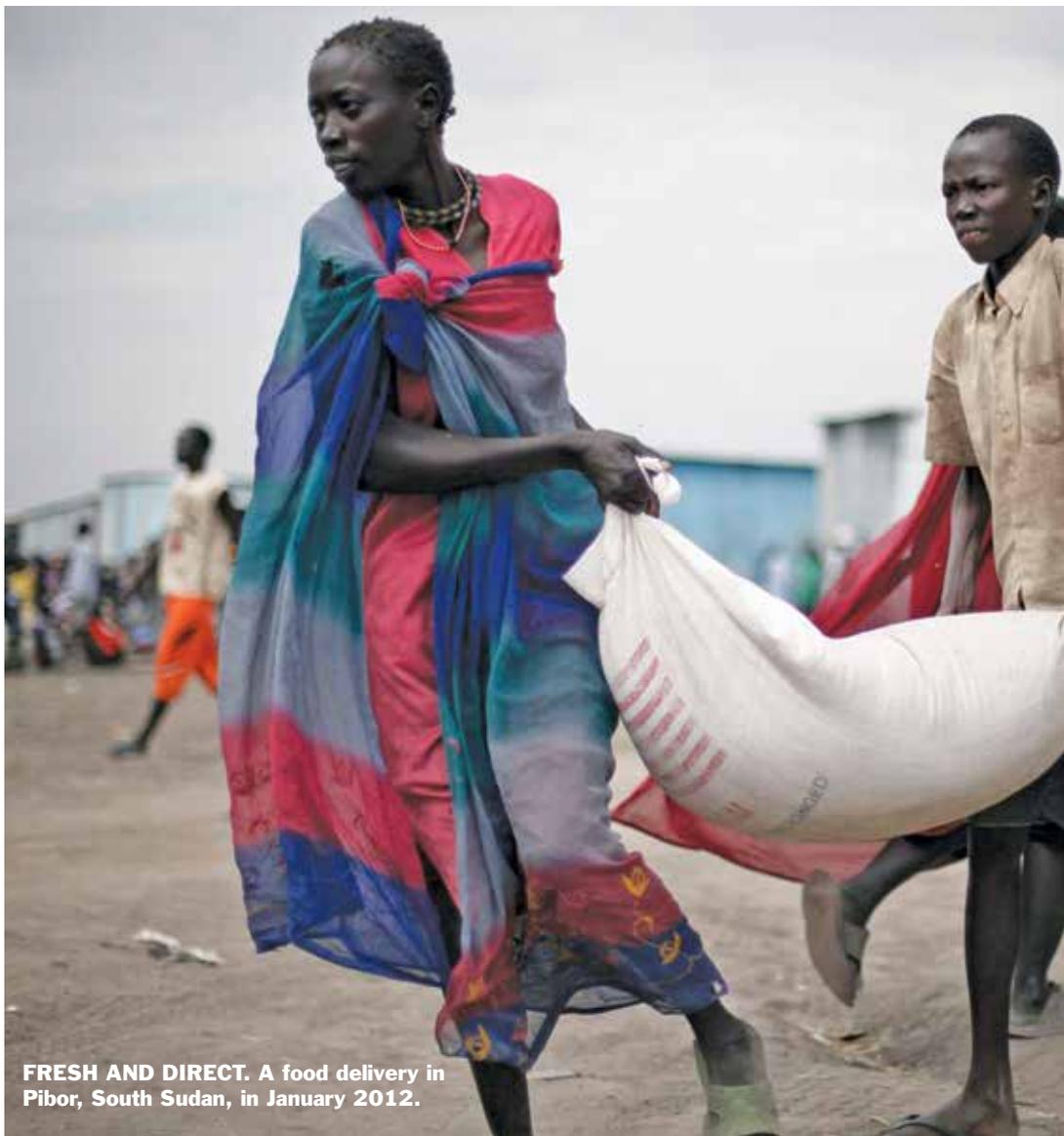
BY WILLIAM WHELAN

For people of faith, responding to hunger is about neither politics nor humanitarianism. Rather, feeding the hungry is primarily a response to the question posed by Jesus to all of his followers: “Who do you say that I am?” (Mk 8:29). It is about the belief that the food we eat is both God’s gift in response to our need and God’s invitation for us to share this gift of life with others. Participating in efforts to feed and defend the hungry is accepting God’s invitation to love Christ in our suffering brothers and sisters.

Among the many ways of responding to this invitation is the Food Assistance Convention, which took effect on Jan. 1 and is the only legally binding international agreement related to reducing hunger and promoting food security. This agreement reaffirms and updates the global commitment made by major donor countries since 1967, in a series of Food Aid Conventions, to provide food to those in need throughout the world. This new convention has the potential to become a significantly more important international instrument for assisting those with insecure access to food.

The primary focus of previous Food Aid Conventions was providing food aid—typically food grown in and shipped by donor countries. Under the new convention, the United

WILLIAM WHELAN, a former U.S. official who participated in the negotiations for the Food Assistance Convention, has been a chairman of the Food Aid Convention, a Jesuit Volunteer and a member of the board of Jesuit Volunteers International.



FRESH AND DIRECT. A food delivery in Pibor, South Sudan, in January 2012.

States, the European Union and other donor countries make a commitment to additional types of food assistance in order to respond most appropriately to those in need. In addition to the food that is required to feed the hungry directly, cash and food vouchers are also explicitly recognized as valid forms of assistance. Because the convention stipulates that actual need should determine what food assistance will be provided, it underscores the importance of donor support for accurately determining the food needs of the hungry in

each context as well as the most appropriate response to best meet those needs.

Therefore, to help ensure that the types and levels of food assistance required will be available to meet as much need as possible, every member is required at the beginning of each year to make a legally binding resource commitment



The purpose
of the
Father's gift
of food is to
provide the
nourishment
required to
build the
kingdom on
earth.

CNS PHOTO/HERWARD HOLLAND, REUTERS

of food and/or money for the provision of food assistance. Under previous conventions, commitments were fixed for many years. Now, however, the types and levels of assistance provided by members can change annually to reflect changing food needs and national budgets. The annual food and dollar commitments of the United States will be determined by what the president requests in his budget and what Congress authorizes and funds each fiscal year.

Consequently, agricultural commodity and other

commercial interests will lobby for types of assistance and levels of funding that are in their financial interest, like the sale of food to the U.S. government for food aid. Humanitarian and development organizations will lobby for certain types and levels of food assistance depending upon whether their programs focus on development or responding to emergencies. And individual citizens, especially people of faith, will have the opportunity to remain silent or to express their opinions about whether our country should respond to the needs of the hungry living beyond our borders—and, if so, how generously.

The Food Assistance Convention will become a more important instrument for addressing global hunger than the previous Food Aid Conventions if the consistent focus of the signatory donors is on providing the types and amounts of food assistance that meet the needs of the hungry. This will require that future donor commitments are less susceptible to the biases and whims of donors, which can reflect their own perceived self-interest. The chances of this happening will be far greater if people of faith are committed to seeking meaningful food commitments from their governments, because they, as people of faith, believe that feeding the hungry is not about politics, but is about feeding Christ in our world today, the Christ who feeds us as well.

Receiving and Sharing the Gift

As people of faith, we are invited to consider what Jesus teaches his followers about his Father, food, hunger and the kingdom. This entails a prayerful encounter, one that is enriched by an Ignatian spirit of contemplation in action, with our incarnate God, who consistently attaches special importance to food and hunger. This is particularly evident in the Our Father, the multiplication of the loaves and fish, the actions of Jesus at the Last Supper and in Matthew's account of the Last Judgment.

Jesus provides his followers with a glimpse of his intimacy with the Father in the Our Father. This prayer acknowledges the Father's gift of food that enables him to carry out his earthly work in proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. Jesus also reveals to his followers that they have the same Father. He teaches them to petition the Father for daily bread that satisfies their daily hunger, makes possible their healthy growth and establishes a bond with all members of God's family. Included in this prayer is an acknowledgment of the physical need for food to sustain life as well as an awareness of our basic human dependency upon a heavenly Father who provides the sustenance that nourishes life. When Jesus invites his followers to pray "thy kingdom come, thy will be done," he is reminding them that the purpose of the Father's gift of food is to provide the nourishment required to build the kingdom on earth.

Jesus also focuses on the physical needs of a hungry

humanity in his compassionate multiplication of loaves and fish. In this encounter with Jesus' divinity, we witness Jesus' response to the concrete, physical needs of people as a clear manifestation of the Father's love. We witness the divine source of food for the hungry. And we learn that sharing God's gift involves some human action. Before the miracle, people were involved in the production of loaves and in catching the fish placed in the baskets at the feet of Jesus. People were involved in the market system that made it possible for some loaves and fish to be available.

After the miracle, people collected the leftover loaves and fish and placed them in baskets at the feet of Jesus. Each of these actions reminded everyone present that God's gift of the food they ate was both fruit of the earth and the work of human hands.

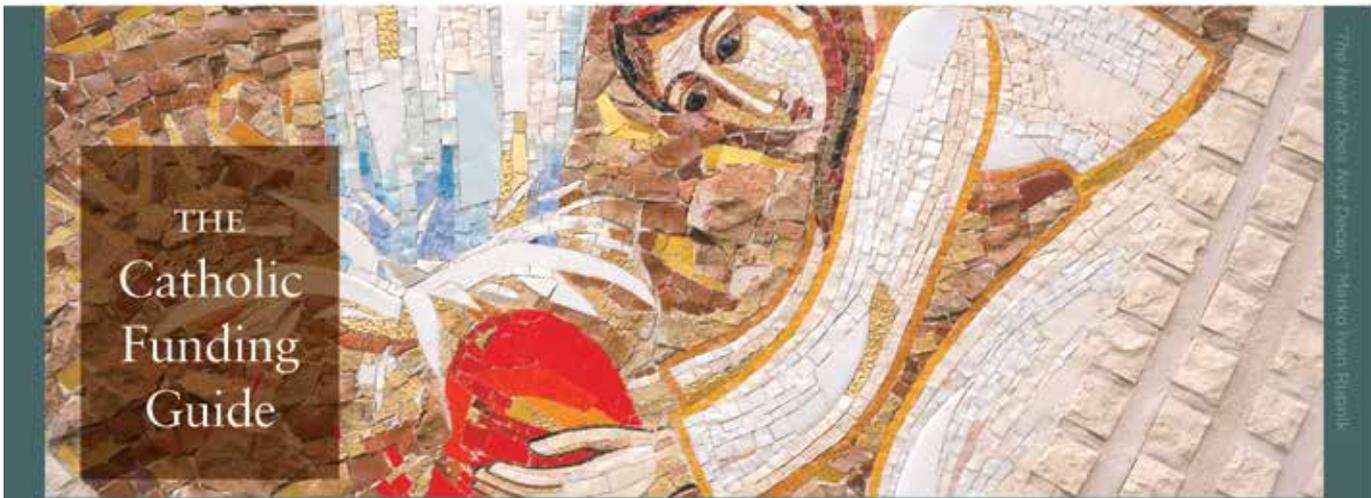
A Eucharistic Vision

God's miraculous gift of food in response to our need culminates in the gift of the Eucharist and the washing of the feet. In receiving the Eucharist, we no longer simply receive God's gift of food to nourish our human bodies, but we also receive the presence of God who chooses to embody himself in this gift of food. By virtue of this gift, Christ resides within our fellow humans, and we become even more closely linked to all members of our family whom we acknowledge

and affirm in the Our Father. Thus it is fitting that Jesus teaches us to wash the feet of others since his real presence is found within them. This washing of feet, this imitation of Christ, involves finding ways to feed our hungry neighbor within whom Christ's passion continues. Jesus points to the profound importance of the washing of feet when he explains that the Son of Man sitting on his throne of glory will welcome into the kingdom those who recognized him and fed him in their hungry neighbor, the very least of his brothers and sisters (Mt 25:31-46).

Reflecting on food as God's gift and the invitation to share God's goodness can bear fruit in many possible ways. It can deepen our reverence for the food we eat as being God's gift. It can deepen our understanding that receiving the gift of Christ's presence in the Eucharist always invites a human response—our "washing of feet" whenever we help feed anyone within whom Christ resides. It can identify ways to prevent the hardening of our hearts toward those who hunger or those who assist them. It can deepen our understanding that Christ resides in the hungry in our local community and in faraway places. And it can energize our commitment as individuals, as church and as a nation to respond generously to the needs of the hungry with the gifts of food and food assistance that are essential to building God's kingdom. 

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For Hell or for Glory

The legacy of the Battle of Gettysburg

BY JAMES T. KEANE

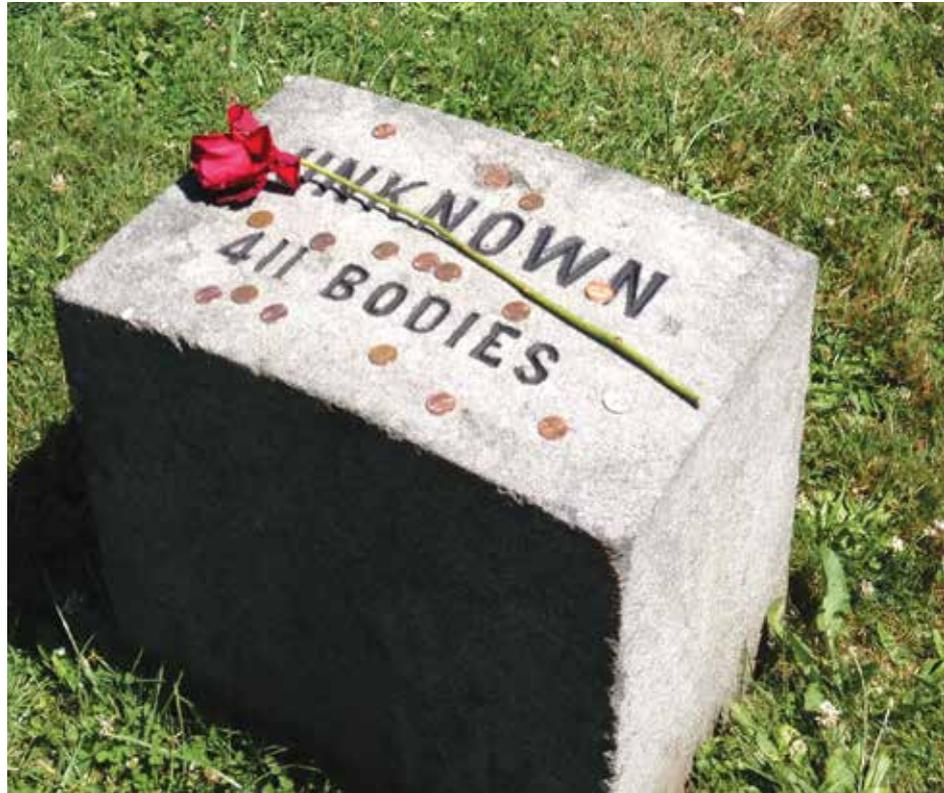
To hear the name Gettysburg is, for almost any American, to immediately remember famous men. First, one thinks of the legendary generals on both sides of the enormous Civil War, or perhaps of Abraham Lincoln, delivering the brief but masterful Gettysburg Address at the dedication of a cemetery to honor the battle's fallen less than five months later. And during my own visit to the battlefield in July for the sesquicentennial of the three-day Battle of Gettysburg, I was drawn to the prominent memorials of the famous generals who fought there—Robert E. Lee, George Meade, John F. Reynolds and Abner Doubleday.

But I was fascinated less by the famous men or the tales of valor than by the sheer mass of humanity that fought and died on those fields 150 years ago. For all else that Gettysburg was, it was also one of the first battles of indiscriminate modern warfare.

This experience was in large part facilitated by the presence in Gettysburg that weekend of vast numbers of Civil War re-enactors playing the roles of soldiers, nurses, generals and more. The anniversary was marked by a mammoth re-enactment of the battle on nearby farms, and the area was inundated by visitors in the uniforms of Union and Confederate troops. In addition to the drama of the re-enacted battles—cannon, cavalry, gunpowder, the distinctive scent of thousands of men in wool uniforms who had not showered in days—one also saw a town of 7,500 (only 5,000 more than at the time of the battle) completely overrun by almost 100,000 people—more than 15,000 of them in full period costume.

The Other

On an impossibly hot day before the re-enactment, I spent several hours talking to re-enactors who had momentarily turned into tourists themselves, exploring Gettysburg and visiting the actual battlefield (and, to my annoyance, often remaining in character—“Yankee, might thee offer me some



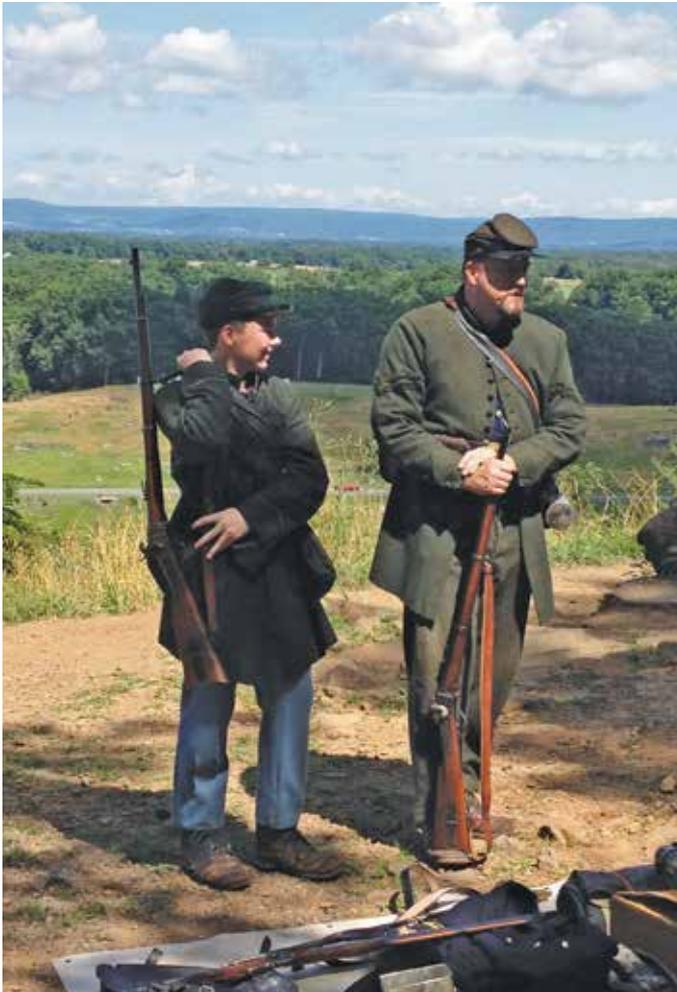
of yonder water bottle?”). One group, dressed in impeccable detail as Confederate riflemen, had flown over from Germany, one of 16 foreign nations that sent participants to the re-enactment. Perhaps, it occurred to me, Germany needs some more time before military nostalgia is acceptable at home.

The vast majority, however, were from the United States, and they provided insight into another interesting feature of the original battle; other than their uniforms, they all looked more or less the same. Like the armies they were imitating, they were almost all white men of a certain age and appearance.

Historians of any war can inevitably point to cultural artifacts that seek to establish the enemy as wholly Other, the hated, inscrutable, soulless, not-like-us target that has no emotion or yearning other than our destruction, and so must be annihilated. From biblical songs calling for the smashing of Babylonian babies against rocks to Allied propaganda in World War I that German soldiers were melting down captured Canadians to make glue, the impulse is always to deny the enemy any similarity to one's own human-

JAMES T. KEANE is an editor at Orbis Books in Ossining, N.Y., and a former associate editor of *America*.

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Confederate Army of 70,000 and a Union force of 94,000, more than 46,000 were killed or wounded over the course of three days.

To be wounded at Gettysburg was itself in many cases a death sentence. With little in the way of modern medicine (no penicillin or morphine, only crude surgical instruments and inattention to sanitation) and no way to evacuate the injured, soldiers who fell on the battlefield often bled to death or suffered a slow and agonizing death from infection. Weather conditions made it worse. The scorching heat was followed by a heavy rain the day after the battle, and many of the wounded simply lay helpless in the sucking mud. Even when succor could be offered, it often meant little more than a tourniquet to slow bleeding or a bonesaw to cut through shattered or infected limbs.

With such huge numbers of casualties, even disposing of corpses was a massive task that had to be done hastily as the bodies began to rot. News reports said that by the second day after the battle's conclusion, the stench of the battlefield could be smelled five miles away. As a result, many corpses were simply dumped into hollows or buried alongside roads, especially the bodies of the Confederate dead. Soldiers tasked with burying the dead often worked for a day and then begged off, overwhelmed by the task and the carnage. There was no time to identify individuals, and no dog tags. At Gettysburg National Cemetery, where more than 3,500 Union soldiers are buried, far more haunting than the named graves are the rows and rows of tombstones with merely a number.

ity—all the easier to kill them.

But what do you do when the enemy looks just like you? When he speaks your language, prays the same terrified words to the same God, eats your food, sings your songs? At a distance it might make little difference, but at places like Little Roundtop and in the waning moments of Pickett's Charge, the soldiers at Gettysburg found themselves fighting face to familiar face.

The Carnage

The savagery of the fighting is memorialized in some of the place names at Gettysburg: The Slaughter Pen; Bloody Run, where creeks of human blood washed around the feet of fighting men; The Valley of Death. And, of course, there is Pickett's Charge, the valiant but doomed frontal assault of the Confederate Army into Union gunfire on the third day, "for hell or glory," that left 10,000 men dead or wounded in less than an hour. Altogether, out of a

At a distance of 150 years, these images and stories are haunting; they could only have been overwhelming for both sides in the days and weeks following the battle. I suspect that the trench warfare of World War I and the enormous casualties of World War II have made us rather more able to

process mentally the wholesale slaughter that takes place in modern war, but in Civil War America there would have been no such precedents until Gettysburg and similar, even bloodier battles were reported in the newspapers.

In that vein, it is worth noting that the New York City draft riots, which necessitated a military occupation of large sections of Manhattan, occurred precisely 10 days after Gettysburg, when the news of the battle and estimates of casualties were already in the papers. For more than a few recent arrivals from Ireland present for the drawing of draft numbers, those accounts of the carnage surely put into stark terms what they (few could afford the \$300 commutation fee for a substi-



tute) could expect to see in the weeks and months ahead—a high likelihood of dying in someone else’s Civil War.

Reconciliation

What is perhaps most striking about Gettysburg today is that the battle is not necessarily commemorated as a triumph of one side over the other. The most dramatic statue on the battlefield is a monument to Robert E. Lee, and the Confederate soldiers are largely remembered not as traitors but as brave men willing to charge into fusillades of lead and iron for honor and duty. Perhaps it is easier to forgive and forget after a century and a half (especially if there are tourist dollars to be won); then again, it is also easy to forget that humanity rarely does. How many other battlefields around the world remain today a source of rage and hatred of the Other, of occasions to sing a song of triumph for victory or of wrath at defeat and humiliation? I myself remember the completely irrational anger that welled up inside me when I visited Pearl Harbor and found it overrun with Japanese tourists smiling and taking pictures. And how many countries have been torn apart in the last century by remembrances of past civil wars?

But at Gettysburg there are Union and Confederate flags side by side everywhere; there are as many monuments to the dead of the Southern states as their Northern cousins.

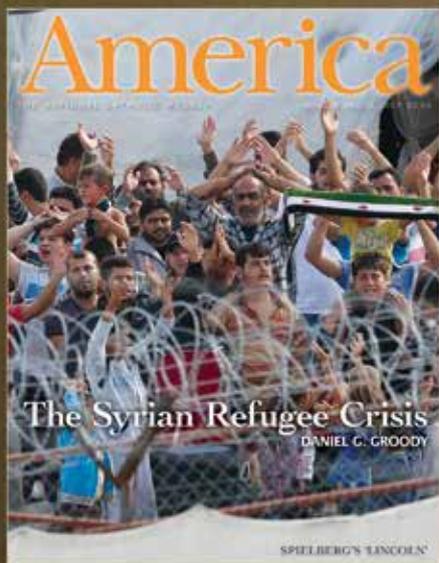
The narratives of the battlefield guides and the language used in the museums and on the tombstones are often surprisingly neutral and equally respectful of the dead of both sides. How did such a brutal slaughter come to be remembered in just a few short years as a monument to both? Was this perhaps the only way the nation could survive after the Northern victory? There is something singular about the lack of rancor.

Of course, rancor can be a relative thing to judge. It sometimes hides beneath the surface. Many of the emotional wounds of the Civil War remain our wounds today, and we have found many Others, both foreign and domestic, to demonize. On the busiest day of that Fourth of July weekend in Gettysburg, one spot of sidewalk in Lincoln Square was occupied by a group of full-voiced enthusiasts of revolt against “King Obama” (and against restoration of the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933, which created safeguards to regulate banks). They had a booth in which to store their pamphlets and other wares and on which to hang a poster of President Barack Obama. One did not have to look too closely to see what they had done to it.

There, 50 feet from the building where Abraham Lincoln put the finishing touches on the Gettysburg Address, the first black president of our more perfect union was depicted with a Hitler mustache. A

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“Gettysburg’s Catholic Memories.”
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Dialogue of Note

How an interfaith rock band deepened my love of Catholicism

BY AUSTIN ROSE



PLAYING ALONG. Austin Rose on drums with his band, Interfaith Rock

I'm a teenage drummer interested in interfaith work. When I recently combined these interests, I found myself on a journey of discovery that taught me about the nature of interfaith dialogue and my own Catholic faith.

Last year I helped start an interfaith rock band with the assistance of my parish, St. Katharine Drexel Catholic Church, and a grant from the Community Foundation of Frederick County, Md. We called it Interfaith Rock. Made up of Buddhist, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and Protestant high school and college musicians, the band performs exclusively at charity fundraisers and other nonprofit events. We feature a playlist of rock songs with peace and justice themes and rock versions of religious songs from different

faith traditions.

Our mission is to promote interfaith understanding and respect through music and community service, highlighting the harmony of shared values and the richness of diversity. Instead of merely talking about our faith perspectives, we join together in action. The journey has been a surprising one, and none of us could have guessed where this project would lead us.

Just by playing music, we found that interfaith exchange arose naturally. For example, one song we played, called "I Love You and Buddha Too" was about embracing all religions, and it included the name of the holy prophet Muhammad. Jacob, a Buddhist, asked our three Muslim bandmates, Sadiq, Salmaan and Marya, if they were comfortable with the reference, indicating that he thought the holy prophet's name was not supposed to be uttered in song, or at least not without being followed by the blessing, "Peace Be Upon Him." All three appreciated our

sensitivity, but wanted to keep the reference in. Given the powerful message of interfaith unity and respect conveyed in the song, they felt that Islam should be represented. Also, they did not want us to feel uncomfortable talking about the founder of their religion. Without even trying, interfaith dialogue was occurring, one song at a time.

The community service part of our mission helped us to bond on an even deeper level. It became clear to each of us that service was a major value in all of our faiths. I especially remember one concert and the feeling of joy we shared as we looked out at the faces of people who would be fed and sheltered with the money that our music was raising. That night, we realized that our common goal was larger than any of our other individual beliefs.

I have heard some adults express concern that interfaith youth activity can confuse or dilute a young person's faith. But I have found the opposite: Interfaith Rock has deepened

AUSTIN ROSE is a high school senior at St. John's Catholic Prep in Frederick, Md. He participates in interfaith activities in the community through his parish, St. Katharine Drexel Catholic Church.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AUTHOR

my Catholic faith. It's like playing the drums. I could spend my whole life banging away in my basement alone, but, instead, I learn by playing alongside other musicians. With my band, I've found that necessary and delicate balance between following other instruments and creating my own beat and, to my surprise, a balance in my spirituality between embracing unity with other faiths and deepening my own separate identity.

When the band couldn't find a good Buddhist song, our guitarist and faithful Buddhist, Jacob Abuhmada, wrote his own. He wore his Tibetan shawl for the performance, chanting the piece in a guttural growl. The audience looked at him in shock, but Jacob took no notice. I couldn't help but smile, thinking to myself how Jacob's religious beliefs were miles away from mine, and yet how much he inspired me. From that day on, I found myself getting more involved in my parish community and my school's campus ministry. I now pray

more, attend Mass by choice and worry less what others might think.

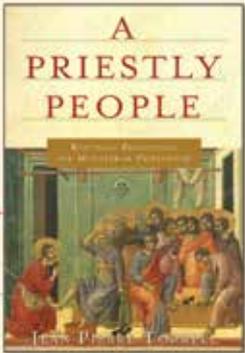
Another unexpected experience happened at a charity concert where we shared the stage with an evangelical Christian Rock band of homeless men from the Frederick Rescue Mission, a local shelter. Before the performance, our band was practicing the song "One Day" by Matisyahu, our finale and my personal favorite, when we noticed a man from the rescue mission offstage crying. A faint smile beneath his tears, he explained that "One Day" was his favorite song, too, an inspirational piece that had given him faith and gotten him through difficult times on the streets.

I suddenly realized that I felt a close emotional connection with this stranger, and that I truly saw the face of God in him. I found myself marveling that a person who had experienced untold tragedy in his life could still have utmost faith in God. He came from a different faith and a wholly different world, yet

I still felt connected to him. It was not until that moment that I really understood and experienced on an emotional level the Catholic emphasis on Jesus being present in the poor and the stranger. There I was, standing with my Buddhist, Jewish and Muslim friends, talking to an evangelical Protestant and having the most powerful experience ever of my Catholic faith.

Throughout my life, I have absorbed a whole bunch of words about faith. I have heard all about Catholicism in the classroom and in the pews. I have heard all about other religions through conversation. But clearly, faith is not in these words alone. Faith is all around me. It is in my bandmates from different religions, it is in the experiences we encountered, and it is in the stranger from The Rescue Mission. Now I know that, regardless of the religion, faith is more like the music we play—uniting us, surrounding us and staying with us long after the last note is played. ■

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The Old Gym

Recalling a Catholic school classic

BY BRIAN DOYLE

Here's a wonderful, redolent, crucial part of our Catholic childhoods that we do not talk about much and maybe we should: the sweet, spicy, sharp, stinging scent of old gymnasiums in old Catholic schools, with their slightly sagging stages on which the Christmas pageant was held, and commencement exercises, and the annual visit from His Excellency the Bishop; and the side basketball baskets that folded up to the ceiling if necessary and had to be cranked up and down with a pole 1,000 feet long that could only be wielded properly by the gruff wizard of a janitor who knew where everything was and could fix everything and could clean up any and all accidents and could, if necessary, like that one time perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation, not to mention temporarily splint broken fingers and ice swollen ankles and soothe Mrs. Adams when she wept uncontrollably the day Kennedy was murdered.

And the creaking, golden, dusty, wooden floors with their dead spots in the corners toward which seasoned

defenders angled their man in crucial moments of games when you needed a turnover in the worst way, like against

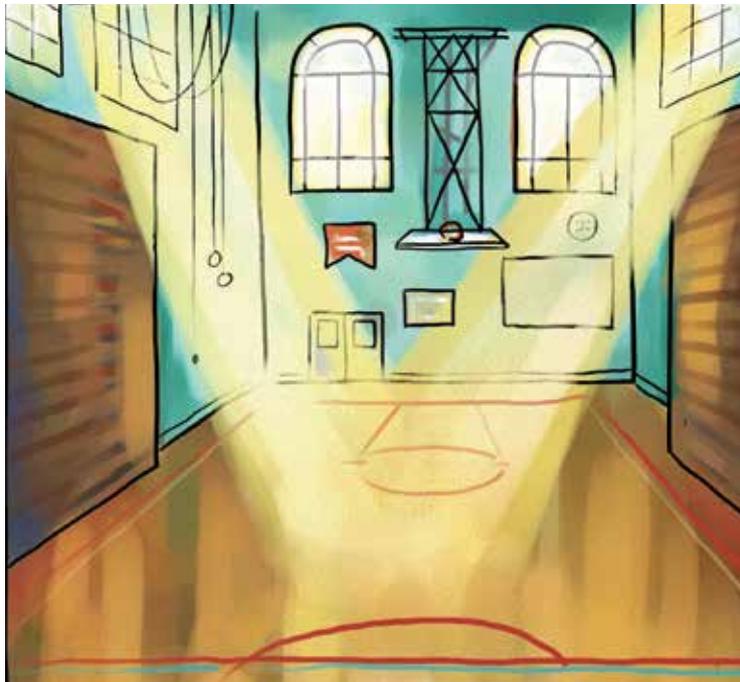
be recruited to push, and even that one time Father Pastor, although he was older than all the dads put together and rumor had it that he had known St. Thomas Aquinas personally.

And the immense, mullioned windows, which also had to be cranked open with long, rusty, metal poles and which had not been cleaned since the time Elizabeth Taylor borrowed the church for one of her 50 weddings and the church and school and rectory and convent were cleaned and repainted by an anonymous gift from a Welsh actor, who married her every five years or so; and the tremendous doors, each heavier than a hill, each reportedly made

from metal harvested from Luftwaffe airplanes shot down by members of the parish; and the ancient basketballs, some as flaccid as towels, which shared the utility closet with rub-

bery dodgeballs and moldy softballs and baseballs stained so green with grass that they looked like fishing floats; and metal folding chairs

stamped with the name of the parish and painted a color never seen before and never again in the world except on parish folding chairs, a color some-



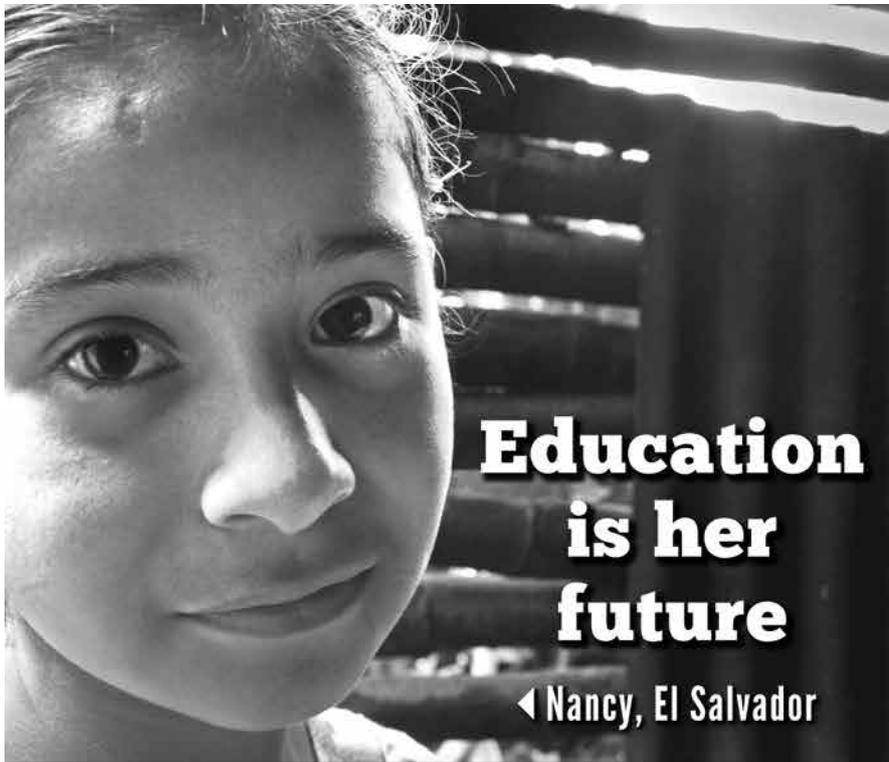
the powerhouses like St. Mary Star of the Sea and St. William the Abbot; and the ancient bathrooms which probably were imported whole and untouched from the catacombs beneath the Eternal City and were dotted with heartfelt mosaic messages from the early Christians; and the bleachers that were folded shrieking and groaning back up against the gym wall by a tremendous muscular effort from the whole team, even the coach, and also as many fathers as could

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Faith reflections from young Catholics. americamagazine.org/generationfaith

BRIAN DOYLE is the editor of *Portland Magazine* at the University of Portland and the author, most recently, of the essay collection *Grace Notes*.

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thing like gray and brown had gotten married and gone to sea for their honeymoon cruise and both were terribly seasick; and the occasional sparrow and swallow and even once a crow in the gym, because the kids would prop the emergency exit doors open to ventilate the building, knowing that the dramatic signs warning about sirens and alarms were total fiction; and the stray socks and mathematics textbooks and love notes beneath the stage, where you could also find most of the props from the Christmas pageant, not to mention supplies for May Day and unopened boxes of *Baltimore Catechisms* and most of a bottle of Four Roses whiskey.

And the twin basketball hoops at each end of the gym floor, one an inch higher than the other, a fact known to the home team, which is why we went that way in the second halves of games; and the baskets' battered backboards, once white but now a sort of pearl gray, with the ghostly imprints of a hundred thousand bad shots stamped faintly on the wood like a code; and the latticed metal struts that proffered the baskets thirsty for basketballs; and the silvery nylon nets, never whole for more than a day, stitched anew to their stalwart loops before every game by a slight boy sitting on the shoulders of an unsteady, burlier boy; and the two referees, aging and slightly paunchy now but sure of their authority and quick to issue technical fouls for abuse of equipment and disrespect of the game; and the squeak and squeal of sneakers during basketball and volleyball and dodgeball and kickball games, the last held in the gym only on days of epic and fearsome and inarguable rain; and here the thought occurs to me that the sweetest sound of my Catholic childhood, perhaps the sweetest song and prayer of all because it was so open and innocent and untrammelled and made by and of and for sheer wild headlong joy, was the music of all those sneakers. Remember? **A**

FILM | JAKE MARTIN

UNLOVABLE CHARACTERS

Transition, loss and love in the films of Noah Baumbach



FLOATER. Greta Gerwig in "Frances Ha"

‘Hurt people hurt people.’ This phrase is uttered several times throughout Noah Baumbach’s film “Greenberg” (2010), usually in regard to Ben Stiller’s eponymous lead character—a 40-something ex-musician recovering from a nervous breakdown. Stiller’s Greenberg is at once repelled and attracted by the phrase, recognizing the trite self-help-y-ness of the word play, while at the same time identifying with the fundamental truth it carries. And it is that truth that makes the phrase a most remarkably succinct summation of the body of work by Baumbach himself.

Noah Baumbach was one of a multitude of “wonder boys” who arose during the American independent film explosion in the 1990s. Two of his films, “Kicking and Screaming” (1995) and “Mr. Jealousy” (1997)—both of which he directed and wrote, while still in his 20s no less—led him to be listed as one of Newsweek’s “Ten New Faces

of 1996.” And yet it would take nearly a decade, until the release of the semi-autobiographical “The Squid and the Whale” (2005), for Baumbach to find his place as an artist of significance in the contemporary cinematic landscape.

Baumbach has continued to explore the themes of transition, loss and commitment, themes that were at the heart of “Squid,” in his subsequent works “Margot at the Wedding” (2007), “Greenberg” and “Frances Ha” (2013). And it is these themes that make Baumbach’s work so important from a spiritual perspective. They are also why the work of a seemingly atheistic filmmaker could be of such relevance to a Christian audience.

Baumbach’s films examine the convergence of past and future in the ephemeral present. His characters, like all of us, are either attempting to forget events they cannot or pining for a past that never really existed. Their present is transition, be it divorce, recovery, post-collegiate life or marriage. But

these external transitions only serve as catalyst and metaphor to deeper interior transitions that must occur in all of us if we are to become fully ourselves, and as such fully human.

There is much suffering in his work, most of it existential, and much of it brought on by that most human of instincts, resistance to change. But it is from this place of unwillingness, denial and pain that growth occurs, and it is within this process that the characters in Baumbach’s films move from one-dimensional caricature to multi-dimensional human beings.

Baumbach’s protagonists are frequently difficult to love even from the relatively safe distance of the seats of a Cineplex. These are not the lovable, idiosyncratic curmudgeons or strangely eccentric “weirdoes” that we are used to being spoon-fed by mainstream Hollywood films. Instead, Baumbach gives us self-centered, cruel and emotionally stunted individuals who make their lives and the lives of those they love far more difficult than they need to be.

Yet Baumbach is able to find that thread of humanity, that redeeming force, that glimmer of hope within his characters that makes you stay with them on their journey, however unlovable they might seem. He is able, perhaps better than any other filmmaker, to find the lovability of the unlovable. It is perhaps because Baumbach understands that the root of bitterness and rage is frequently the result of nothing more than thwarted expectations. His lovably unlovable protagonists represent the misplaced idealism, and the requisite unrealistic expectations that accompany it, to which we all occasionally revert. They fully embody those thoughts, feelings and desires, those parts of us that hold ourselves and those we love to standards that are un-

attainable—indeed, to standards that are inhuman in their perfection.

Baumbach's characters do not live in a bubble, and what is most powerful about his work is the exploration of the fallout that his protagonists' behavior has on those around them. He frequently makes use of children to underscore the implications that selfish actions have on those we love. Few sequences in recent American cinema have been more uncomfortable

and heartbreaking to watch than the "acting out" of Frank Berkman (Owen Kline), the younger of the two sons in "The Squid and the Whale." Frank, an 8-year-old boy, is too young to cope with and understand the pain he feels in the aftermath of his parent's divorce. We are forced to sit, watch and identify with him as he attempts to alleviate his hurt through self-destruction.

Frank's scenario is at once wholly singular and wholly universal—who among us has not at least known someone (if not ourselves) who has responded to loss with self-destructive behavior? We see Frank's behavior and we cringe, partly because it is grotesque to watch an 8-year-old drink alcohol in an attempt to numb his pain, and partly because we are very familiar with people (ourselves, family, friends) attempting to escape the horrible pain of loss by hurting themselves. We know this pain, and to see a child suffer through it only reinforces its power and our inability to "handle it" by ourselves.

But more often than not in Baumbach's films, the children serve as surrogates for adults who are unable to fulfill their roles, as in the case of Frank's older brother Walt (Jessie Eisenberg) in "Squid" and Margot's son Claude (Zane Pais) in "Margot at the

Wedding." These characters provide a stability and rationality that their elders cannot. The adults provide a level of material comfort that allows for the appearance of a traditional parent/child paradigm, yet there is fluidity in the relationships, with adult agency being transferred between parent and child and

back again often over the course of only a few seconds.

This adult/child fluidity is also found within singular characters, most notably the title character of "Frances Ha" and Greenberg, two characters who fluctuate between the desire for growth and the fear of the demands of adulthood. Their eventual evolution arises from their acceptance of their circumstances, as well as the acknowledgment of their own limitations. It is only when they reach this place of acceptance that they are able to move beyond their incessant navel-gazing and self-indulgence. They experience that "thing" the character Malcolm (Jack Black) in "Margot at the Wedding" describes as the realization that "you aren't the most important person in the world."

Like his subjects, Baumbach's work has developed and grown. Starting with "Greenberg," it has started to take on a more hopeful tone, and his most recent entry, "Frances Ha," is a significant departure from the dauntingly pessimistic "Squid" and "Margot." "Frances Ha" is almost romp-like in its representation of its 20-something heroine—a cinematic soul sister to the women of Lena Dunham's cultural phenomenon "Girls," minus the nihilistic heaviness. The "Ha" of the title proves to be an underlying force that carries the film along and away from the melancholic timbre of Baumbach's earlier work.

Baumbach's films are not on the scale either formally or thematically of some of his contemporaries, like David Fincher. They are modest in their scope and are analogous to the short stories

ON THE WEB

Jim McDermott, S.J.,
reviews the fall TV lineup.
americamagazine.org/television

Finale

"This was not my first fané," he wrote. After a meal, our Stephen loved to sail into the dining room, holding aloft this last course: ice cream, whipped cream, and meringue. "Its presentation is a jaw-dropper... love to do it for a newcomer."

That night he chose a deeper bowl, whipped up "not a measured slope but an escarpment... the whipped cream avalanched, chips of meringue floating around like icebergs...it always thaws beautifully, but this time I took it from the freezer and stuck it in a pan of hot water, which was like climate change. The melting added to the avalanche..." Invoking the advice of Julia Child, Do not comment, apologize or make excuses, he carried it to his guests con brio, "to the delight of all..."

Was it showmanship that, just weeks later, bore him away—leaving behind our grief like the sinkful of pots we'd wash while he went off to nap—bore him, now light and lush as fané, to another feast?

GAIL TYSON

GAIL TYSON, a graduate of Stanford University's creative writing program, works as a communications strategist with Catholic congregations and institutions. She has an essay forthcoming in Still Point Arts Quarterly.

of James Joyce in that they maximize every ounce of their force to convey meaning, while still remaining relatively “small” in breadth and duration.

These are not sagas but meditations, and from a spiritual perspective, can be seen in light of the singular sayings of the desert fathers. When a character like Ivan (Rhys Ifan), a former band mate of Greenberg’s, pleads for his friend’s understanding at his attempt to save his failing marriage with the line: “This wasn’t the life I planned on. And it’s huge to finally embrace the life you didn’t plan on,” it is cause for the reflective viewer to pause. Baumbach’s films are full of moments like this.

It goes without saying that Baumbach’s work is not escapist fare; it is discourse. He continually invites his audience to identify and question, bringing them to moments of extreme pain—which are, in a sense, his characters’ own minute passion narratives—and daring them not to care, to hurt, to be uncomfortable.

There is a saying that “change is the only constant,” and while the phrase is just as hackneyed and trite as “Hurt people hurt people,” the weight of its truth is inescapable. We live lives of transition, loss and commitment, even in what we understand to be our most static moments. We are always changing, always losing and always offering ourselves to someone or something, be it an idea, a profession, a person or a philosophy of living.

Baumbach’s films open the door to self-examination, to reflect on what we value and why we value it. In his work we see ourselves, usually at our worst, and it is from this place of self-knowledge and growth that we can begin to move toward a future of hope with strength and humility.

JAKE MARTIN, S.J., is a second-year theology student at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, Berkeley, Calif., and the author of *What’s So Funny About Faith?: A Memoir from the Intersection of Hilarious and Holy* (Loyola Press).

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Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

BROKEN, BAD, REDEEMED?

What will become of me after “Breaking Bad”? By the time this column reaches your coffee table, dear reader, I will, like you, be grappling with that awesome responsibility. And I will know the answer to the question at the heart of the series: Is Walter White, even after all that he has done, redeemable?

“Breaking Bad” has been one of those rare television phenomena, a program that has meant far more than entertainment to its legions of viewers. It has become a cultural touchstone, the launcher of a million water-cooler discussions and viewing parties. The show has generated fan-stocked Web and Wiki sites, Facebook and Twitter explosions and of course thousands of articles, like this one, that pretend to get at the meaning of it all.

The nation has followed poor Walter White—good father, dutiful husband, cancer victim and once the object of near universal sympathy—as he became transformed before us into a ruthless sociopath. But this monster, we realized in gradual horror, had been hiding in plain sight from the first moment he climbed into the Krystal Ship and began cooking Blue Sky for his daily bread.

It was during a weekend binge viewing of B.B. year three when Walter White’s inner darkness became apparent to me. Walter doesn’t just endure his sin-propelled transformation into the imperious and dangerous Heisenberg, the “one who knocks”; he longs for it. Also revealed were the thematic machinations of the show’s scheming director, Vince Gilligan. “I was brought up Catholic,”

Gilligan reluctantly described himself on Stephen Colbert’s show last year. (“You know what else the road to hell is paved with?” Colbert quickly volleyed: “the words, ‘I used to be a Catholic.’”) He mines his Catholic upbringing to good effect. Even a lapsed Catholic can count off his seven deadlies, after all. What is “Breaking Bad” if not a morality play for our digitized times with an audience not gathered around a medieval stage, but consuming the series across the digital firmament?

Like all good morality plays, “Breaking Bad” leads us through the dissection of a de-graded morality into a contemplation of our own. As Walt refuses the help of family and “friends,” it is pride that prods him into the meth business in the first place. As Walter surrenders in anger to a murderous impulse, taunts Hank “My name is ASAC” Schrader into continuing a dead-ended investigation and is driven by greed across the desert, a modern McTeague, I watch him become undone by the capital vices. I am startled by the low and tragic places sloth and gluttony have taken Jesse Pinkman; how lust begins the unraveling of Skyler White. Pressed to ponder my own unhappy skirmishes with the seven deadlies; it is I, the observer, who can be changed by this Heisenberg.

After each step deeper into the abyss, Walt seeks a reboot, a do-over, that one last awful thing he’ll have to

do that will free him from breaking any badder than he already has—liquifying a body, poisoning a child, running down drug-dealers, setting up poor Jesse again and again. His attempted resets result in more murder and mayhem, of course. They are just steps farther away from his own conscience and from God. Walter is devoid of contrition and a firm purpose of amendment.

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As the series draws to a close, we have seen hints of the humanity that remains in Walter White—an attempt to trade his ill-gotten gains for the life of his brother-in-law, phoning in a cover story for Skyler as authorities listen in. Jesse has been reduced to complete meth thrall-dom, bereft of hope but still alive enough to know he needs absolution, not just regret, for his many mistakes.

In medieval morality plays, the protagonist begins in innocence, succumbs to temptation and falls into sin, but in the end finds a way back to God and redemption. We have come to know Walter White, however, as a man who was never truly innocent, as a man who may have been tempted not away from virtue, but toward his truer self. Can we hold out any hope that some kind of redemption may still await a creature like Walter White?

Of course we can, and Vince Gilligan (curse his “brought up Catholic”!) knows it.

It’s the same hope we hold out for ourselves.

KEVIN CLARKE is America’s senior editor and chief correspondent.

HAVE COURAGE! TAKE RISKS!

Two new books challenge priests and everyone.

Part of the excitement in those daily homilies Pope Francis has been delivering is that here is the pope saying things many of us have been saying to one another but have seldom if ever heard from the pulpit or read in the diocesan press. On June 20th the pope urged Jesuit journalists to attack hypocrites—intellectuals without talent, ethicists without goodness, bearers of mere museum beauty—wherever found.

I grew up in Trenton, N.J., sitting next to my father, editorial writer for the Trenton Times, at Mass while the pastor, who seems never to have prepared a sermon, snarled against the secular press, as if those words were obscene. And today some blame “threats” to the church on the press. Two days later Francis turned his words toward bishops who consider themselves “princes.” He warned against surrender to “spiritual worldliness,” settling into the comfortable life.

I read these words a week after returning from retreat, where I had read two superb books for

priests: *Night Conversations With Cardinal Martini: The Relevance of the Church for Tomorrow* (Paulist Press, 136p \$15.95), dialogues with Georg Sporschill, S.J., in Jerusalem in 2007, and *Notes from the Underground: The Spiritual Journey of a Secular Priest*, by the Rev. Donald Cozzens (Orbis, 210p \$20). Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, born in 1927, a Jesuit and longtime bishop of Milan, considered for the papacy during the previous election, had foreseen his recent death from Parkinson’s disease and gave several

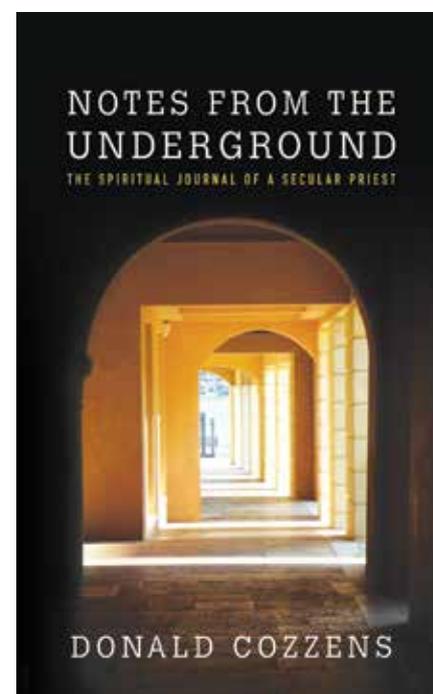
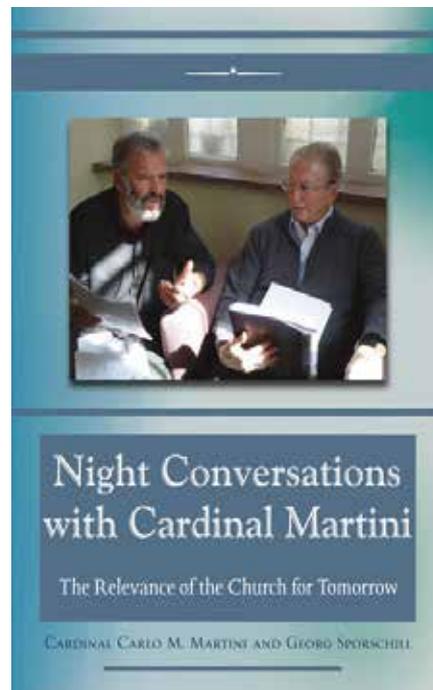
very frank interviews, with the hope that those who loved and admired him during his life would act on the ideas they had discussed.

A few days before he died, he told Father Sporschill that “the church is 200 years behind the times.” Why don’t we rouse ourselves, are we afraid? “The church is tired in affluent Europe and America. Our culture has grown old, our churches are big, our religious houses are empty, the bureaucracy of our churches is growing out of proportion, our liturgies and our vestments are pompous. Yet maybe these things express what we’ve become today.” He urged the pope and bishops to find 12 unconventional people to take on leadership roles, people close to the poor who can galvanize young people to take charge.

The young, he said, had to train for church leadership the same way he and others had trained to climb mountains. They must enter foreign cultures, learn languages, stay fit with both sports and prayer. Cardinal Martini knows and loves young people well, having

led thousands in Bible discussions in his cathedral; but he knows their weaknesses too. He worries about “the ones who are trapped in affluence, who are dependent on computers,” and those who are bored, turn to drugs and sit alone in front of the television, who have never been invited to join a community. Some get involved in good works but “lack the courage to make a life decision.” What would he say to them? “*Have courage! Take risks! Risk your life!*”

Both Cardinal Martini and Father



Cozzens hold friendship at the center of their lives. Cozzens, a popular author for priests, now a professor at John Carroll University, recalls that he had “power” for a while as diocesan vicar for clergy and seminary rector, and he remembers advice from a fellow priest-psychologist who reminded him that the clergy had two major repressions: sexual desire and ambition. Those who

ON THE WEB

Joseph Hoover, S.J., talks about his new role as poetry editor. americamagazine.org/podcast

angle for a position must always play it safe. This, he says, “chips away at the priest’s integrity, at his soul.” Most of the hierarchy and priesthood, he says, are not power-hungry men. Still, it is a constant temptation.

All of us will be saved from this destructive pride, he writes early in the book, by intimacy and transcendence; married or single, young or old, we need a few people in our lives with whom we can be “soulmates.” Each of us must have a person or persons for whom we would lay down our lives. And one gains the strength to live celibacy by nourishing this friendship with spiritual reading and prayer.

Cozzens says, “I count myself among those faithful hanging on and hoping for signs of renewal.” And he demonstrates his faith by imagining some reforms emerging from his experience: the pope adds four women to the college of cardinals; a secret committee of theologians and canon lawyers studies the celibacy

requirement and concludes it should be required only of those who prayerfully determine that they have this “special gift from God”; the Vatican sponsors an international symposium of moral theologians to review the church’s theology on sexuality.

Father Cozzens pulls it all together with a reading from Carlo Maria Martini’s interview about the church

being out of date. “Why don’t we rouse ourselves? Are we afraid?”

Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., is literary editor of America.

Correction: In the Bookings published on Feb 13, the prize-winning biography of Henry Luce was attributed to Douglas Brinkley. The author was Alan Brinkley.

BOOKS | BILL WILLIAMS

BOYS’ LIVES

THE GOOD BISHOP The Life of Walter F. Sullivan

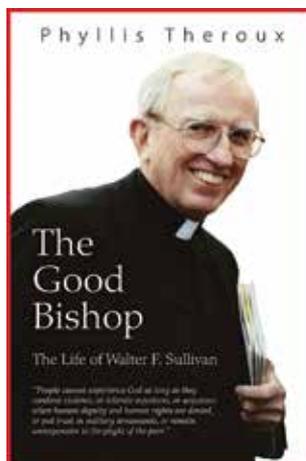
By Phyllis Theroux
Orbis Books. 160p \$20

When retired Bishop Walter F. Sullivan died this past December, countless thousands mourned the loss of a beloved spiritual teacher who had presided over the Diocese of Richmond, Va., for 29 years. *The Good Bishop* is a fitting tribute to this man who fought for prison reform, opposed the death penalty, denounced nuclear proliferation and reached out to homosexuals. Sullivan constantly walked a tightrope between pushing the social Gospel and adhering to church doctrine. When Sullivan was

much less death row.” The Richmond Diocese had 125,000 Catholics and 147 parishes. Sullivan wanted to stop at every one of them so he could “know his flock on a first-name basis.” He logged thousands of miles traveling around the state.

After a trip to Haiti he created a Haitian ministry. Eventually 66 parishes and schools in the Richmond diocese were linked to groups in the impoverished island nation.

Sullivan was often at odds with the Vatican. When he wrote an introduction to a scholarly book on the church and homosexuality, Rome directed him to remove it. He reluctantly complied. The bishop’s efforts at ecumenical dialogue and



his welcoming of women into leadership positions also generated controversy. He favored the ordination of women as priests, but he eventually “fell silent on the subject” out of loyalty to Rome.

In 1975, Sullivan met with an Episcopal bishop to explore the possibility of bringing a Roman Catholic church and an Episcopal church together under one roof in

his welcoming of women into leadership positions also generated controversy. He favored the ordination of women as priests, but he eventually “fell silent on the subject” out of loyalty to Rome.

In 1975, Sullivan met with an Episcopal bishop to explore the possibility of bringing a Roman Catholic church and an Episcopal church together under one roof in



Virginia Beach. The Vatican asked Sullivan not to go ahead with the plan “basically because it had never been done before.” But Sullivan persisted and today “the church is a small ecumenical showplace, the only one of its kind in the world.” The congregation worships together, but Catholics and Episcopalians take communion at separate altars.

When Sullivan’s aunt died, she left him \$1 million, an inheritance that eventually grew to \$2 million. Over time the bishop donated the entire sum to worthy projects throughout the diocese. He commissioned a Holocaust memorial, which was placed in front of the cathedral—the first Holocaust memorial located on the grounds of a Catholic church in the United States.

One could argue that Sullivan’s most controversial stand was his denunciation of war and nuclear proliferation. The author notes that Virginia is the most militarized state in the nation, with 27 military bases and 14,000 defense contractors. In addressing a largely military audience in Virginia Beach, the bishop once asked, “What are the values we wish to proclaim? Are these values rooted in the Gospel of Jesus or rooted in blind national self-interest disguised as patriotism?”

While Theroux’s admiration for the bishop is clear, she faults his response to the scandal of sexual abuse by priests, calling it “less than stellar.” Fifteen diocesan priests were accused of sexual abuse. From Theroux’s short summary of the cases, it is difficult to tell the extent of the bishop’s culpability. We have the impression that Sullivan, like many church leaders, failed to comprehend fully the moral rottenness of the sexual abuse scandal, even though he had warned priests that if they ever got involved in sexual abuse, “I’ll be visiting you in jail.”

Theroux originally set out to write a short oral history based mostly on

the bishop’s recollections, but she soon concluded that Sullivan’s life was worth a book. One can agree with that conclusion, while also finding fault with the finished product, much of which reads like hagiography rather than an objective life story. We learn little about Sullivan’s inner life. Theroux characterizes her subject as a brave extrovert with unlimited energy for social justice, but what about his dreams, frustrations, emotions and disappointments?

ELIZABETH REAVEY

ON THE MARGINS

RAISING GENTLE MEN Lives at the Orphanage Edge

By Jay Sullivan
Apprentice House. 354p \$19.95

Readers looking for a nice, conventional story about serving others and how fulfilling that can be must look elsewhere. Jay Sullivan’s *Raising Gentle Men: Lives at the Orphanage Edge* is real, and serving others is complicated. Sullivan spent two years between undergraduate and law school teaching in Kingston, Jamaica, in the 1980s. But his real Jamaican experience came during his time living at an orphanage for young boys.

The structure of the book is more or less a series of vignettes about life at the orphanage and Jay’s desperate attempts to understand God’s will for him. Jamaica in the mid-1980s suffered from high crime rates and even higher poverty. Jay lives and volunteers at Alpha Boys School—an orphanage run by a selfless group of

The Good Bishop is a bit disorganized, skipping back and forth among subjects. Much of the text consists of accolades from dozens of people who knew Sullivan. Still, *The Good Bishop* gives worthy recognition to the life of a remarkable church leader who went out of his way to preach and practice the social Gospel.

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nuns—dedicated to serving abandoned or abused boys.

Reading Jay’s story is a lot like his journey: often without clear direction. We don’t always have a full picture of the characters, and some stories that seem to be teetering on the revelatory then fall short. As time and pages pass, though, it becomes clear that that is exactly the lesson Jay wants to teach us.

While he gives us glimpses of the boys’ lives, the lack of complete understanding and insight reminds us of Jay’s struggle to really know what these young men go through and how to reach them; Jay admits: “I would never truly be a part of the orphanage; I would exist only on its periphery.”

Sullivan’s description of the seemingly mundane brought a smile to my face. Serving abroad is not all rainbows and sunshine. You might never have hot water, and you will probably eat a bug at some point after becoming too lazy to pick all the crit-



ters out of your sugar. Don't get me wrong, Sullivan romanticizes some aspects of his days in Kingston, but he also reminds us that life does not stop because we've decided to go on a service trip. I was drawn by the honesty

of Jay's experience. I just wish he'd cut himself some slack once in a while!

Jay's head is sometimes stuck in the clouds, as is true of many of us who have spent time in service overseas. Writing the story 20 years later,

Jay portrays his younger self as a bit self-deprecating and full of doubt. Thankfully, he peppers in some reality checks from the sweet sisters and pragmatic co-worker Irene, from whom I wish I heard more. The sisters serve as a perfect representation of Jay's time in Jamaica: "You just did it. It was your calling. It was the life I chose. You left your family. You left your home. You joined a new family and went where you were told. Would you please pass the marmalade," Sister Magdalen reveals to Jay. That's right: words of wisdom, followed by a plea for some jam. Just when Jay gets too caught up in discovering God's purpose for himself, the sisters guide him back to the reality of the moment. Irene is not so gentle. She tells Jay, "I think you're full of crap."

Jay's story is not full of dramatic, life-altering events. He doesn't save a child from a burning building or convert a village to Catholicism. He's not even sure he sees the fruits of his two years spent serving others in Jamaica. And yet, the story is perfect. Sometimes we forget that serving others does not exempt us from cleaning the bathroom. Too often, we have painted flowery pictures of far-away lands where our good deeds make tangible differences, where we have "Aha!" moments. Of course, the boys needed stability, a father figure and emotional support. But sometimes, they just needed string to make a kite. Sometimes they just needed a ride home. Sometimes they just needed a game of checkers.

The power of Jay's story is in the small details: a bed-time story, a brief moment holding hands. And isn't that the lesson for us all when searching how to serve others? We shouldn't underestimate God's power to work in small ways. Remember the mustard seed?

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Becoming Clean

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (C), OCT. 13, 2013

Readings: 2 Kgs 5:14-17; Ps 98:1-4; 2 Tm 2:8-13; Lk 17:11-19

“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” (Lk 17:15)

As a child, I saw the world in peculiar ways, as children tend to do, influenced partly by the two powerful forces of television and the Bible. Growing up in the 1960s, I was fairly certain from the movies and TV shows I watched that a good portion of humanity died in quicksand, so I was on guard for quicksand. I was also sure that about half the people who lived at the time of Jesus or Elisha had leprosy. I made no distinction between the Old Testament and New Testament; as far as I knew, Moses, Elisha and Jesus all lived on the same street. Biblical stories that featured someone afflicted with leprosy jumped out at me. I knew very little about leprosy, but I did know it was devastating and that I would be an outcast if I caught it.

Leprosy in the form that I imagined it, known today as Hansen’s disease, did indeed exist at the time of Elisha and Jesus, though biblical “leprosy” denotes many other, milder forms of skin disorder as well. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Web site states that “Hansen’s disease, also known as leprosy, is a chronic bacterial disease that primarily affects the skin” and today is “very treatable, and, with early diagnosis and treatment, is not disabling.” Still, apart from the physical pain these skin conditions brought, there were the deeper pains that lead to psychic, communal and spiritual disorder. Indeed, even today “Hansen’s

disease (leprosy) remains the most misunderstood human infectious disease. The stigma long associated with the disease still exists in most of the world, and the psychological and social effects may be more difficult to deal with than the actual physical illness.”

Leviticus 13 outlines the religious duties of the priest and of the afflicted person. If the priest found that the person was “unclean,” the resulting stigma specified that “the person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp” (Lev 13:45-46). To be unclean in ancient Israel was not to be declared sinful, but to be “out of order” and therefore unable to live in community with the people of God or to worship God in the Temple. To distinguish between clean and unclean was God’s command and a means by which Israel was to become holy like God (Lev 11:44-47).

The wholeness that we yearn for, physically, spiritually and emotionally, is at the center of the holiness to which we have been called. The story of Naaman, the Syrian general whom Elisha guides in his restoration to physical wholeness from leprosy, is the story of a Gentile who is “out of order” physically and excluded from God’s people. His wholeness is indicated

physically when “his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy,” but his spiritual restoration is manifested when this Gentile warrior’s heart turns to the living God. His response is gratitude to Elisha and to the God of Israel, whom Naaman says he will serve from now on, even in a foreign land.

This gratitude for God’s mercy and healing is also central to Luke’s account of Jesus healing 10 lepers. In the liminal region between Samaria and Galilee, the 10 cry out to Jesus for mercy. Jesus, following Leviticus 11, directs them to the priests—even though they are not all Jewish—and as they follow his directions they are all healed of their skin disorder. Only one of them, however,



PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

Reflect on a time when you have felt excluded from the Church or God. How did you come to feel included again? How can you include others?

returns to Jesus to show his gratitude, and he was a Samaritan, someone “out of order.” Jesus asked, “Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”

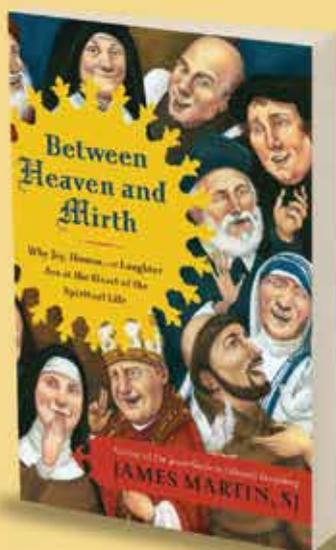
Both of these stories indicate, though, that as the person with leprosy is now restored to wholeness, so too is the foreigner now welcome home. In recognition of God’s action in their lives, gratitude fills them. They are no longer lepers. But even more than this, there need be no more “lepers” of any kind any longer, for no longer must anyone fear separation from God. God has come to welcome you home, to restore true order, to make you clean.

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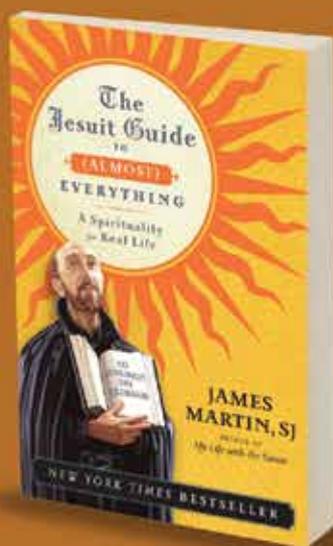
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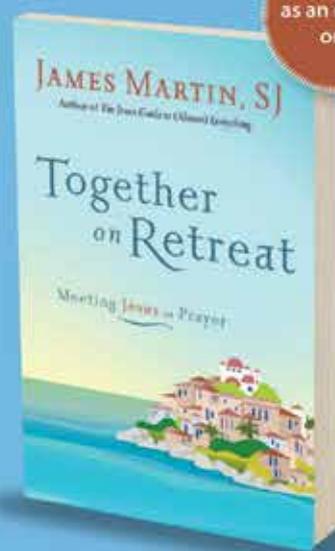
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